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LASALLIAN THEMES

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS
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THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER OF ABBREVIATION

Ac	Acts	Lk	Luke
Am	Amos	Lm	Lamentations
Ba	Baruch	Lv	Leviticus
1 Ch	1 Chronicles	1M	1 Maccabees
2Ch	2 Chronicles	2M	2 Maccabees
1 Co	1 Corinthians	Mi	Micah
2 Co	2 Corinthians	Mk	Mark
Col	Colossians	MI	Malachi
Dn	Daniel	Mt	Matthew
Dt	Deuteronomy	Na	Nahum
Ep	Ephesians	Nb	Numbers
Est	Esther	Ne	Nehemiah
Ex	Exodus	Ob	Obadiah
Ezk	Ezekiel	1 P	1 Peter
Ezr	Ezra	2P	2 Peter
Ga	Galatians	Ph	Philippians
Gn	Genesis	Phm	Philemon
Hab	Habakkuk	Pr	Proverbs
Heb	Hebrews	Ps	Psalms
Hg	Haggai	Qo	Ecclesiastes
Ho	Hosea	Rm	Romans
Is	Isaiah	Rt	Ruth
Jb	Job	Rv	Revelation
Jdt	Judith	1 S	1 Samuel
Jg	Judges	2 S	2 Samuel
Jl	Joel	Sg	Song of Songs
Jm	James	Si	Ecclesiasticus
Jn	John	Tb 1	Tobit
1 Jn	1 John	Th	1 Thessalonians
2 Jn	2 John	2Th	2 Thessalonians
3 Jn	3 John	1 Tm	1 Timothy
Jon	Jonah	2Tm	2 Timothy
Jos	Joshua	Tt	Titus
Jr	Jeremiah	Ws	Wisdom
Jude	Jude	Zc	Zechariah
1 K	1 Kings	Zp	Zephaniah
2 K	2 Kings		

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The Books of the Bible in biblical order

Genesis	Gn	Obadiah	Ob
Exodus	Ex	Jonah	Jon
Leviticus	Lv	Micah	Mi
Numbers	Nb	Nahum	Na
Deuteronomy	Dt	Habakkuk	Hab
Joshua	Jos	Zephaniah	Zp
Judges	Jg	Haggai	Hg
Ruth	Rt	Zechariah	Zc
1 Samuel	1 S	Malachi	MI
2 Samuel	2 S	Matthew	Mt
1 Kings	1 K	Mark	Mk
2 Kings	2K	Luke	Lk
1 Chronicles	1 Ch	John	Jn
2 Chronicles	2 Ch	Acts	Ac
Ezra	Ezr	Romans	Rm
Nehemiah	Ne	1 Corinthians	1 Co
Tobit	Tb	2 Corinthians	2 Co
Judith	Jdt	Galatians	Ga
Esther	Est	Ephesians	Ep
1 Maccabees	1 M	Philippians	Ph
2 Maccabees	2 M	Colossians	Col
Job	Jb	1 Thessalonians	1 Th
Psalms	Ps	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Proverbs	Pr	1 Timothy	1 Tm
Ecclesiastes	Qo	2 Timothy	2 Tm
Song of Songs	Sg	Titus	Tt
Wisdom	Ws	Philemon	Phm
Ecclesiasticus	Si	Hebrews	Heb
Isaiah	Is	James	Jm
Jeremiah	Jr	1 Peter	1 P
Lamentations	Lm	2 Peter	2P
Baruch	Ba	1 John	1 Jn
Ezekiel	Ezk	2 John	2 Jn
Daniel	Dn	3 John	3 Jn
Hosea	Ho	Jude	Jude
Joel	Jl	Revelation	Rv
Amos	Am		

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS IN LASALLIAN TEXTS

BLAIN 1	Vie de Jean-Baptiste de La Salle par le chanoine Blain, 1ère partie, CL 7
BLAIN 2	Idem, 2° partie, CL 8
CE	Conduite des Ecoles, CL 24
CL	Collection des Cahiers lasalliens
Da	Les Devoirs d'un Chrétien, I, CL 20
Db	Les Devoirs d'un Chrétien, II, CL 21
DC	Du Culte extérieur et public, CL 22
E	Exercices de piété, CL 18
EM	Explication de la Méthode d'oraison, CL 14
FD	Règle du Frère Directeur, CL 25
FV	Formule des vœux, CL 2
GA	Grand Abrégé des Devoirs, CL 23
I	Instructions et Prières, CL 17
L	Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle
MAR	Vie de M. de La Salle par F. E. Maillefer, Ms de Reims, CL 6
MC	Mémoire des Commencements, CL 10, pp. 105-109
MD	Méditations pour les dimanches, CL 12 (Med. 1-77)
MF	Méditations sur les principales Fêtes, CL 12 (Med. 78-192)
MH	Mémoire sur l'habit, CL 11, pp. 349-354
MR	Méditations pour le Temps de la Retraite, CL 13 (Med. 193-208)
PA	Petit Abrégé des Devoirs, CL 23
R	Recueil de différents petits traites, CL 15
RB	Les Règles de la Bienséance, CL 19
RC	Règles communes, texte de 1718, CL 25
RD	Directoire(s), CL 15, pp. 122-132
RI	Règles que je me suis imposées, Blain 2, pp. 318-319; ou CL 11, pp. 114-116
VL	Vocabulaire lasallien, Région France, 1985-1988

OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

AEP	M. Sauvage, M. Campos, <i>Announcing the Gospel to the Poor</i> , Romeoville, 1981,
BJ	<i>Bible de Jérusalem</i> .
CAL	M. Sauvage, <i>Catechesis and the Laity</i> , Brisbane, 1991.
CBJ	<i>Concordance de la Bible de Jérusalem</i> , 1982
DS	<i>Dictionnaire de spiritualité</i> , Paris, Beauchesne, 1937...
N	Notes accompagnant le texte de l'EM
TOB	Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible
VE	Vue d'ensemble sur l'EM
VTB	<i>Vocabulaire de Théologie biblique</i> , Paris, Cerf, 1988.

33. BROTHER'S DRESS

Summary:

1. Lexicography. 1.1. Furetière. 1.2. Richelet. 1.3. Bluche. - 2. Canonical data. 2.1. The Council of Trent and the decisions of the French clergy. 2.2. The 1983 Canon law. - 3. Secular role of the habit according to La Salle. 3.1. To Christianize what is secular. 3.2. To safeguard against concupiscence. 3.3. A Christianising social role. - 4. A Religious role. 4.1. Initial characteristics. 4.2. According to the Bull of 1725. 4.3. Ulterior evolution. - 5. Lasallian motivations. 5.1. A sign of cohesion and usefulness in school. 5.2. A sanctifying means.

1. LEXICOGRAPHY

1.1. When Furetière wrote in 1690: "Good army officers sleep with their clothes on", he praises their readiness to react rapidly, whilst it is a sense of decency that La Salle wants to preserve when he asks the Brothers to sleep fully clothed when they have only one bed for two persons "whilst travelling" (RC 45). In RD, he adds: "removing only their trousers, their collar, their garters and their shoes" (RD 19). The trousers are made of "sheepskin" (FD 11). The underpants are worn underneath. For lack of a pair of pyjamas, not used in those days, the Brother never goes to bed "without underpants" (RC 44). The shirt is "the first item of clothing worn on the skin" (Furetiere). In cold weather, a waistcoat is worn over the shirt: the Brothers wear one "of serge" in winter and may have another "in cotton" in summer" (FD 11). The shirt is "IN AMANDICES" (FD 12) a word unknown to Furetiere as well as to Richelet and Littre whilst "L'AMANDOURI" is cotton material imported from Alexandria (*Nouveau dictionnaire Larousse de Claude Auge*). To read (AMADIS) instead, which means "a narrow sleeve buttoned at the wrist" which became popular according to Quinault's opera, does not seem appropriate.² With reference to the Bible, Fure-

tiere remarks that "clothes serve to hide one's nudity". He distinguishes between the "long dress", "decent for priests", magistrates, the nobility, "the short dress" used by courtiers and the military, "the ceremonial dress", priestly vestments used in liturgical functions which are different from "the ecclesiastical dress" and "the religious dress", which varies according to the Religious Order one belongs to". To take the Habit, is "to start one's Novitiate".

"The proverb *the dress does not make the monk* means that it is not enough to manifest one's profession exteriorly, it is also necessary to obey the Rules". Its origin predates the *Roman de la Rose* where it is quoted. It derives from the fact that formerly people used to ask themselves "if it was enough to do one's novitiate and wear a religious habit" to be awarded an ecclesiastical benefice such as an abbey. That is "not enough", "one must also be professed" (Art. Moine). To the proverb, St. La Salle prefers the Council of Trent where it was said that "it is not the habit that makes the religious" basing this statement on the Gospel which speaks of "false prophets covered with sheepskin", whilst in reality they were only wolves (MF 169). Even in ordinary life, public opinion is not duped. The poet Regnier has put in verse a proverb according to which "fine clothes

enhance the figure, i.e. they mislead; people got accustomed to consider eccentric "whoever wears always the same clothes", because he does not follow the fashion "lest he be misjudged". That is why De La Salle in his RB, encourages his pupils not to distance themselves from the common fashion (RB 60) whilst, he points out, on his MH, that to have the Brothers wear for a long time the same habit will soon appear "peculiar" as befits religious (MH 27, 33-35, 40).

1.2. Richelet, in his 1710 edition, bears witness to a fairly widespread custom when he quotes the expression: "he went to bed fully dressed". And he explains: "Habit, religious dress, garb which characterises a religious Order and which is given to those who enter Religion". Thus for St. La Salle, to have given the first Brothers a genuine statute regarding their habit signified that they had implicitly agreed to join the religious life (cf. MH). In a supplement, Richelet quotes Corneille:

"Underneath her clothes, she looks young and pretty whilst, in reality, she is anything but that. Her clothes hide what she is. What you see, is not her".

The idea has much in common with that of the Gospel which is commented on in MD 60.1.

1.3. It is in the section entitled CLOTHES that *Le Dictionnaire du Grand Siècle* of Bluche³ deals with clothes. The social role of clothes is important and varied. Clothes correspond to the needs of groups whose cohesion they underline: the Court, the magistrates, the army, artisans, the clergy, Religious, the middle and popular classes... To write that "religious wear mostly a dress made of coarse cloth held around the waist by means of a belt" does not describe properly the Brothers. Having originated in 1517-1609, the word "soutane" refers to the ecclesiastical habit.⁴ That which contributed greatly to the reform of the clergy after the Council of Trent. La Salle's insistence regarding the habit forms part of this "reform movement" as much as his desire to distinguish the Brothers from the priests.

2. CANONICAL DATA

2.1. The purpose of the clerical garb as defined by the Council of Trent is valid for the habit of the Brothers, all things being equal: "Nothing teaches or draws men continually to the practice of piety... than the good example given by those who have consecrated themselves to the service of God... That is why the members of the clergy... must control so well their behaviour that, in their garb, nothing shows that is not serious, reserved, and that reveals an intense love for religion... The holy Council orders that all the wise decisions taken by the Sovereign Pontiffs and the Holy Councils concerning becoming dress worn by ecclesiastics... be in future carried out and that those who transgress them receive the same punishment or even greater according to what the local bishop will decide".⁵ As male congregations made up of non-priests were non-existent in France before the arrival of the Brothers, the "religious Brothers" were incorporated among the "clergy" mentioned in the civil and canonical regulations of the 17th and 18th centuries. Canons 44 and 45 of the 4th Council of Carthage (398), canons 44-45 were quoted: "Let the priests... manifest the excellence of their profession by the modesty of their garb and by refraining from showing off their glamorous vanity."⁶ And that of Milan (1565): "Let there not be in the clerical garb anything that savours of excessive refinement or feigned grubbiness"⁷ Blain points out how St. J.B. De La Salle observed these rules.⁸ The importance of Church-State relations under Louis XIV and in the 18th century was such that numerous decisions of the royal courts of justice, working hand in hand with the episcopal authority, refer to the civil courts members of the clergy and religious guilty of crimes if they were not wearing their distinctive garb when the offence was committed, whilst priority was left to the diocesan authorities in the contrary case or at least they were allowed legal help by an ecclesiastical judge.⁹ When La Salle was accused of embezzlement of money by Abbe Clement's father (1712), from the teachers' seminary at St. Denis entrusted to the Brothers, he could have availed himself of this legislation to request the help of ecclesiastical judges had not his fidelity to Rome, ultramontane and anti-jansenist, put him at an un-

fair disadvantage with Cardinal de Noailles and the Grand-Cantor in charge of the schools of the diocese.

2.2. The 1983 Code of Canon Law published by Vatican Council II does not belittle the importance of a "regular" ecclesiastical or religious garb... It is up to "the Bishops' Conference and legitimate local customs" to legislate about it (Can. 284), but, with regard to Religious, it is "the form prescribed by the proper authority" i.e. by the General Chapters, which will determine "the habit of their Institute" which will be worn "as a mark of their consecration and a witness to their poverty" (Can. 669). In important matters, the lasallian directives keep their general value.

3. A SECULAR ROLE ACCORDING TO LA SALLE

3.1. For La Salle, all the earthly realities, created by God and restored by Jesus Christ, belong to the field of action of any Christian. Whatever is profane and among other things the garb, needs to be Christianised in order to attain its finality. Da, Db, E, RB addressed to the pupils and their parents are a proof of this: to make the sign of the Cross when getting up and on going to bed (Da VII), to pray when dressing (Da 486, Db 267, E 30), to comply with "Christian" rules (RB 35).

More than anybody else, the Brothers should keep God in their thoughts when dressing (R 126, 192).

3.2. The dress is related to concupiscence, we would say to our instincts, to desires which in their inception elude the control of reason and will. It is the shameful consequence of original sin (RB 75). Although "a bare skin" is a simple garb (RB 60), nudity in public is to be condemned (RB 43, 44, 51) as opposed to a sense of modesty (RB 42, 43, Db 100) and to decency which is synonymous with decorum (RB 58), and this applies to the Brothers whose purity must shine forth (R 178, RC 5, 58).

3.3. The choice of clothes is evidence of one's love for poverty or for wealth, luxury or plain cleanliness, for humility or ambitious vanity.

Clothing is Christian to the extent that it is related to one's social condition (RB 60, 62, 65). That is true of the Brothers (MH 3). In this connection, one must remember that the 17th century is not a "society made up of classes" as defined by marxism, but a society made up of "orders" (clergy, nobility, the third estate).¹⁰ The modern principles of equality and fraternity, meaning the suppression of hierarchies built on birth or social condition, are different from those of the 17th century. Most of the Christian rules drawn up in connection with dressing and undressing remain however valid (E 30, E 57, RB 55, 56, 58) provided one does not forget that these acts are often public in the 17th century (the King's rising and going to bed, dormitories...).

4. THE BROTHER'S DRESS, THE "RELIGIOUS" HABIT

4.1. Chronologically, the first lasallian teachers wore "very decent jerkins without any pockets" (MH 14)." In winter, a capote by way of mantle, was worn over the habit (MH 16). It is worn the way peasants wear theirs letting the sleeves flap. Then, that is during the 1684-1685 scholastic year,¹² the short cassock, which La Salle prefers to call the "robe", takes the place of the jerkin worn by seculars. The words "ecclesiastical garb" are advisedly avoided because the Brothers are not members of the clergy and their habit does "not have its shape": this "robe" goes half way down the leg, is button less, and hooked... from the top until half way along the body" then "sewn up to the bottom". The mantle measures one inch more than the robe (MH 11-13). The RD which came later, adds to what we call today "cassock" that it should go down as far as 18 cm. from the floor and the mantle, a kind of horseman's cape with floating sleeves, of the same length. The habit of the teaching Brothers is black, that of the serving Brothers (who do manual work and help the teachers at school) is capuchin brown. The skull cap, meant to protect from the cold, covers the ears. It has a "woollen lining". The hat, worn outside the house, is a three-corned one in common use, this we know from pictorial tradition, but it has broad rims which demean vestimentary co-

quettishness (L 31). The white rabato is shorter than "that of lay people". (MH 5): it is 4 inches long and 3 1/2 inches wide" (RD 12). Black woollen gloves, cloth stockings in summer, woollen in winter, a shirt and a jacket as well as a pair of trousers in sheepskin and serge stockings complete the wardrobe. The shoes are of "coarse" leather. A serge muff replaces the gloves worn in class when the Brother is in his Community where the house is often not heated. Why? In class, fingers need to be nimble to be able to write, and that is not the case in "the house" (RD 11-12). La Salle stresses that in the end by the way it is worn, in spite of the fluctuations which affect fashion, the habit of the Brothers will differ from that of the clergy to avoid any confusion, and that of "seculars" who do not live "in community", so that it will evidently show the "religious" character of those who wear it as a sign of their consecration to God and to the service of the Christian schools.

4.2. Article 18 of the *Bull of Approbation of the Institute* (1725) reads as follows: "The habit of the Brothers should be despicable and conform to evangelical poverty; it should be made of coarse black cloth, going down as far as the heels, be equipped with iron hooks, with a mantle of the same length, a hat, shoddy shoes and stockings which reflect in no way the vanity of the world, just as the Brothers have lived so far and live at present" (literal translation from latin in the 1852 edition of the Rules and Constitutions: same version in 1889). But in 1891, "habits" became "robes", "despicable" disappeared, "coarse cloth" became "common", the "capote" became "manteau", the "shoddy" shoes became "without elegance" and the conclusion is changed into "just as you have lived so far and live at present". The 1927 edition of the Rules makes its own the 1891 version but does away with the latin translation of "Hactenus vixerunt et vivunt et praesenti", no doubt because the compliment of 1725 could not without treason be kept after 1725; a strange way indeed to treat a document which dates back to the Founder! To understand the initial text presupposes that one takes "abject, despicable", to mean a habit which fails to find approval but not that it is shameful, and that "neglige, shoddy" is understood as free from any worldly elegance but

not that it is filthy. It is through these meanings that La Salle will convey the idea that the Brothers are poor... scorned by the worldly and "an object of contempt" like Jesus at his birth (MF 86.2). When Father Helyot will have his *Histoire des Ordres Monastiques, religieux et des congrégations séculières* approved in 1712 — it will be published between 1714 and 1719 with other approvals — he is unaware of the existence of the *Règles Communes* of the FSCs, which remained confidential, and familiar only with the "*Statuts et Règlements*" of Pere Barre. It is of the "Ecoles Chretiennes et charitables de l'Enfant Jésus" that he speaks. However, the illustration which represents the habit of the teachers, who were practically replaced in Rome as in Paris by the Brothers of the Christian Schools from at least 1707, but who are well known to the people, because of their comings and goings (1688 in Paris, 1705 in Rouen), can only show the habit "of the latter which in fact is the same as that described in MH and especially in FD and which was never worn by the disciples of Father Barre."¹⁴ In 1810, soon after the Revolution, the General Chapter will decide that "the robe of the servant Brothers will be the same as that of the Teaching Brothers" (para 2. p. 61 in *Chapitres Generaux*).

4.3. The spread of the Institute across the world led the General Chapter of 1875 to decide that the Superiors could authorise the wearing of "secular clothes" if these became indispensable to go out of the house, but they will have to be black and simple. Later on, according to the countries and the legal situation of the Brothers, as well as the normal customs adopted by the clergy, appropriate alterations adapted to the circumstances were resorted to. The Rule approved by Rome in 1987 says simply: "As a mark of their consecration and a witness to their poverty, the Brothers will wear the robe of their Institute as described in the relative Canonical document". It is an application of Canon 669. And there is this addendum: "The habit of the Brothers is made up of a soutane and white rabat". Following local customs, those who hold authority in the Districts, may issue practical rules regarding its use. These rules have to get the approval of the Superior General".¹⁵

5. LASALLIAN MOTIVATIONS DATING FROM AS FAR BACK AS THE ORIGIN OF THE INSTITUTE WERE OF A RELIGIOUS NATURE

5.1. The habit characterises the clergy and sets it apart from the world. It is needed to establish social equality and the poverty of the members of a community. It enhances the authority of the Brothers in the classroom. It renders visible the Institute. Even in the absence of the vows, it is conducive to religious regularity. It shows the existence of a common spirit not only regarding the lifestyle but the behaviour of those who wear it towards their pupils. It is not advisable for the Brothers to "exercise any ecclesiastical functions" which would make them neglect their duties towards the children in the church" (MH).

5.2. However, "holiness does not consist in wearing a dress but in performing actions". Among the Brothers, "the simple and coarse habit gives an example of piety and modesty which edifies people and commits those who wear it to exercise a certain control over themselves". It is "holy", therefore respectable, for "it is a proof that those" who wear it "have committed themselves to lead a holy life". However, by itself, it does not sanctify for it often serves "to conceal considerable weaknesses". When we substitute "secular clothes" for those of the Brothers, "we must shun the maxims of the world and adopt "a new spirit". La Salle concludes: "Since you wear a habit diffe-

rent from that of world lings, you must be a new man created injustice and holiness, says St. Paul... Your exterior must be saintly... modest... and reserved" (MD 60.2).

¹ FURETIÈRE, *Dictionnaire universel contenant généralement tous les mots français*, La Haye, 1690, art. Habille.

² HATZFELD et DARMESTETER, *Dictionnaire général de la langue française*, Paris, 1888.

³ Under the direction of Francois Bluche, Paris, Fayard, 1990.

⁴ *Ibid.*, art., by Prof. R. Darricau.

⁵ CHANUT, *Le saint Concile de Trente traduit en français*, Paris 1683, Vol. I, 253 quoting session 22 "De la Réformation".

⁶ SERGÉ, *Canon des Conciles et pensées des Pères pour tous les jours de l'année*, Paris 1706, p. 148.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

⁸ BLAIN I. 112, 144, II 397, 398 but he keeps the clerical robe II 393.

⁹ *Mémoires du clergé*, Vol. XIV, Abrégé, Paris, 1771, Column 823-826: the discussions and the principal decisions are dated 1701, 1702, 1709 and the case of the "lay Brother" is compared to that of a member of the clergy; thus the habit expresses the will or the refusal to belong to the clerical or religious state.

¹⁰ Cf Robert MANDROU, *La France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*. Paris P.U.F. 1970, p. 99-105.

¹¹ Furetière 1690 et Richelet 1710 (*Nouveau dictionnaire français*, Genève), who is from Champagne like St. La Salle de scribes the jerkin as a sort of vest reaching almost as far as the knees.

¹² CL 11, Frère MAURICE-AUGUSTE (Alphonse Hermans), *L'Institut des Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes à la recherche de son statut canonique (1679-1725)*, Rome 1962, p. 46.

¹³ Yves POUTET, F.S.C., *Le XVII^e siècle et les origines lasalliennes*, Rennes, 1970, Vol. I, p. 499-500.

¹⁴ CL 11, p. 32.

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, art. 26-26a.

Complementary themes:

Brothers of the Christian Schools; Decorum; Detachment; Humility; Ministry; Mission; Modesty; Poverty; Stability; State; Union; Vocation.

GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Besides the various publications mentioned above, the following are worth consulting: dictionaries of canon law, spirituality, ecclesiastical or religious history. See articles on; "Habit" and "Clothes". See also:

1. HELYOT Hippolyte (in reality Pierre, but he is a religious of the Third Order of St. Francis called Père Hippolyte): *Histoire des Ordres monastiques, religieux, militaires et des congrégations séculières de l'un et de l'autre sexe... Avec des figures qui représentent tous les différents habillements*, 8 vol., Paris, 1714-1719.
2. MIGNE, *Dictionnaire des Ordres religieux*, Paris, 1847-1859, Vol. II. Col. 122-125 does not refer to the FSCs but engraving No. 20 reproduces roughly their habit. It seems more convenient for school use than No. 21 of the Clerks Regular of the Pious Schools about whom La Salle wanted to be informed by Brother Gabriel Drolin then living in Rome.
3. Cf. Y. POUTET, *Les Clercs Réguliers des Ecoles pies et l'origine des Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes*, and Mgr MACCARRONE and A. VAUCHEZ, *Echanges religieux entre la France et l'Italie*, ed. Slatkine, Genève, 1987, p. 301-327.
4. G. COOLEY, *Le Costume ecclésiastique*, in Bull. de la Société académique des antiquaires de la Morinie (St. Omer), 1964, No, 381, p. 274-284.
5. A fine example of life in Champagne and of a dress quite common in the 17th century, in Rene GANDILHON, *La Naissance du champagne*, Hachette 1968, in 4, p. 171.
6. A reprint in colour of the habit of the Brothers according to Hélyot in G. LE BRAS, *Les Ordres religieux*, Vol. II, Paris, Flammarion, 1980, in 4, art. Y. POUTET, *Les Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes*, p. 715.
7. On the habit of St. John Baptist De La Salle, CL 49, J.A. CORNET and E. ROUSSET, *Iconographie de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, Rome, 1989.

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34. BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Summary:

1. A bit of History. - 2. What happened between 1682 and 1686? 2.1. Schoolteachers of our Community. 2.2. Wearing a special dress. 2.3. The change of dress led to change of name. - 3. Brothers of the Christian Schools. 3.1. From a profession often improvised... 3.2. To a ministry one is trained for. 3.3. And which is exercised in a useful and efficient school. 3.4. Where people behave like "disciples of Jesus Christ." - 4. God's work. 4.1. Through the personal commitment of De La Salle. 4.2. As "a poor man among the poor." 4.3. "In order to hold together and by association."

Why and how did De La Salle choose the name BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS? A sequence of events consisting of a succession of commitments will build up the whole itinerary¹ of the Foundation, The name *Brothers of the Christian Schools* describes A COMMUNITY whose traits will appear progressively.

1. A BIT OF HISTORY

De La Salle helped Mr. Nyel and later more and more frequently acted as his substitute with the teachers because "he (Mr. Nyel) had spent all his energies looking for new foundations without trying to consolidate the existing ones".² So much so that at Christmas 1679, La Salle rented a house near his own where the teachers could meet. He then admitted them into his own home for meals; later he received them there the whole day "except during school time"³ and finally on June 24, 1681, he accommodated them there. A year later, on

June 24, 1682,⁴ he went to live with them in a house on the Rue Neuve; there they will observe "a uniform rule covering all the hours of the day".⁵

From June 24, 1682 to June 9, 1686, the actions of La Salle and his companions will constitute the stages of an itinerary which will turn this small group of men into a Community following the pattern of the Religious; thus out of a group of teachers, a Community of Brothers was formed. It was in fact on June 9, 1696, at the end of the first Assembly of the "principal Brothers" that they made their first vows: the vow of obedience.

2. WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN 1682 AND 1686?

- the group of teachers adopts and follows a daily schedule;
- they select the dress they will wear;
- they give themselves a name.

Moreover throughout this structuration process, La Salle takes some important decisions:

- he resigns his canonry, August 1683.
- He distributes his possessions to the poor (Winter 1683/84).
- He shares fully his teachers' life.

These actions are so many commitments; four years during which came into being what De La Salle had written in "Un mémoire écrit de sa main pour apprendre aux Frères par quelles voies la divine Providence avait donné naissance à leur Institut",⁸ namely: "God who directs all things with wisdom and moderation, and who does not force the will of men, wishing to have me take full responsibility for the Schools, did so in a very imperceptible manner and over a long period of time; in such a way that one commitment led to another without my being aware of it".⁹

2.1. "Schoolteachers from our Community"

A first commitment was that of the common life, i.e. "a life controlled by the same set of observances for all".¹⁰ The biographer Blain writes: "At the beginning of 1682, the house of the schoolteachers began to look like a genuine community".¹¹ Bernard, for his part, notes: "It was then that the same exercises as are held today were held for the first time".¹² Whilst Maillefer refers to "new regulations".

So the group gives itself a daily timetable. This will form the first element of a manuscript entitled: "Practice of the daily timetable".¹⁴ Brother Maurice Auguste¹⁵ expresses the hypothesis that "this manuscript dated 1713 probably contains in several of its parts, fragments of a much older text going back to the first years of the Community". In it we find a very detailed timetable of the Daily Exercises of the House, from "the rising at all times at half past four" until the "thirty strokes of the bell" at nine in the evening. Quoting haphazardly, we then come across the Rules for Sundays, for Feast days, for Holy Week, etc...¹⁶ Brother Maurice Auguste shows clearly¹⁷ that these Regulations are now part of the Rule, thus justifying Blain's remarks: "Through practices, he introduced imperceptibly what he wanted to in-

clude permanently in his wise Rules".¹⁸ It is a new "style" of life in common, a manner of life that is going to give rise little by little to a "community spirit". Blain speaks of "a uniform way of living"¹⁹ characterised, on the one hand, by the Rule of Silence (which will always be the object of a Chapter of the Rules) and, on the other, by "togetherness" during exercises of piety, meals, recreation, the rosary when going to and coming back from school, the study of catechism, etc.

One feels like criticising this uniformity; we would find it difficult if not impossible to abide by it; De La Salle desired to ensure cohesion and stability among his teachers. This group finds cohesion and stability in the exercise of its profession as schoolmasters and the practice of a life of prayer. The profession and prayer fill the day. Fidelity to these two activities gives rise to a Community observing the Rule which will become little by little a Community of Communion. "The Brothers will show and will entertain a true community spirit".²⁰ It is this expression "Community Spirit" which must be remembered. When he gets this group of schoolteachers to live side by side, elbow by elbow, La Salle does not aim at creating anonymity; he wants each one to draw, from his contact with others, trust and perseverance. The first text of the 1705 Rule will only mention what was already being practised. "The Brothers will possess nothing they may call their own, everything will be in common even clothes and other items the Brothers will need". Thus, the evangelical option of poverty has been adopted by the group.

Whilst the Community is being set up, La Salle suggests at the appropriate time, the practice of asceticism in matters connected with food. Maillefer tells us: "About this point, he simply accepted what had been done so far. He set up rules for meals and ordered that only ordinary meat of the cheapest type be served".²² He himself sets the example, and at what price!...²³ of the spirit of mortification but, he insisted, "without any compulsion".²⁴ In whatever concerns the Community's food, Blain will refer to "the spirit of poverty and that of penance".

De La Salle wrote, certainly at the end of 1689, beginning 1690,²⁶ what has been called the *Memoire sur l'Habit* to defend the Brothers

against the meddlings of Mr. Baudrand, parish priest of St. Sulpice.²⁷ In its article 2, this Memoire specifies that in this Community "people live by the Rule, depending on each other in everything, without anything being owned in private, and in perfect uniformity". Brother Maurice Auguste underlines the importance of this text when he writes: "This text is in more than one place, a judicious reminder of the conditions in which the Community lived".²⁸

Of course, we are no longer in 1682, but the expression "one lives in it" makes one understand that the events took place years ago... And what is one to think "the Rules"?²⁹ To live "in perfect conformity", there is the daily timetable. But to live "dependently... and without owning anything" requires more than the daily regulation; the latter cannot lead to a choice of life bound by fraternity and obedience. It seems to us therefore that La Salle was able to form a group whose members live as "persons cut off and retired from the world" (Art. 40). There! the word has been uttered. On the other hand, doesn't the type of life lived by this group of persons correspond to the definition of Community given in the 17th century dictionary? "Communaute: (congregatio) persons who have secluded themselves from the world to live together in the fear of God and to ensure better their salvation, abide by a set of rules and wear a special dress".³⁰ That is why Georges Rigault remarks: "If there were yet no "Brothers" in 1682, there is already a Community brought close together in a group through love and obedience, living under the guidance of a priest who holds himself responsible for their souls".³¹ That is what La Salle states when he writes to the Mayor and Councillors of Chateau-Porcien on June 20, 1682: "I would be quite wrong were I not to send you schoolteachers from our Community".³²

2.2. "Wearing a special dress"

According to the biographer Bernard, "what made La Salle make up his mind, were the constant requests of the Brothers to give them a dress which would distinguish them completely from the rest of the people".³³ Maillefer specifies that "the dress was poor and uniform and by its singularity

and simplicity distinguished them from seculars". And he hastens to add: This new style of dress fitted perfectly the modest nature of their employment and, by inspiring respect for their persons it made them behave with more self-control in their actions. "Le Memoire sur l'Habit" goes back over these ideas and supplies an interesting description: "The Community's dress is a kind of cassock which covers the body as far as the middle of the leg. It is button less and is closed by small black hooks from the neck down to the middle of the body, and from there downwards, from one end to the other. The lower part of the sleeves is not folded over the fist and is closed by means of invisible hooks. This dress is called a robe to avoid giving it the same name as that worn by the clergy from which it differs in shape. By way of mantle, they wear a capote with hanging sleeves, without collar or buttons on the front, its sides being held together by a large hook on the inside".³⁵

The *Memoire sur l'Habit* specifies: "This habit has been worn for five years".³⁶ It is therefore during the winter of 1684-1685 that the habit was adopted. For La Salle and his first disciples to wear this "peculiar dress"³⁷ was on the one hand, to wear a dress which was neither secular nor clerical"³⁸ and on the other, "to consider themselves members of a community"³⁹ who are all "lay".⁴⁰ These persons by the nature of their "state" "secluded and retired from the world"⁴¹ live in poverty. That is why La Salle insists on such details as buttons and hooks. Brother Maurice Auguste explains: "Such a stress is nevertheless significant. Ecclesiastical as well as civil fashion multiplied the use of buttons and hooks in those days on the front of the clothes, on the sleeves and on the facings. And these buttons were of necessity the object of great refinement and often of ostentatious luxury: precious metal, mother of pearl, at the very least. Visible hooks could act just as well as a pretext for the use of all sorts of more or less sophisticated ornaments".⁴²

The profession of "one who teaches" renders necessary the use of a practical dress against the cold⁴³ and in the exercise of one's duties; on the other hand, in this connection, Articles 15 and 62 of CL 11, p. 254 are not lacking in a sense of humour!⁴⁴ ... It is important also that this dress distinguishes he who wears it from a schoolteacher

and that it "makes the pupils respect the wearer".⁴⁵ Thus, "this peculiar dress" becomes a visible sign. It enables its wearer to feel that he belongs to a community grouped around La Salle. It enables those who meet him to identify these new schoolmasters of Rheims. It is well known that they hold a gratuitous school in the district, that they accompany the children to Mass on schooldays where they supervise them but refuse to perform any clerical function. It is also known that they teach catechism every day. On Sundays and Feast days, besides the catechism in the morning, they lead the children to High Mass and, in the afternoon, to Vespers in the parish. This "singular habit" was also the visible sign which La Salle himself wished to wear when "he was compelled through a shortage of teachers, to teach school at Saint-Jacques for a fairly long time", as is testified by Bernard.⁴⁶ Maillefer and Blain also stress this event and Blain particularly wishes to bring out the humility of their hero. If one is not forbidden from seeing in this a longing for humiliations, one may also see in it the Founder's participation in school work. From the start, he showed equality with his teachers; on taking the habit, he became one of them. The experiment had lasted long enough⁴⁷ to make him see from the inside what is meant by "to hold schools gratuitously". It is therefore not surprising that he wrote: "Community exercises and the job of teaching engages one fully".⁴⁸ Did he not have in mind this experience when he wrote in some of his meditations that this profession is "holy", it is a "ministry" and even a "holy" ministry in which one plays "the role of guardian angel" whilst accomplishing "God's work" for the benefit of pupils who have become "disciples" whose "heart is to be touched".⁴⁹

Referring to what Bro. Maurice Auguste calls "a first taking of the Habit",⁵⁰ Bro. Yves Poutet writes: "La Salle saw in the wearing of the habit which was neither ecclesiastical nor secular, an excellent means, 1st, to induce young men to join a community which in that way became manifest, and 2nd, to make the Masters conscious of their belonging to an organisation bound by special rules".⁵¹

2.3. The change of Habit brought about a change of name

Biographer Blain is about to regale us with one of these developments of which he held the secret. In spite of its length, it deserves to be read attentively:

"The adoption of the new garb brought about a modification in the Community's name. That of *Brothers* was the one that fitted them best, so they chose it, leaving the name of *schoolmasters* to those who practise this profession for gain. Humility and charity suggested giving up that name: it had not been fitting for men who professed to run schools only so that Jesus Christ might reign in them, and so that they might teach Christian doctrine gratuitously. If the name of *schoolmasters* had been acceptable up to this time in a house where uniformity of lifestyle and equality in all things had not yet bound the subjects together, and where some of them were still vacillating in their vocation, it was no longer proper now that they had joined together to form a single body. Consequently, the name *Brothers* truly belonged to them – a name which nature gives to children who share the same blood and the same father on earth, and which in religion describes those who have the same spirit and the same Father in heaven.

In this way the denomination *Brothers of the Christian and Gratuitous Schools* became henceforth the official name of the sons of De La Salle and, from now on, we shall call them by no other.

This appellation is the correct one, because it includes the definition of their state and indicates the mission proper to their vocation. This name reminds them that the charity which gave birth to their Institute must be its life and soul; that it should preside over all their deliberations and plan all their projects; it should initiate and help to carry them out, control all their activities, and animate all their words and work.

This name teaches them how excellent is the duty they have assumed, the dignity of their state, and the holiness proper to their profession. It tells

them that as Brothers they owe each other mutual proofs of tender but spiritual friendship; and that considering themselves the elder brothers of the children who come to be taught by them, they should exercise this ministry of charity with truly loving hearts".⁵²

"The name 'schoolmasters' was given up". Their garb "neither ecclesiastical nor secular" placed the people who wore it in a special category. The name "Brothers" will establish clearly the identity of those who will be called by that name. The 17th century vocabulary reserved the word "Brother" for members of Religious Orders who were not priests.⁵³ La Salle is willing to abide by this system typical of an extremely hierarchical society. This group of men will become a community of consecrated non-priests. A schoolmaster fulfils an employment for which he draws a salary. The Brother exercises his profession which is a ministry lived for the poor and in poverty. The two roles cannot be confused: La Salle does not mix them up. He is already convinced and he will make this clear later on in this article of the Rule: "Those who belong to this Institute will call themselves Brothers and they will not allow anyone to call them by any other name";⁵⁴ "they will vow to keep schools gratuitously".⁵⁵ They will be the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Neither ecclesiastical nor secular but "retired from the world"⁵⁶ will be the status wanted for them by La Salle and for this he will fight,⁵⁷ he will explain it to them and make them live it.

Blain stresses very strongly that "this designation is justified". He explains all its relative aspects in detail. "Brothers to each other" and "elder Brothers" for their pupils. The Brother is at the same time a community man and a school teacher: he is a Brother of the Christian Schools. **It** is worth noting also that the taking of the habit was later to be accompanied by the change of the family name. This is what one reads in the Catalogue of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: "Brother Antoine, family name Jean Partois, entered the Institute in September 1686."⁵⁸ It is a break with the secular state, a sort of death to the world. François Blein, Charles Frappet become Br. Ambroise and Br. Thomas, and it is by these names that they will be called in Community, in school, in the district or the parish.

3. BROTHER OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

3.1. "of a profession often improvised"

Blain points out that "this name: Brother of the Christian Schools indicates the duties of their vocation".⁶⁰ La Salle is involved with and by M. Nyel in the schools for boys of the city of Rheims. Very quickly, he becomes aware that it is not without reason that the image of the schoolmaster is often negative. It is worth recalling that the 17th century historians have often underlined as did Jean de Viguierie, that "the teacher has other obligations to fulfil besides teaching... He must also sing in church and teach handwriting... In turn: teacher of youth, mayor's secretary, sacristan".⁶¹ As for Pierre Giolitto, he calls the schoolteacher, "the assistant or better the factotum of the parish priest and so that the reader understands perfectly what it is all about, this historian lists the activities as varied as they are numerous which are his lot. And as if that were not enough, he specifies that "the master in order to add somewhat to the monthly salary, does a variety of jobs".⁶² La Salle wanted his men to be first and foremost and at all times, full-time teachers. It is therefore not surprising to find under his pen in the *Memoire sur l'Habit*: "Community exercises and school duties require total dedication".⁶³ And "it seems out of place to give a purely clerical habit to lay people who do not possess and cannot exercise any function, or to wear the surplice in church".⁶⁴ Their "peculiar habit" makes of them members of a "Community of Brothers of the Christian Schools". A Community where "people are employed to hold school gratuitously in the towns only".⁶⁵ The profession of schoolmaster engages full-time.

3.2. To a Ministry for which one is trained

The teacher's image is often negative because of a lack of formation, and sometimes even of any formation. The image is all the more negative if one is to believe La Salle's words,⁶⁶ that they lack not only "knowledge" but skill and "self-knowledge". It is therefore right to help them acquire this knowledge; aware of M. Nyel's draw-

backs, Blain faces La Salle with the dilemma: "He absolutely needs to get closer to them and get them closer to him".⁶⁷ The good name which the Christian Schools secure in a very short time shows eloquently to what extent the word and example of La Salle had been convincing and Community life had borne its fruit.

Formation will be from the start of his Institute, the chief preoccupation of the Founder. The *Memoire sur l'Habit* refers to the teachers for the countryside whom the Community is trying to train for their employment;⁶⁸ youngsters who join the Community and "who are trained to meditate and to perform the other exercises of piety, who are taught all the parts of the catechism and to read and write perfectly".⁶⁹ The Brother must acquire much "knowledge" but especially that of the Catechism. In particular he must acquire skill in reading, in writing and even more learn "how to behave" so that through his conduct, he may give his pupils good example, and be their model.⁷⁰ In the spirit of La Salle, "to give a Christian education to the children and teach them how to live well"⁷¹ is to exercise a true ministry. That demands preparation.

3.3. And which is exercised in a useful and efficient school

De La Salle realised very soon that the existing schools were not suitable for the needs of the children of the poor. Study sessions were too long and too remote from the daily preoccupations of manual workers. Moreover, they are paying schools, and when they are gratuitous, segregation sets in, the rich on one side, the poor on the other... and sometimes they are left out; this encourages them to miss school in a disastrous manner.⁷² The school La Salle has in mind is open to all, strong or weak, gratuitous for all, poor or rich; a school that is useful and efficient, which forms simultaneously men and Christians. For that purpose, the simultaneous method will be adopted, repeated checks on what has been learnt, the teaching of basic elements: reading, writing and arithmetic, starting with the teaching of reading in French. An innovation which the Founder had often to justify. He even did it in a text written for his friend Mgr. Godet Desmarests, bishop

of Chartres, of which here is an extract: "When French youngsters are being taught to read through French, they know at least how to read when they leave the schools; knowing how to read well, they can go on teaching themselves the Christian doctrine, they can learn it in the printed Catechisms, they can sanctify Sundays and feast days reading good books and through prayers said in French... Finally it is useless to spend a long time teaching to read Latin well to persons who will never use it".⁷³ To form man, through the acquisition of practical skills. To form the Christian: give him the possibility to fulfil "his two duties towards God which are to know him and love him" and, teach him to live "as a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ".⁷⁴

3.4. A school where people behave as disciples of Jesus Christ

Such a school has to be the CHRISTIAN SCHOOL. Is that a new name? More than that. Rather La Salle's will is to distance himself from what already exists. He is aiming at an educational project integrating human and Christian formation. Blain puts that very clearly: "In relation to the children, he has not separated their instruction from their education, nor piety from knowledge. He thought he would find both in teachers who were pious and capable".⁷⁵ In several of his Meditations, La Salle will mention again education and instruction. Here is a very evocative passage in which he reminds the Brothers "to show a particular esteem for the instruction and the Christian education of children because it is a means to make them become true children of God and citizens of heaven".⁷⁶ It becomes evident that the child is at the very centre of the educational system. Why? because he is destined to be saved through Jesus Christ. A salvation which he will achieve only if he behaves as "a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ". And he will learn to behave in this way through instruction and the example given him by his master.

The school is going to become the place where doctrine is learnt. About 4 hours and a half are dedicated to Catechism every week. Every day, a reflection broaches the subject; whilst during the evening examination of conscience the duties of

the Christian are recalled. The school is about to become also the place where religion is expressed through gestures: the sign of the cross, bowing in front of the crucifix, the recitation of the rosary, the reminder of the presence of God, prayers... One has only to leaf through the *Conduite des Ecoles*.⁷⁷ And as if that were not enough, it is to be noted that the master just as much as the pupils is invited to perform these practices. For example, when reference is made to the "prayers to be said at every hour of the day, these will help the teachers to renew their control over themselves and recall the presence of God, and the pupils to get them used to think of God from time to time during the day and be ready to offer him all their actions".⁷⁸

The school will also endeavour to fit its activities into those organised by the local Church. The pupils, led by the masters, will take part each day in the Mass and on Sunday in the Mass and Vespers in the parish.

The school La Salle has in mind is that in which "teaching is gratuitous and given for the glory of God".⁷⁹ And in the same Meditation, he reminds the Brothers that he can say with St. Paul: "The object of my consolation is to teach the Gospel free of charge, without those hearing it having to spend any money". Gratuity becomes a gospel witness. Just as much as the manner in which corrections are meted out; the *Conduite des Ecoles* requires that on those occasions, «Firmness and kindness go hand in hand".⁸⁰ As for teacher-pupil relationships, the Rule specifies that the Brothers will "love all their pupils tenderly"⁸¹ and in several Meditations, the Brothers are asked to remember that they have to "touch the hearts of their pupils";⁸² an expression which they would find in the *Conduite des Ecoles*.⁸³ In this pedagogical guide, they would also be asked "to dedicate themselves completely to their pupils, to win them all to Jesus Christ".⁸⁴

The pupil will not only be the spectator and the beneficiary of this evangelical apostolate; he will be invited to live such values as: sharing, mutual help, solidarity service to others... It is thus that the *Conduite des Ecoles* referring to the changes between lessons, specifies that "several pupils who are better readers must be left in class to help the others and serve as tutors".⁸⁵ The Master must

act in such a way that "these pupils feel happy to continue listening to the lesson".⁸⁶ If during a lesson, a boy does not know a letter, the teacher will ask another pupil who knows it well to say it".⁸⁷ Moreover, as there are "various jobs that the teacher cannot and must not do himself officials will be appointed such as:

A pupil who recites the prayers, one who carries the rosary beads, the bell ringer, the holder of the school key!... All the pupils "bring their lunch with them every day". They will be taught to eat their meal in a polite way and to pray God before and after the meal". But it is also so that the children give away "the bread left over to have it distributed to the poor".⁸⁸

The Brother chosen to "behave as a disciple of Jesus Christ"⁸⁹ is also expected to "make of his pupils true disciples of Jesus Christ".⁹⁰ The school La Salle has in mind is a school which aims at evangelisation. Let us read Blain again: "The schools are like churches for children, since they adore God there and address their prayers to him; there, they sing his praises, and there they learn to love and serve him: they are taught to practise virtue, shun vice, to practise Christian maxims. They are taught to pray God, to make good confessions, to receive communion worthily, etc...".⁹¹

4. GOD'S OWN WORK

4.1. through the personal involvement of De La Salle

Bernard and Blain attribute this prayer to John Baptist De La Salle: "My God, I don't know if I should set up or not set up (the Institute). To set up a Community or to know how to go about it is not my responsibility... It is up to you, Lord, to know how, and to do it in the manner most agreeable to you. I do not dare to found, because I do not know what your will is, and I will not do any good if I founded communities. If you set them up, they will be well founded, they will not need any (human) foundation. I beg of you, o my God, to let me know your will in this matter".⁹² As a deeply spiritual man, he searched his soul. Even more, he would do everything to find out the will

of God. Once he has found it, thanks to those whose advice he seeks, he obstinately commits himself to what he knows to be "the marvellous ways of Divine Providence" in his regard.⁹³

That is how he will give up his canonry; the prayers which the canons recite take up much time⁹⁴ and this is therefore incompatible with his community responsibilities. On the other hand, his first disciples told him very bluntly that his inheritance and his canonry make of him "a well-to-do gentleman... sheltered from misery".⁹⁵ He understands that abandonment to Providence is preached better by example than by beautiful words. He undertakes to take the necessary steps; the procedure will be long but will be crowned with success on August 16, 1683.

Wouldn't his inheritance be useful to finance the Schools? Father Barre whom he consulted answered that "having set up the schools on Providence as their foundation",⁹⁶ he did not need to worry about money. The very severe winter of 1683-1684 couldn't have come at a more opportune time, for in the course of an orderly distribution⁹⁷ "he gave away everything without keeping anything for himself,⁹⁸ and "he became by choice what they (his masters) were through sheer necessity".⁹⁹

4.2. as a "poor man among the poor"

A group of men has, thanks to a daily schedule of work, accepted to lead a community life, under the guidance of a priest. The exercises of piety to which were added the duties of the teacher, the exhortations of their mentor, made these men realise that they were taking part in a very special event. They could also see the evangelical gestures accomplished by La Salle who had become in their midst "a poor man among poor men".¹⁰⁰ Hence they could decide on the choice of a habit which besides giving them an unmistakable identity proved that they were poor. Because all along this process, their life in common has become that of a fraternity, they adopt the name "Brothers of the Christian Schools".¹⁰¹ The mission given to this Community is to impart a Christian education through instruction given in schools. In these schools, the teachers will be called Brothers by

their pupils. From school teachers, they have become Brothers of the Christian Schools.

In the Rules which I have imposed on myself, which Bro. Yves Poutet thinks could date back to the first semester of 1686,¹⁰² La Salle can write: "I will always consider whatever concerns my salvation and the foundation and management of our Community as God's own work".¹⁰³ Bro. Miguel Campos quite rightly points out: "Through faith, La Salle understands that the task connected with the Society of the Christian Schools and that of his salvation are the work of God".¹⁰⁴ If La Salle adds: "That is why I will leave all the care to him",¹⁰⁵ this abandonment is far from passive; it is an act of confidence in God and of availability. His prayer: "My God, I do not know..." finds here its full meaning. Each Brother is also invited to take part in "God's work" that is to work at his own salvation and the salvation of souls through his apostolate in the classroom. "Do not make any difference between what concerns directly your employment, your salvation and your perfection. Rest assured that you will never save your soul better and will never acquire as much perfection as by fulfilling well your duties of state; provided you do so because God ordered it".¹⁰⁶

4.3. "to keep together and by association"

This whole structuring process reached its climax on June 9, 1686, feast of the Holy Trinity, during which La Salle and the "principal Brothers"¹⁰⁸ bound themselves by a temporary vow of obedience: a religious act. The decision was reached at the Assembly which was held in Rheims. Later in 1694, there would be another Assembly, that of "the twelve senior Brothers".¹⁰⁹ These Religious will vow "to hold together and by association" gratuitous schools".¹¹⁰ And on the feast of the Holy Trinity, each of the Brothers will say: "I promise and vow obedience, not only to the body of this Society but to its Superiors, which vows of association as well as stability in the said Society, and of obedience, I promise to keep inviolably all my life time".¹¹¹ This June 6, 1694, marks the culmination of this itinerary which, from 1682 to 1686, had seen the birth of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

¹ The word belongs to Fr. Miguel Campos, CL 45.
² Maillefer, ms. Reims CL 6, p. 39. The remark deserved to be more subtle.
³ Idem, p. 41.
⁴ On the date June 24 cf. Maurice Auguste *The date June 24 and the origins of the Institute of the BCS*, Bulletin FEC, Jan. 1959, No. 156, pp. 27-35.
⁵ Maillefer, CL 6, p. 45.
⁶ Fr. Maurice AUGUSTE, *Lasalliana*, card 08.A.07. In an article: *At Rheims in 1686: a first essay on the General Chapter*. He bears out the date June 9, 1686.
⁷ On the meaning of "temporary" cf. CL 2, pp. 35 etc.
⁸ Blain, CL 7, p. 167. This Memoir has been called "Le Memoire des Commencements".
⁹ Blain, CL 7, p. 169.
¹⁰ Definition given by Fr. Maurice Auguste in his conferences to the CIL 82. "To live in Community in 17th Century France".
¹¹ Blain, CL 7, p. 179.
¹² Bernard, CL 4, p. 47.
¹⁵ Maillefer, CL 6, p. 53.
¹⁴ Set of Rules presented in Cl 25, under the initials RC. Read also in CL 11, p. 45 a commentary by Fr. Maurice Auguste.
¹⁵ Conference to CIL 82.
^{16 and 17} CL 25, pp. 95 etc.
¹⁸ CL 7, p. 234.
¹⁹ CL 7, p. 234.
²⁰ Chapter 3 of the Rule; CL 25, p. 21.
²¹ CL 25, p. 70.
²² CL 6, p. 73.
²³ Cf. CL 4, p. 71; or CL 6, p. 75; or CL 7, p. 226-227.
²⁴ CL 6, p. 75.
²⁵ CL 7, p. 234.
²⁶ CL 11, p. 47.
²⁷ The complete text of the *Memoire sur l'Habit* is to be found in CL 11, p. 339-354. Read also p. 51 notes 4 and 5 on the use of the word "Community". The enumeration is borrowed from CL 11. The manuscript of this Memoir is kept in the Archives of the Mother House in Rome. This document will be quoted several times. The date when it was written is not within the period that concerns us. But it is a transcription in writing of facts that really took place; it may be considered a testimony to these facts.
²⁸ Fr. Maurice AUGUSTE CL 11, p. 51.
²⁹ The word "Rules" is to be found again in Art. 21, 36, 41; in 29, the word is "regularity".
³⁰ *Nouveau Dictionnaire Francais*, 1709, Pierre RICHELET.
³¹ Georges RIGAULT, *Histoire Générale de l'Institut*, Tome 1, p. 148.
³² *Lettres de St. J.B. De La Salle, edition critique*; Fr. Felix Paul, Lettre 111, p. 367.
³³ CL 4, ms. Reims p. 69.
³⁴ CL 6, p. 53.
³⁵ CL 11, p. 350, Art. 11, 12, 13.
³⁶ CL 11, p. 351, Art. 28.
³⁷ In this sense only: "alone, unique" according to the meaning of the 17th c. This word is repeated.
³⁸ CL 11, p. 351, Art. 18.
³⁹ CL 11, p. 352, Art. 42.
⁴⁰ CL 11, p. 350, Art. 9.
⁴¹ CL 11, p. 352 Art. 40. About "poverty" see also Blain CL 7, p. 241.
⁴² Fr. Maurice AUGUSTE: *Lasalliana* 04.A.20, *A Reims au cours de l'hiver 1684-85, une première "prise" d'habit*.

⁴³ The Casaque, from a mantle worn in the street, becomes a dressing gown to be worn in class and in the community house in winter; cf. Art. 15.

⁴⁴ CL 11, p. 354. "They would be unable to move about among the boys wearing that garb, or line them up and keep them in order when they take them to church or when they are there". Art. 15. "It has been noted that, with that garb on, one could knock down most of the small children from one side to the other when trying to line them up". Art. 62.

⁴⁵ CL 11, p. 351, Art. 29.

⁴⁶ CL 4, p. 66.

⁴⁷ Bernard says: "A rather long period of time" CL 4, p. 66. Blain writes: "during several months" CL 7, p. 244. To which may be added that St. La Salle also taught "in Paris and elsewhere". CL 4, p. 67.

⁴⁸ CL 11, p. 350, Art. 10.

⁴⁹ The quotations are made in this order: MD 61.1; MR 196.3; MR 197.3; MR 197-198; MD 59.3; MR 196; MR 204.2.

⁵⁰ Expression drawn from the title written on filing card 04.AA.20 of *Lasalliana*.

⁵¹ Yves POUTET, *The 17th century and lasallian origins*, Vol. 1, p. 733.

⁵² CL 7, pp. 240-241. Read also MD 60.1 what La Salle says on the Dress.

⁵³ *Nouveau Dictionnaire Français*; Pierre RICHELET; 1709.

⁵⁴ CL25, p. 16 RC Art. 1.

⁵⁵ Idem.

⁵⁶ This expression recurs in several meditations of St. La Salle. Cf. for example MD 17.2; 40.1; 77.1; MF 144.1.

⁵⁷ Remember the *Mémoire sur l'habit*.

⁵⁸ About this Catalogue; cf. CL 3. The remark 6, p. 24 gives the origin of the Catalogue.

⁵⁹ Names mentioned in CL 3, pp. 32-33.

⁶⁰ CL7, p. 241.

⁶¹ Jean DE VIGUERIE; *L'Institution des Enfants. L'éducation en France, 16^e-18^e s.* (Calmann Levy) p. 130.

⁶² Pierre GIOLITTO; *Abécédaire et Férule. Maîtres et Ecoles de Charlemagne à Jules Ferry*. (Imago 1986), p. 133-135.

^{63 and 64} CL 11, p. 350, Art. 10; p. 353, Art. 47.

⁶⁵ Expressions quoted from *Mémoire sur l'habit* CL 11, p. 349 Art. 2 and 3.

⁶⁶ CL 11, p. 350 Art. 9; the *Mémoire sur l'habit* refers to the Masters as "without knowledge" (i.e. not members of the clergy) and intellectually mediocre" and Art. 36 "most of them are rough, ignorant and without education". In CL 7, p. 169, the words of St. La Salle: "Quite naturally, I used to rate below the rank of my valet, those whom I was compelled — especially at the beginning — to employ in the schools; The mere thought that I would have to share their living would have been unbearable to me".

⁶⁷ Blain; CL 7, p. 170.

⁶⁸ Yves POUTET: Filing Card 03.A.15 *Lasalliana*. "Demia in a printed notice, and in a personal unpublished diary (soon to be published) recalled the example given in Rheims before 1680 by the Founder of the FSC... perhaps even as early as 1686". See: Demia: 1637-1689, Priest of Lyons.

⁶⁹ CL 11, p. 349 Art. 4 and 7.

⁷⁰ "Example and model" are often repeated in the Meditations of St. De La Salle; for example: "Teach them by your example" MF 153.3. "So that you may be models for those whom you are to teach" MF 132.1.

⁷¹ Rule of 1705; CL 25, p. 16 RC 3.

⁷² In the *Conduits des Écoles*, Chapter VI is entitled: "On

absenteeism"; Section III tackles the "causes of absences". That helps us to understand the idea the poor had of school in the 17th century. This text is all the more interesting in that it suggests "solutions" to absenteeism. CL 24, pp. 180-196.

⁷³ CL 7, pp. 375-376 or CL 10, pp. 111-112. This Memoir contains ten reasons; the quotation borrowed from the 9th and 10th. The Chartres School was opened on Oct. 1699; that is much later than the period under discussion. But the reasons given by De La Salle to the Bishop of Chartres were not improvised; they were the fruit of experience, of "the tradition established in the Christian Schools" as Blain emphasizes.

⁷⁴ Expressions used in the *Devoirs d'un Chretien*, CL 21, p. 7.

⁷⁵ CL 8, p. 359.

⁷⁶ MR 199.3.

⁷⁷ The *Conduite des Ecoles*: a pedagogical manual. The Preface gives this introduction: "The Conduite has been collected and put in order by Mr. De La Salle only after a very large number of discussions held between him and the most senior Brothers and those most able to teach and following an experience of several years". CL 24.

⁷⁸ CL 24, Chap. VII, p. 76.

⁷⁹ MR 191.1.

⁸⁰ CL 24, p. 140.

⁸¹ CL 25, p. 36 No. 13.

⁸² For example in MD 57.2; MF 2; MF 81.2; 129.1; 148.3...

⁸³ CL 24, p. 46.

⁸⁴ CL 24, p. 22.

⁸⁵ CL 24, p. 22.

⁸⁶ CL 24, p. 23.

⁸⁷ CL 24, p. 25.

⁸⁸ CL 24, p. 7 and 8.

⁸⁹ MD 44.1.

⁹⁰ MF 116.2.

⁹¹ CL 7, p. 36.

⁹² CL 4, p. 59. Compare with Blain's version. CL 7, p. 128; a very similar version.

⁹³ It is a very fine expression used by Br. Bernard as a title to his biography of St. La Salle. Cf. CL 4.

⁹⁴ "A Canonry which compelled him to attend to choir duties five or six hours a day" thus expresses himself Br. Bernard; CL 4, p. 48.

⁹⁵ These expressions are quoted from Maillefer. CL 6, p. 67.

⁹⁶

⁹⁷ Blain (CL 7, p. 220) supplies details of this distribution which was made to three categories of poor: school children; the poor who were too shy to beg and had to be looked for, and the poor gathered in the house.

⁹⁸ An expression used by Maillefer. CL 6, p. 67.

⁹⁹ An expression used by Blain: CL 7, p. 188.

¹⁰⁰ An expression we owe to Blain; CL 7, p. 215.

¹⁰¹ In the *Memoire sur l'Habit*; CL 11, p. 349 Art. 1.

¹⁰² Yves POUTET, publication already mentioned p. 745 remark 49.

¹⁰³ Blain, CL 8, pp. 318-319; cf. also CL 4, p. 255.

¹⁰⁴ CL 45, p. 256 "Evangelical itinerary".

¹⁰⁵ Continuation of Art. 8 of the "Rules which I imposed on myself CL 8, p. 318.

¹⁰⁶ CL 15, p. 184 IV. "Collection of various small treatises".

¹⁰⁷ According to the chronology established by Bro. Maurice Auguste; Lasalliana, filing card 08.0.07.

¹⁰⁸ According to Br. Maurice Auguste, "Principal" includes a representative of 5 or 6 houses of the Society plus several Brothers chosen by St. La Salle; very probably fewer than 12 Brothers. Cf. Lasalliana card 08.0.07.

¹⁰⁹ Expression used by Blain; CL 7, p. 343.

^{110 and 111} according to the Formula of Vows CL2, p. 42.

Complementary themes

Association; Catechism; Child-Pupil-Disciple; Correction; Disciples; Education-To bring up; Example-Edification; Exercises; Formation; God's work; Goodness-Tenderness; Guardian Angels; Heart-To Touch Hearts; Instruction; Ministry; Reflection; Rule-Regularity; Salvation; Silence; Spirit of the world; State; Vows.

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35. THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER

Summary:

1. The Christian teacher in the 17th century. - 2. The relationship between De La Salle and his teachers. - 3. The Lasallian vision of the teacher.

1. THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER IN THE 17th CENTURY

In the 17th Century various names were used to designate the person who exercised the teaching function. Among them were "School Master", "School teacher" and, the most frequent, "teacher". It appears that the designation "Christian teacher" was not among those used. It does not appear in Bathencourt's "The Parish School" nor was it used by Demia, by Chenneviere nor by Felix Vialard de Herse. Neither is it found in the "Collection of the Minutes of the French Clergy" nor in the "Essay on a Christian School" and neither De La Salle nor his biographers make use of it. At sight this seems strange in a century profoundly influenced by Christianity but, on deeper reflection, it is logical since practically all the French teachers of this century were Christian so that to add this adjective to the name was to create a redundant addition.

In fact there were many ecclesiastics among those who were dedicated to teaching in schools and throughout the century the number of religious who became involved in teaching increased. Those lay people who earned their living through this occupation were given the task by the Church which dominated and controlled teaching especially in the countryside. The Parish Priest and the

Bishop gave the teacher permission to teach — a permission which normally had to be renewed annually — on condition that he observed diocesan rules and statutes which regulated teaching. In Paris this permission, and its renewal, was granted by the "Grand Chantre" who was a kind of Director of Primary teaching appointed by ecclesiastical authorities.

While the "evaluation" of the teacher spoke, at times, of his competence and of his attitude towards the pupils and towards the local community, the focus was centred especially on his religious suitability and on his moral qualities. When considering a candidate the ecclesiastical authorities considered, above all, his "Catholicism", orthodox doctrine, good living and irreproachable habits.¹ In the school where such teachers taught the aim of the instruction was eminently Christian - the learning of the religious doctrine and a way of life in conformity with the Catholic or Protestant faith. In the same way, the contents and the practices of the teaching were markedly religious.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DE LA SALLE AND HIS TEACHERS

The relationship which De La Salle had with his teachers was a relationship which evolved over

a period of time (MC cf. B1 167, 169; Bd 30, 34, 37, 39, 40). Firstly, with regard to the concept -at the beginning, he did not think much of the type of person who presented himself to take charge of the classes, considering them as lower than his valet. However, later he was to develop a very high concept both of their social function and of their religious mission. Secondly, with regard to his relationship with them, from a "purely exterior direction" of the teachers he moved to a complete involvement with those whom God had associated with him to work in the same mission (B2, 388; Testament). From being a well-endowed and willingly-disposed person who cared for and helped, "out of pure charity", those who were in need, he became associated and committed with them in everything and for life (B1 313). He began working/or them, being concerned for their subsistence and ensuring that they exercised their employment with piety and dedication. The following stage was to move progressively to live *with* them, initially by having them lodge near to his residence, having them spend part of the day in his own house and then, finally, to have them stay in his house. The process culminated when De La Salle, having renounced his canonry and disposed of his goods, came to live in the same way *as*, them, experiencing what they experienced and exercising the same work which they undertook (Bd 66) — in a word "being the same as them in everything" (B2 355). Having undertaken a physical, cultural and social exodus his family came to consist of "poor children and the teachers destined to instruct them" (B2 371).

However, it was not easy to undertake such a change (B1 169; B2 356, 357, 364; Bd 30, 38) for, as he was to later admit, if he had known from the beginning the sacrifices which were to be demanded he would not have had the courage to take the steps which he undertook in giving himself to the teachers and to the schools and, in fact, the very thought would have been intolerable for him. Educated in a "good" environment and used to social contact with people of the world and of the Church, it was only with much sacrifice and repugnance and with the effort of much renunciation that he became used to the meals and the manners of these "simple souls", "uneducated" "Mr. Nobodies". Without being able to foresee

the future, he gave himself to prayer and reflection and sought the advice of wise and enlightened people in the ways of God. Allowing himself to be led "from one commitment to another" he ended up by seeing clearly that his particular vocation was to commit himself to the schools and to the teachers, a vocation which he accepted with all its consequences. The consequences were that, over forty years, he was to be a tender father, a faithful and sincere friend, a vigilant, zealous and charitable pastor, a confessor and respected spiritual director, a skilful and experienced doctor and a teacher (B1 326; B2 367, 372) — in other words, a formator of his teachers as human beings and as religious and professional people.

He was primarily concerned for them (Bd 81; B2 363). To lead them to the perfection of their state and of their employment was the great objective of his zeal. He dedicated himself to sanctify others to the extent that they themselves were holy..." (B2 313, 336, 356, 364, 367). His love for them was tender and manly and he showed himself to be good-natured with them without, however, tolerating, for example, the performance of their duties out of mere compliance (B2 367, 375-376).

He frequently visited the schools (B1 315; B2 359, 367) and during these visits he reviewed both the progress of the teachers and of the work observing how the teachers taught, how they conducted themselves with the pupils as well as seeing whether they observed the norms established for maintaining discipline. Similarly, he was concerned that they were not exhausted by their ministry and he also indicated the faults which they committed in its exercise. The result of his presence was to renew and encourage them in their work. Another way of communicating with them was through his letters which are full of congratulations, warning and directions so that his disciples would be faithful and exemplary in carrying out their educational work.

He made himself their disciple — "he was more their disciple than they his", as Blain remarked — listening to their judgments and to their just and, at times, agonized concerns (B1 437; B2 37). He consulted them in "a consistent and habitual way" (B1 340), listened to their opinions, gathered their votes and accepted the voice of the

majority (B2 389). He gave them responsibilities (Bd 84, 85; B1 356) and allowed them to participate, through assemblies and interchanges, in the shaping of his society, in the establishment of community and pedagogical practices and in the acceptance of new works (B1 232-233; CE Preface p. 1; B1 370). It is also possible that if, at times, he left them alone, he did so purposely (B2 108) to accustom them to cope without him, helping them to mature and to direct themselves, to take the entire direction and destiny of his new Institute in their own hands. In consequence of this, he renounced his own benefits and desires which had been lovingly nurtured (Bd 48, 49, 57).

Associated in the interests of the "children which the heavens had given him", he was delighted with the zeal for perfection manifested by his disciples and for the progress which they made (B1 236; B2 365, 369). He suffered as a result of the objections and reproaches which were made against them as well as through the persecutions of which they were victims (Bd 42, 82, 83) and he went to court with them to defend them against their accusers (B1 362). It is true, too, that he had to live with their weaknesses and that some of them caused him bitter pains (B2 386-387; Bd 18-19) while others disappointed him in not responding to the confidence he had placed in them (B1 215, 311-312, 343, 356, 357, 435) or made him suffer through their imprudence, disobedience and treachery (B2 361). However, these sorrows caused by the few were the exception and were more than compensated by the attention, tenderness, attachment and confidence of the others (B2 386). They admired him (B2 164) and responded to him as sons to a father and as disciples to a master (B1 412). They defended him and wanted him as their superior (B1 419; B2 118). For them he was neither an imposed authority nor a born superior -he was an elected and re-elected superior as long as age and health permitted it and until his arguments made them accept the election of his successor (B1 349; B2 135). He had captivated them in such a way that their hearts were united to his; "... Never was there more sincere or generous attachment than that of these good sons of a good father..." (B1 442, 443).

3. THE LASALLIAN VISION OF THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER

During the Ancien Regime in France the position of teacher was frequently considered as the occupation of those who could find no other profession.² De La Salle realistically demonstrated to his disciples how their work was "... honoured and esteemed only by those who possessed the spirit of Christianity..." (MF 113,1) — and he possessed it. Consequently, he was to form himself and then to succeed in transmitting to his disciples a very elevated concept of the function of the Christian teacher. At the same time he was aware that the honour which was involved in Christian teaching also carried responsibilities and that it called for very demanding commitments. He was to make them aware of this, too — the Christian teacher must consider himself honoured in having been called to the ministry (MF 79,3) and, in response, he must honour his ministry and make himself worthy of it (MR 199,3; MF 102,3).

1. De La Salle expressed the particular vision which he had of the Christian teacher by means of similes and through a series of relationships which were established between the teacher and God, Jesus Christ, figures in salvation history, and with children. With regard to God, the Christian teacher is the cultivator of his fields, the labourer in his work, the administrator of his deposit, the sacrament of his love and action. Between God and man, the teacher is a visible angel and a providential mediator. With regard to Jesus Christ, the Christian teacher is his successor in the ministry (MF 138,3). Like Jesus he is the saviour of the poor (MF 86,3: 87,2) as well as a good shepherd besides being an architect of the body of Christ. As with those figures who contributed to salvation history, the Christian teacher is a prophet, miracle-worker, apostle and bishop. With children he is a father and a guardian. In summary, the Christian teacher is a person honoured and blessed by God.

A. Children are like young plants — They are the field of which God is the *farmer* and the

teacher is called by the Lord of the vineyard and of the harvest to work in his field and to collaborate in the ploughing and the harvesting of the Lord (MR 193,3; 201,1; 205,1; 207,3; MD 67,3).

B. The Christian educator is God's *labourer* employed by the Lord and by the Church, hired by Jesus Christ to do his work which is: to devote himself to the Christian school, to take great care of the souls of his disciples, to instruct and educate them in piety, to announce the Good News of the Kingdom, to reprimand and correct their vices and to lead them all in the way of salvation (MD 37,1; 44,2; 56,1; 59,3; 61,3; 67,1.3).

C. Those who educate in justice are honored with the glorious title of "*ministers* of God and dispensers of his mysteries", ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ and of the Church in spreading the fragrance of heavenly teaching throughout the world with a view to the salvation of man (MD 3,2; 58,3; MF 94,3; 146,3; 189,3; MR 193,1.3; 195,2; 199,2; 201,2).

D. God has entrusted a precious treasure to his ministers and ambassadors in their relationship with children — they are thus the *administrators* of the deposit of faith which has to be transmitted and developed in the Christian education of those who have been entrusted to their care (MD 61,1).

E. A *sacrament* is an outward sign of the efficacious action of God in the world and among people. According to De La Salle, this is precisely what the Christian teacher is for his pupils although he uses different terminology — thus, for him, the Christian educator is the voice of God who exhorts through him (MD 3,1; MR 193,3; 201,2). He is at times another Christ, re-presenting him once again here and now. The pupils have to view the teacher in the same way as they would view their Saviour and they should receive instructions from the teacher as if it was Jesus in person who was instructing them (MR 195,2; 196,1; MF 86,3; 138,3).

F. The teacher is the precursing *angel* sent by God as a means of preparing the way for the entry

of the Lord into the hearts of the pupils (MD 2,1; cf. MF 162,2) and he is also the *Guardian Angel* who reveals the truths and the Christian maxims to them, directing them in the path of goodness and protecting them from the dangers which threaten them (MR 197-198; 208,3).

G. This angel of the school is also a *mediator* - an intermediary between God and the pupils. As in the angels in Jacob's dream, every day he goes before the Lord in order to present the needs of his disciples and returns to them as the messenger through which God communicates and teaches them (MD 37,3; 56,3; MF 186,3; MR 196,1; 198,1).

H. Like Jesus Christ, the teacher is also the *shepherd* of the flock which has been confided to him. Like Jesus, he guides his sheep and does everything to ensure that they have life and have it in abundance (MD 33; MR 196,1; 201,3; 207,2).

I. The children are the building which God constructs and the Christian teacher is called to help God in this work (MR 193,3) — he is thus the *architect* of God. The work that he does is one of the most worthy and excellent works because it contributes to the building of the body of Jesus Christ, which is the Church, and because he sustains it by the solid foundations on which he constructs — religion and piety which lasts throughout life in the hearts of those children who receive a Christian education (MF 155,1; MR 193,2; 194,3; 199,2.3; 200,1 205,2.3).

J. The *prophet* is both chosen and sent. The Lasallian educator is called and missioned by God, Jesus Christ and the Church to carry out his work, to be a co-operator in sanctification and salvation, announcing the Gospel and transmitting the spirit of Christianity (MR 196,1.2; 198,2; 199,1; 201,1; MD 7,1; 39,2; MF 140,2). The prophet also both announces and denounces and, thus, the Lasallian educator is a true prophet instructing his pupils in religious truths while responding to the bad conduct of the mischievous with the zeal of Elias, saying to them "... I am so zealous for the glory of God that I cannot allow you to renounce the covenant which you made

with Him in your Baptism nor the privilege of sons of God which you then assumed..." (MD 60,3; MR 202,1).

K. The Biblical prophets were powerful in word and deed and normally they were also *miracle-workers* — they had the power to confirm their proclamations and denunciations through extraordinary signs. Similarly, the zealous teacher who carries out his mission in conformity with the will of God is gifted by the all-powerful God with the ability to work miracles and is called on to perform them as, for example, in touching the hearts of his pupils and inspiring in them the spirit of Christianity (MF 139,1; 180,3).

L. Those who catechise and instruct the poor are *apostles* — successors of the apostles, participating in their ministry, educating in the faith, strengthening the law of Christ in the hearts of the disciples and building up the Church of God (MF 102,1; 145,3; 159,2; 167,2; MR 199,3; 201,1).

M. De La Salle tells his disciples that they exercise a function which, more than any other, is similar to the priestly ministry (MF 186,3). But, above all, he insists on the parallel between the mission of the Christian teacher and that of the *bishop* — to watch over the flock which has been confided to both. It is the responsibility of a bishop to intercede for the salvation of souls and to carry out the will of God with regard to achieving this salvation. The Christian teacher has a similar responsibility — to intercede insistently for the salvation of the pupils confided to his care and to seek the means necessary for obtaining it as well as ensuring that the pupils make use of these means (MF 189,4). What are the means which the bishop makes use of to facilitate the salvation of his flock? In the exercise of his function he is careful on two points: in opposing vice and maintaining the faith with vigour and firmness. And what about the teacher? He has to ensure that his pupils do not give themselves to evil and must imprint the truths of faith on their minds (MF 132,3). He is a shepherd and exercises the role of shepherd in his relations with children (MR 199,3; 203,3; MF61,3).

N. It is the responsibility of a *father* and a mother to educate their children in the Christian

faith. However, the majority of them do not do it through lack of instruction and of time and, consequently, the result is that, while many children actually have earthly parents, it is as if they did not have them. By Providential design it falls to teachers to substitute for parents in the instruction and preparation for life in conformity with the faith. Like St Joachim, the father of Mary, the Christian educator engenders sons for Jesus Christ and brings Jesus Christ to birth in his pupils. Similar to the Divine Saviour who came so that man would have life and have it in abundance, the Christian teacher procures a life of grace for his disciples in this world and eternal life in the next (MD 37,3; 61,3; MF 157,1; MR 193,2; 199,1; 201,3; 203,3).

O. Children are ignorant — morally destitute and spiritually orphans. They need teachers: they need the human help of *guardians*: "God looks on them with pity and cares for them as one who is their protector, their help and their father". However, he entrusts this care to the Christian teacher. He puts these orphans in their hands, submitting them to their guardianship (MD 37).

P. The Christian teacher is therefore *honoured* by God who entrusts him with the important employment which he exercises. He is honoured by Jesus Christ who chose him to proclaim his holy maxims to his pupils and he is honoured by the Church who has assigned him to such an excellent ministry (MF 157,1; 167,1; MR 199,1).

Q. The Christian teacher receives particular gifts and in this sense is *blessed* by God. In a general way it can be said that he receives the graces necessary to do good within and according to his ministry. More especially, he receives the graces and gifts to instruct children, to teach the ignorant; to announce the Gospel; to educate according to the spirit of religion; to exhort and correct the delinquent and to support the weak (MF 146,3; 170,3; 189,1; MD 37,1; MR 193,2; 194,3; 201,1).

Christian teaching, besides being an eminent way to collaborate in the salvific plan of God, a mediation between the Truth and those who seek it, a sacrament of the love and action of God for

others, is the greatest *guarantee of grace, sanctification and personal salvation* for the teacher. In carrying out his ministry well and fulfilling his obligations with God, the Christian teacher "will be lavished with so many graces that he sanctifies himself while contributing as far as he is able to the salvation of others" (MR 205,2). Finally, the greatness of the ministry can be gauged by the rigour of the account which God will demand from it and by the excellence of the rewards promised to those who exercise it with fidelity and dedication (MR 205-206; 207-208).

This faith in the value and necessity of Christian teaching was something which De La Salle not only preached by word but also practically demonstrated in his life: "...The most persuasive and effective argument..." which he presented to his disciples was to show them how he, "a former canon of one the most illustrious Churches of France, a priest and celebrated Doctor...", considered it such a joy to take the place of a Brother in a school (B2 362). In this way he was unsparing in word and deed in order to have them assimilate clearly the conviction of the greatness and urgency of this vocation: "... No other work seemed to him as important as his own for the salvation of poor people..." (B2 366).

2. According to De La Salle, such a vocation had to be lived by a person displaying very definite and specific characteristics. According to the Lasallian vision, the teacher had to be a professional in education, a specialist in the Christian school and inspired by deep mysticism — a person who is completely dedicated, stable, responsible and competent, communitarian, available and inspired by the principle of gratuity; a man of God for others — a man for others that they might be of God.

He also indicated how teaching might be exercised as a profession in the full meaning of the word:

A. For De La Salle, the Christian education of children and youth was an end in itself, a complete ministry.³ Those who exercised this ministry had to be *completely dedicated* to a single function contrary to the custom of the time when schoolteachers were often only part-time. He "created a

group of people who were trained to direct schools well and consecrated by state and vocation to this ministry of charity" (B2 358). This testimony of Blain was confirmed by Bouillet, treasurer of the schools of Lyon and executor of Demia's will: "...They devote themselves exclusively to the direction of the schools and have a single concern: to educate children in the best possible manner".⁴ The testimony of Bouillet continued: "...They are lay people who do not aspire to the ecclesiastical state so that they are not diverted from their school functions by liturgical demands".⁵

In order that they could be the completely dedicated people envisaged by De La Salle he did not want them to marry. Nor did he want them to become priests or to exercise para-ecclesiastical functions, nor did he want them to aspire to the ecclesiastical state nor even undertake studies which might prepare them for this state in life (RC 1,2; MH 47; 50; L 113,2): "... De La Salle does not have married school-teachers and he believes that if the school-teacher wishes to be assiduous in his school it is not appropriate for him to be a prisoner of an office (the sacristy)...".⁶ De La Salle thus made a definite contribution to the evolution of teaching as a substantial full-time occupation to which the whole life and all the energies of a person could worthily be dedicated.

B. The Lasallian teacher is also completely dedicated with regard to his time since he is with his pupils the whole day, "from morning until night" (RC 1,3). Further, this commitment was life-long since the second vow made by De La Salle and his religious teachers was "to remain in society for life". According to De La Salle, Christian teaching thus had to be a *stable* function rather than some thing provisional as it often was at this time.

C. In De La Salle's view the teacher was to have a highly professional awareness. He was *responsible* – i.e. he responded through commitments. He made use of all the time that he had at his disposal to do all that he had to do. He sought to be effective in his work and regularly evaluated his experiences as an educator.

D. Among the first teachers who presented themselves to De La Salle there were some whom

he had to send away because "... they had no talent nor vocation for the school although they were quite pious..." (Bd 46; which was in contrast to others who presented themselves at the end of 1681 and the beginning of 1682 who were described as "having talent for the school..." (Bd 47). Thus, for De La Salle, the person who wanted to devote himself to teaching had to be *competent* — ie. he had to understand the doctrinal contents so as to faithfully transmit them; he had to know his pupils so as to deal with them adequately; he had to develop his pedagogical approaches and dispositions such as respect for his employment exercised with joy along with empathy with his pupils and attention to their specific needs; he had to know how to correctly control his class, what was the pedagogical manner of relating to the pupils, of observing them, of having them participate in school life; he had to use the best methods for teaching reading, writing and counting as well as for teaching catechism and the rules of politeness; he had to know how to concretise the contents of his teaching, to adapt his language to the world of the child and to appropriately administer correction.

De La Salle gave the following stipulation to his teachers as a third commandment: "...You will teach children with care..." (RC 16,8) and to enable them to do this he created the Training College for teachers, codified the pedagogical experiences of the early years of his Institute in the Management of Schools as well as establishing exercises of permanent personal formation with them — eg. a daily half-hour for studying catechism; a similar time devoted to the reading of manuscripts and of Latin, to the study of arithmetic and of reading; pedagogical reading during some reflection periods; periodic examinations of conscience on educational conduct etc.

E. The previously quoted testimony of Bouillet on the Brothers at the beginning of the 18th century highlights yet another element: "...They live in community". This allows them to use uniform pedagogical methods "in such a way that the replacement of one teacher by another does not harm the pupils..."⁷ De La Salle could not connive of his teachers without a *community* dimension. After the departure of almost all the first

teachers new candidates presented themselves and were accepted "because they had the disposition to live in community..." (Bd 47).

"Brother was the name adopted... He told them that, as Brothers to each other, they must demonstrate reciprocal expressions of tender but spiritual friendship..." (B1 241). In the Rule, in which De La Salle and his teachers codified years of lived experience, it stipulated that "the members of this Institute will be called Brothers" and that whenever they referred to each other they would do so with the name "Brother" (RC 1,1) and that in this Institute "a true spirit of community will be expressed and preserved" (RC 3,1). In Lasallian practice it was always a temporary exception that a Brother was engaged in "isolated" work. The norm was that work was community-based. The first vow which De La Salle and his disciples pronounced was: "... to unite ourselves in society to maintain gratuitous schools together and by association". One of the characteristics of the pedagogy of the Founder was community action and certainly one of the reasons for its success with his teachers was that he led them to discover and follow it: "... He had given the Brothers a principle that, when they had any difficulty, two of three of them must come together and accept for the common good what is there decided..." (B2 124).

The reference of Bouillet to the "uniform methods" which were followed reminds us that the community dimension of the Lasallian teacher led to a corporative discipline which, from the point of view of religious rules, was called "regularity" and from an educational point of view was expressed in a uniformity of pedagogical practices: "...They will teach all pupils according to the method prescribed and practised everywhere in the Institute..." (RC 7,3).

F. The third and final vow which De La Salle and his Brothers took was the vow of obedience: "... to do whatever will be asked of me..." and to go "... wherever I may be sent...". Thus, *availability* is another aspect of the Christian teacher envisaged by De La Salle. It is a disposition which is the source of educational and apostolic vigour and effort since it makes available to the common cause, in an unconditional form, the good will and

the talents of all.

G. De La Salle wanted his teachers to be imbued with the principle of gratuity practising, in the first place, material gratuity: "...The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a society in which profession is made to maintain schools *gratuitously*..." (RC 1,1). Moreover, the second part of the third commandment of the new congregation was that "they will teach children *gratuitously*..." (RC 16,8; R 5). They were to receive nothing from the pupils nor from their parents (CE 121; RC 7,11) and this was "essential" for the Institute (RC 7,1); "... Say with joy... that the greatest source of your joy in this life is rooted in having preached the Gospel free of charge to those who listen to it..." (MR 207,2).

He also demanded that they live in complete detachment (MF 148,3) which is a form of spiritual gratuity, in dedication and self-giving, out of pure love of God and for no other motive than that of pleasing him (MF 153,2; MR 206,3; 207,2). Does all this appear too much? "You will never be able to do too much with regard to being disinterested in the exercise of your ministry..." (MF 153,3).

H. It was impossible to think of achieving this ideal of the Christian teacher by relying on human ingenuity and purely natural efforts. Its achievement was based on the assumption of divine grace and a life of *holiness and piety* along with virtue beyond the ordinary. De La Salle knew this and repeated it many times (MD 33,2; 39,2; MF 110,1; 186,2) — such sanctity demanded a deep interior life involving constant contact with God, union with Jesus Christ, self-giving to his Spirit, prayer, meditation, sacramental life, recollection as a condition of daily life and periodic retreats in the sense of the "spiritual exercises". It demanded asceticism and renunciation and pre-supposed in the teacher not only the practice of the "Twelve virtues of a good master" but much more that had to

be practised in his relations with God and with his pupils.

I. Among the first virtues which De La Salle wished to see in his teachers were "zeal for instruction and *purity of action*", a purity which, more than being a virtue, is the sum of the virtues which brings to birth in the teacher that spirit which guarantees the efficacy of his zeal (MR 203,3).

J. But there is one basic virtue which relates the teacher to God and which is expressed in zeal for the pupils. This virtue enables the teacher to see the child — the young person, the poor person - with the eyes of God and leads the teacher to treat the person accordingly. It enables the teacher to perceive the excellence of an employment which "is little valued by men" (MF 155,3). It leads him not only to be committed professionally to his pupils but also apostolically both transforming his motivations and opening new educational horizons for him. It enables the teacher to see how, through his human actions, God carries out his salvific plan with man and permits him to live his profession as a vocation, as a ministry of salvation. Through this he is enabled to reflect the action of the Lord in his disciples and it leads him to a proclamation of praise and thanksgiving of the God who does marvels in and for his creatures. The Christian teacher as envisaged by De La Salle is thus a *man of faith*.

¹ Cf. GIOLITTO, P., *"Abécédaire et Férule"*, Imago, Paris, 1986, pp.66, 68, 69, 71, 89...

² GIOLITTO, P., op. cit, p. 60.

³ POUTET, Y., *"Le XVII^e Siècle et les origines lasalliennes"*, (2), Rennes, Imprimeries réunies, 1970, p. 247.

⁴ POUTET, Y., *"L'enseignement des pauvres dans la France du XVII^e siècle"*, in *XVII^e Siècle* N° 90-91, p. 108.

⁵ POUTET, Y., *"L'enseignement des pauvres dans la France du XVII^e siècle"*, in *XVII^e Siècle* N° 90-91, p. 108.

⁶ Letter of LESCHASSIER to the Parish Priest of Crosne, cf. POUTET, Y., *"Le XVII^e Siècle..."* (2), p. 81, n. 17.

⁷ POUTET, Y., *"L'enseignement..."*, p. 108.

Complementary themes:

Apostle; Child-Pupil-Disciple; Correction; Decorum and Christian Civility; Disciples; Education-To bring up; Example-Edification; Formation; Gentleness; Guardian Angels; Heart-to touch hearts; Parents of the pupils; Teacher-Pupil relationship; Silence; Vigilance.

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36. FAITH - THE SPIRIT OF FAITH

Summary:

1. Lexicographical approximation. - 2. Faith. 2.1. In The Duties. 2.2. In the Collection. - 3. The Spirit of Faith. 3.1. The basic texts. 3.2. Four other texts. - 4. An overall view. 4.1. The aim of the Christian. 4.2. Faith as a journey. 4.3. Faith as a light and guide. 4.4. Faith is search and unity. 4.5. Faith is the presence of God and prayer. 4.6. Faith demands conversion - to follow and to renounce. 4.7. Faith means to obey the voice of God. 4.8. Faith involves journeying together and transmitting the light. 4.9. Faith involves seeing God in creatures. 4.10. Faith involves abandoning oneself to Providence. - 5. Conclusion.

We will concentrate on twenty of De La Salle's texts, some very brief, which have been analysed in the magnificent Lasallian Vocabulary (VL) and make use of the editions mentioned there.¹ We will consider the lexicography, faith, and the spirit of faith, give an overall view and draw a conclusion. One must say from the outset that the life of faith envelops the whole of Christian life since "the true Christian lives in faith" (R 71) and, consequently, it is not surprising that we have to touch on many points.

1. LEXICOGRAPHICAL APPROXIMATIONS

Our starting point will be the VL (with its inevitable limitations and with our own limitations, too²). Given that there is much difference between, for example, "believing" in God and "believing" in dreams (Da 114), we will make a distinction between the religious-moral sense of the words (meaning A) and their secular sense (meaning B).³

1.1. Faith

The word faith abounds in the writings of De La Salle and appears in almost all of them.⁴ One could cast a wide semantic net, or create a conceptual map, around the word "faith" starting with a nucleus such as: *a)* "fidelity", "loyalty", "to trust"...; *b)* "to believe", "belief", "credulity..."; *c)* including "truth", "doubt", "falsehood". The result would be rather modest. In the VL many words scarcely or never figure either because they were from a different era or because De La Salle did not use them.⁵

1.2. The spirit of faith

The expression "spirit of faith" appears only 55 times and is completely absent from the majority of his writings. Thus, it only figures in six of the twenty that we are studying and, furthermore, does so in a very unequal manner with more than two-thirds of the examples found in a few pages of *the Collection*.⁶ This might be a little surprising

bearing in mind that the spirit of faith is the spirit of the Institute and that De La Salle makes much use of the word "spirit", and the construction "the spirit of...".⁷ However, it is the contents rather than the expressions⁸ which are more important.

1.3. Possible equivalences

In some cases, at least, there may be a complete equivalence, or almost an equivalence, between the expressions *the life of faith* (understood in its fullness) and *the spirit of faith* (R 71 + ; MF 87.1; 117.3), *interior life* (EM 3-6), *piety* or *the spirit of piety* (MR 207.3; 208.1), *religion* or *the spirit of religion*,⁹ *wisdom* or *the spirit of wisdom*,¹⁰ *prudence*,¹¹ *obedience*,¹² *the spirit of Christianity* and *the Christian Spirit*,¹³ *the spirit of the Institute* (and similar expressions).¹⁴

1.4. Binary rhythm and gemination

In the basic texts on the spirit of faith there are abundant examples of a two-fold emphasis. For example, "faith must serve to *light* and to *guide*... to *conduct* and *lead* them" (R 71). Frequently this is simply the use of synonyms, or near equivalences (geminations) with a stylistic end in view which was common at the time and studied in literature. The purpose of the stylistic device was to give a certain solemnity to the language through the creation of a binary rhythm. Here we have an important interpretative key, as much for these texts as for others.¹⁵

2. FAITH

Faith in general is explicitly studied in *the Duties* and in *the Collection*.

2.1. In the duties

With regard to *the Duties*, the Da edition, which is the most complete, will suffice for our purposes.¹⁶ One must keep its Preface very much in mind (p. I-X). According to this it is not sufficient to be a Christian since one must also be a Catholic (submission to the Church). One must be a "true Christian" (p. X), that is a true disciple

and follower of Jesus Christ (p. IV) and not only in appearances (when faith is not animated by love of God, p. IV) since it demands, besides, that one be "animated by the spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ and live in conformity with his life, and with his maxims which are expressed for us in the Gospel and throughout the New Testament" (p. V). What are proper to the true Christian are the theological virtues (p. X). The obligations of the Christian are reduced (p. X) to knowing God (faith; p. 1-88) and to loving him (charity; p. 89-192) with the help of God's grace (p. 193-198; on which faith depends, p. 196) which is normally given to us through the sacraments (p. 199-404). Faith is especially related to the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist (pp. 211+, 231+ and 241+) and with prayer (p. 405-494). The normal virtues are not exclusive to the Christian except in the way in which they are practised – i.e. "with grace, by the movement of the Spirit of God and with the pure intention of pleasing him" (p. IX). Without grace, our actions are as a body without a soul and are only good in appearance (like the actions of the pagan) and do not contribute to our salvation (p. 197).

This given, the work begins specifically with *a study of faith* (p. 1-15). Speaking generally, faith is to believe something that we are told or, in other words, solely knowing something through hearing of it. It can be human or divine and is compatible with mortal sin (p. 63, 68) - one can even speak of the faith of the condemned (p. 64; Jm 2,19 makes mention of the faith of demons, p. 90). Naturally, faith without charity and without works is dead and does not contribute to salvation (p. 89 + ; Jm 2,17). The first duty of the Christian is to know God and Jesus Christ, and eternal life consists in this (Jn 17,3). Faith is needed to accomplish this which is the supernatural light which we receive from God in Baptism. It is a virtue which makes us believe what God has revealed and what the Church teaches, with resolution and with the submission of the mind and heart (p. 3; also p. IX). What the Church teaches is the same as if God himself says it since the Church possesses the power and the authority of God and of Jesus Christ (p. 3 and p. 72). Thus, the person who does not listen to the Church must be considered as a pagan (p. 9, 71; Mt 18,17). The truths of faith may or

may not be written (Scripture and tradition, p. 7-13). It must be practised particularly on specific occasions — for example, in pardoning one's enemies, in abhorring vice and encouraging oneself in virtue. Acts of faith may be public, in order to give witness to faith, or directed towards God from the heart (p. 7). The Creed summarises all that one must believe (p. 13-15) and is, in the words of St. Augustine, "the rule and profession of faith". It has a trinitarian structure and contains 12 articles and it must be known and recited frequently. Following this (p. 15-88) there is a study of the articles of the Creed. In speaking of the Church there is an insistence that its authority in matters of faith does not consist in adding to, or changing, but rather in explaining doctrine and determining which are the books of Scripture (p. 71). In what relates to faith we must submit to the decisions of the Church with the same simplicity as to the Gospel (p. 72). Finally, there is a brief treatment of those who sin against faith — i.e. those who do not believe, apostates, schismatics, heretics (and those who associate with them), those who willfully doubt, and those who do not know the principal mysteries and commandments of God and of the Church (pp. 112-3).

To summarise: the following characteristics can be underlined

- it is a type of *catechism* — its aim was "to form the Christian" (p. 11). Apparently it was primarily directed at parents and educators.¹⁷ Consequently, importance is given to orthodoxy, to the notional, to the didactic, to the perfect and to submission to the Church — without much subtle distinction since these were difficult times;

- an exaggerated negative vision of the pagan which was in conformity with *the ecclesiology of the time*;

- with regard to *faith*, the following characteristics can be highlighted:

1. Its capital *importance* — with charity it dominates the whole work and it is mentioned frequently (124 times - as we have seen).

2. What we are presented with is a faith which goes beyond simply "*holding as true*". In effect, it speaks about the heart (p. 3, 7), about the love of God (p. 7), about abandoning vice and giving one self to virtue (p. 6 +), about practical faith with works (p. 6, 89 +, 230), about the struggle against

the enemies of faith (p. 235), and about the danger to one's own life (p. 232, 238).

3. While the expression the "*spirit of faith*" is not mentioned in the whole work (nor does it figure in Db, DC, GA nor in PA), the essentials of its contents are here — i.e. to conform one's life to the life and maxims of Jesus (p. V), to have a faith which is animated by charity (p. IV) and to do everything under the inspiration of the Spirit of God and only with the intention of pleasing him (P. IX).

4. Finally, it is far-reaching and demanding for all the faithful (p. 187-192) since "the true Christian" must practise the works of mercy, the beatitudes and the maxims of the NT, besides what is strictly obligatory, because Jesus Christ has called us all to "perfection" (p. 192).

2.2. The Collection

The Collection was intended for the Brothers. On page 154 the study of the principal virtues begins and among them is the virtue of faith which is treated in three invaluable little pages which deserve to be quoted in full. Faith is the first of the virtues to be studied and, moreover, charity is not treated since it is obviously included in faith which should "be efficacious and animated by charity (p. 155; Ga 5,6). Because of this the text identifies the life of faith with the spirit of faith. Thus, after the initial passage that "the just live by faith" (p. 155; Rm 1,17), there is added immediately and with complete naturalness, "that your first care be that you are led by the spirit of faith" (p. 154).

The internal structure of these three pages has two related poles — "to follow" and "to renounce" — as in the text from Mt 16,24: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me" (quoted on p. 155). In the first place "to follow" — i.e. "suivre"; as well as "s'attacher", "approuver", "obeir" — in the sense of to follow God (his will, his glory, his interests) and to follow Jesus Christ (his Word, what faith tells us, and what the Church approves). In synthesis, faith must "strongly attach us" to knowledge, love, and imitation of Jesus Christ as well as to union with him. In the second place "to renounce" — "renoncer"; also "se detacher", "fuir", "ne recevoir",

"condamner", "tout perdre", "quitter", "sacrifier" — in the sense not only of renouncing whims and fantasies, humours, inclinations, worldly habits, novelties and even reason but actually renouncing everything — honour, health, even life, if necessary, for the glory and interests of God and in imitation of Jesus Christ.

To summarise: the following can be emphasized in this text

- its biblical foundation - especially in its starting point that "the just live by faith" (Rm 1,17 - the chapter on the spirit of faith (R 71) begins in the same way);

- its Christocentrism - obviously directed to the Father. The presence of Jesus is almost total and close while there is not the least mention of the Holy Spirit which was contrary to the author's custom and due certainly to the brevity of the text;

- a vision of faith that is not based on the mere "belief in what one is told" but on *communion*, on knowing, loving and imitating Jesus Christ and being united with him like the vine shoots which die if separated from the vine (p. 156). In other words, it is a faith which is understood in terms of life and action and totally rooted in charity;

- there is an energetic insistence on the mediation of the Church – i.e. to condemn what is condemned by the Church, approve what is approved, and to give it total, prompt and perfect obedience (p. 155);

- finally, it involves a *radical conversion* so that the whole person is directed towards the glory and the will of God in imitation of Jesus Christ.

3. THE SPIRIT OF FAITH

3.1. The basic texts

The basic texts on the spirit of faith are found in *the Collection* and in *the Common Rules*. However, since the latter is almost completely limited to a reproduction of the former, we will concentrate on *the Collection*.¹⁸

In *the Collection* we find a brief chapter entitled "On the spirit of the Brothers of the Christian Schools which is a spirit of faith" (pp. 71-76) and its explanation "The explanation of the chapter on

the spirit of our Institute" (pp. 76-94). This explanation is accompanied by a selection of Scripture passages to help the Brothers to act through the spirit of faith (pp. 95-105).

a) *The Chapter* — it is arranged in two parts and there is an introduction.

The introduction has three aspects:

1. The spirit of Christianity is the spirit of faith because faith is the light and guide that leads and directs one on the road to salvation. The true Christian, the just one, lives by faith (Rm 1,17) because he is directed and acts in everything from the perspective and motive of faith.

2. The end of the Institute is to educate in the spirit of Christianity.

3. Consequently, the spirit of the Institute is the spirit of faith.

The first part speaks of the spirit of faith: "The spirit of our Institute is primarily, then, a spirit of faith..." (p. 72). Everything here is repeated and amplified in the Explanation. *The second part* begins as follows: "Secondly, the spirit of this Institute consists of an ardent zeal for the instruction of children..." (p. 75). However, we believe that, in the strictest sense, the spirit of the Institute is the spirit of faith.¹⁹

b) *The Explanation* — it completely omits zeal and the apostolic dimension associated with it and scarcely mentions the Institute although it is clearly implied. It contains three parts arranged as follows; the nature of the spirit of faith, its effects and, finally, the means for developing the spirit of faith.

1. *The nature of the spirit of faith*. "It is a spirit which is directed and governed in everything by maxims and sentiments of faith taken principally from the Sacred Scriptures" (p. 76: cf. pp. 71-72). Expressed briefly it consists in living in faith (p. 71).

2. *The effects of the spirit of faith*. This life of faith is understood in an active and total way; for example, "it directs everything...", "... not to look on anything except...", "not to do anything but...". When the spirit of faith is analysed three effects, or aspects, are indicated - "regarder", "faire" and "attribuer". In other words, faith is the supreme rule of our understanding and of

what we give value to, of our actions and of what we bear in life.

- "*Regarder*" (*to know, to value*); "... Not to look on anything but with the eyes of faith" (p. 76). It is not referring to something simply notional but implies constant and serious asceticism. For example, "consider creatures only in the same way that God knows them" (p. 77), and do not be guided by the eyes of the flesh, or by the eyes of nature (i.e. inclinations-repugnance), or by the eyes of reason (i.e. simple utility). In short, "*regarder*" refers to value judgements which are existential and normative.

- "*Faire*" (*motives for action*); "... Not to do anything but with God in view" (p. 80) or, as expressed in the chapter, act always "guided by God, moved by his Spirit and with the intention of pleasing him" (p. 74). All of this presupposes three things:

1. To be conscious of the presence of God.
2. To have God as the principle of one's life — that he is the prime author and mover to action and that one allows oneself to be directed by his Spirit.
3. To have God as the objective of one's life - seeking only his glory and pleasing him in everything.

"*Attribuer tout a Dieu*" (*to receive, to bear*); to receive the good and the bad from his hands in the same way as Job did. In other words, to be absolutely convinced that there is nothing in which the will of God is not accomplished, especially with regard to those events which concern us (p. 86). It is a faith which is full of hope and confident abandonment in the hands of Providence. In this way the whole of life — in all its limitations — is open to redemption since what happens in life is God's will for the person and stems from his divine vocation as a person.²⁰

To summarise: these three aspects — to know, to act, and to receive or bear — can serve to synthesise all the horizons of human life which in this way becomes totally "informed" by faith. But, at the same time, they make us aware of something more profound — that our activity is of value in the measure that God acts in us not only as an end but also as the principle of everything. This is, as we shall see, to indicate the radical nature of the spirit of faith.

3. *Means for developing the spirit of faith.* Seven means are indicated and they may be organized in a diptych illustrating what one must avoid and what one must acquire. Put another way, these are the means which, strictly speaking, may "help us to acquire the spirit of faith and enable us to be directed by it", a phrase which is repeated with slight variations.

What must be avoided:

1. To look with the eyes of *the flesh, of nature* and *of reason*, as we have seen.

2. To *act from natural motives* or *through habit* or for any *human motive* (e.g. Hope or human fears). Consequently, one must examine the motives of one's actions from time to time.

What must be acquired:

1. A profound respect for the Sacred Scriptures — for example, carrying it at all times and reading it daily.

2. That all one's actions be animated by motives of faith — for example, making use of some text from Scripture.

3. To pay attention to nothing other than the commands and the will of God, recognizing it and adoring it in all that occurs, particularly in what affects us, and making this the rule of our conduct. This will be translated into submission for the Rule, obedience to the Superior, since "who ever listens to you listens to me" (Lk 10,16, p. 88), the fulfillment of the duties proper to one's state and, finally, the accomplishment of those things which are absolutely essential — e.g. sleep, eating - only because one believes that such is the will of God.

4. To observe *great prudence with regard to the use of one's senses* using them only when necessary and not for pleasure.

5. To take care to renew *the presence of God* because it makes us act out of respect for God and with recollection and because it keeps us away from sin.

6. *To dismiss all vain thoughts* which are capable of distracting us from these occupations.²¹

c) *We can briefly underline the following aspects:*

- a *didactic* preoccupation. Hence there are certain schemes, divisions, sub-divisions and examples which are relatively extensive and which

give clarity and indicate importance. At the same time it has risks, for example, of fragmentation, of repetition and of tautology. Thus, for example, "to act through habit is... to have the habit of..." (p. 92). Moreover, is there not a risk, too, that at times one cannot see the wood for the trees?

- a certain insistence *on negative aspects*, on what one must avoid. If we insist in removing the stones what is left of the track? Moreover, to our modern sensibilities, the vision of beauty, for example, which is given (p. 77: in contrast to the positive emphasis of EM 32) or, particularly, the attitude to eating (pp. 78-80, 91), is rather one sided and reductionist. To take another example; if the senses are only to be used out of necessity, given that to use them "to take some pleasure" is to separate us from the will of God (p. 91), one is easily moved to question, from a modern perspective, whether necessity alone justifies art, the cinema and, especially, television. What is the theological meaning of pleasure? Obviously, what De La Salle wanted to stress above all is the primacy of other dimensions and the necessity to strive hard for perfection. In the passages which he proposes to help one act through the spirit of faith (p. 95-105) the general tone is positive and, at times quite beautiful, and the negative is generally compensated by the positive (pp. 95-100) — with the exception of two themes, that of laughter and that of looking about when walking in the streets (p. 99). We need to be aware, too, that these were different times and that many other authors made use of similar texts. Finally, perhaps the fact that this Explanation was directed in a special way at beginners motivated its didactic tone, the insistence on what must be avoided as well as some simplifications.

- *Practical faith*. It is of course accepted that faith is knowing and believing what one is told but its centre of gravity is in action — "se conduire", "conduite", "agir", "actions", "faire" — and especially in the will and its motives — "vues", "motifs", "sentiments" — which are summarized in submission to the will of God as the living expression of the love of God.

- *Theocentric*. Both the Chapter and the Explanation are clearly centred on God. The Chapter does not mention Jesus Christ while in the Explanation he is mentioned only three times, and

not in a direct or personal way but rather in a New Testament quotation (p. 80, 85, 88). The Spirit of God is mentioned only twice and is related to the interior movement of the Spirit (p. 74, 81).

The image of God which is outlined here covers these points: he is the beginning and the end, the prime author and mover (p. 81). He wishes or permits the circumstances which affect us "through the love which he has for us and for our greater good" (p. 86) and his will must constitute the only preoccupation of the Christian. The concomitant image of the Christian which is developed is that of a person who allows himself to be guided by the Spirit of God (p. 74, 81), who looks at things as God sees them, who is respectfully attentive to his presence. He is conscious of God (p. 74) and seeks to please him (p. 74, 81, 89), receiving both the good and the bad as from his hands (p. 82, 86) and who seeks his glory. Above all, he is a person who obeys the commands and the will of God, thinking only of him and of what he commands (p. 74). Finally, he avoids all that would be "displeasing to God and offensive to the eyes of his divine Majesty" (p. 94) and, moreover, educates children in the fear of God (p. 75).

Thus, the transcendence and the authority of God are emphasized while, at the same time, his intimacy, as "the primary instigator and driving force" (p. 81), is also evident. Perhaps, in this, one detects a slight impression of distance for our modern sensibility, but we know very well that, for De La Salle, God, was much more than transcendence, authority and majesty. He also speaks, although with great reserve, of love, of tenderness, and actually of happiness even in this life.

3.2. The spirit of faith in other texts

The spirit of faith is mentioned in *four other texts* — in MF (6 times), MD (3), CE (1), FD (1).

In MF, the spirit of faith is related to Saints Stephen, Peter of Verona, Peter the Apostle, Louis and Martha. In these texts two characteristics stand out. The first is the naturalness with which faith becomes the spirit of faith, as equivalences (MF 87,1; 117,3; 139,2; 147,3), and the second is the connection which is established between the spirit of faith and the apostolate (in the first three)

and between the spirit of faith and the spirit of one's own state (139,2; 147,3). Thus, for example, "be persuaded that you will only contribute to the good of the Church in your ministry to the extent that you possess the fulness of faith and that you are guided by the spirit of faith which, as the spirit of your state, must animate all your conduct" (139,2).

The five other quotations are found in the other three works and their contents are as follows; one must obey not through reason but through the spirit of faith (MD 9,3) and whoever does not obey in this way sees the superior simply as a man and not as a minister of God (MD 73,1). While we must live according to the spirit and the light of faith only the Holy Spirit can open us to this disposition (MD 43,2). The Christian teacher must not work through motives which are purely human but through the spirit of faith (CE 154) and, finally, the Brother Director must be concerned above all that the Brothers possess the true spirit of faith and that they take the will of God as the rule of their conduct (FD 157).

4. AN OVERALL VIEW

All Christians are called to live in faith (Rm 1,17) but this permits of different expressions. What was De La Salle's synthesis? The following are ten main characteristics gathered around the nucleus "life seen as a journey of salvation" (R 71).

(1) The end of our journey is God, Heaven. (2) Life is the journey. (3) Faith is our light and guide. (4) Faith is both a search and a union because God is the beginning and the end. (5) It involves conversion, adhering to God in everything and detaching oneself from others. (6) To live in faith is to walk in the presence of God and in prayer. (7) It is continuous obedience to the voice of God. (8) It is journeying together and passing on the light. (9) It is to see the face of God in all creatures. (10) Finally, come what may, it is to keep one's heart confidently abandoned in the hands of Providence.

In synthesis, it involves an exodus, a pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem.

4.1. Where are we going? Questioning the end

De La Salle's starting point is Christian anthropology and from the outset he considers the end of man, which is God himself, and the end of time which will be heaven (MD 40,1 and 2; 75,3; MF 183). Consequently, when speaking of the spirit of faith, his vision is very theocentric. It is also very existential in that he does not try to construct a theory but rather tries to open a pathway through the reality of life. Thus, he does not speak of it in itself but rather in the context of the here and now of each person which is a basic hermeneutical criterion for interpreting it properly.

4.2. The whole of life as a journey

The life of the Christian is a journey towards his homeland and, as such, the present is seen in constant tension with the future. Thus, we are in this life solely to know and love God and to get to heaven. This is to eschatologize the whole of existence but not as an evasion, as a simple "vanity of vanities", but rather as transcendence and darkness, as a search and reflection of the fulness for which we yearn but also with our lamps well lit through the work entrusted to us. At worst, we put up with life in order to reclaim a lost paradise and avoid a merited hell (L 122,4). All are on the journey to eternity — all are pilgrims and travellers on the eternal road — hence the exodus spirituality.

4.3. Faith as light and guide

We have faith so as not to get ourselves lost. "Faith must serve as a light and guide for all Christians to lead and direct them in the way of salvation" (R 71). But it is a particular type of faith — the faith of the pilgrim or faith which is manifested in action. It is a faith, then, as we have seen, which is motivated by charity.²²

4.4. Faith is a search as well as gift and presence

While faith seeks God (theological virtue), at its most fundamental level, however, it is a gift

and a presence which calls and leads us (supernatural virtue).

a) *God as objective or end.* For example, "not to do anything except with God in view" (R 72) or, again, to concern ourselves only "with God and with what we must do for his love" (MF 152,2). "Just as in the next life God will be the end and objective of all your actions so he must be in this life, too" (MD 75,3). This is the theological dimension of faith. A theological virtue is one which has God as its object (Da IX, 184). Consequently, the theological virtues, which are proper to the true Christian (Da IX), are faith, hope and charity. However, there is an insistence above all on faith and on charity since to be a Christian is to know and love God (Da X). This is the twin theme of all of the first part of Da. It even speaks of one single virtue which, at times, is charity - to which is reduced all that Christians must do in this world (Da 90; MF 90 merits special mention, beginning as it does: "...We are in this world only to love and to please God"). At other times it is faith since "the true Christian lives by faith" (R 71). In this last example it refers to faith which is motivated by charity (Da IV, R 155) and which embraces the complete theological dimension.

To have God as an objective or end highlights *the search or the option of man* — "regarder... agir... attribuer". It is to have the vision and sentiments of God, seeking to please him in everything and living and dying for his glory and for his interests (R 155). In synthesis, it is to allow oneself to be led in everything by motives of faith, to live the theological life — i.e. one which is centred on God as end and objective. However, it is necessary to go one step further and discover that God is also the beginning.

b) *God as the beginning and prime mover* (R 81). For example, to practise poverty or mortification through motives of faith, in union with the Spirit of Jesus Christ and through the motion of his grace (EM 85), or to mortify oneself because "God wishes that you live and are guided only by his divine Spirit" (MF 79,1). This is the *supernatural* dimension of faith. A supernatural virtue is one which goes beyond the natural, what comes to us from God (Da X). Faith is a gift, but, even

more, it is presence. We seek God because, in a certain way, we have already encountered him, because he has sought us and encountered us and has pitched his tent amongst us. Thus, faith is not only a searching for God but it is also what unites us to him. In this way, the journey and the end are mysteriously linked in peace and joy. Faith is the beginning of life eternal and an anticipation of heaven, creating "such joy and happiness in the soul that loves God that it comes to experience, even now, the anticipated joy of heavenly delights" (MD 70,3). It is a reflected and veiled presence of God, like a humble and trembling dawning but, in the end, the light of truth. This presence takes different expressions for example, Spirit, the new man, the vine, the sun, the interior life.

1) It is *the Spirit* which gives new life. "The spirit of faith is a participation in the Spirit of God who lives in us..." (L 105). The first fruit of the Holy Spirit is to enable one to see with the eyes of faith (MD 44). All of this meditation deals with the life of faith. It is like a diptych illustrating struggle between the shadows and the light: the spirit of the world sees only what is apparent, preferring the shadows to the light, having maxims contrary to the Spirit, the spirit of truth teaching us the maxims of the gospel — to understand, to appreciate and to live them — both with regard to personal sanctification as well as in apostolic work. The eyes of faith enable us to distinguish between the true and the false, the apparent and the real.

2) *To put on the new man* (R 127) and rise again through grace (MD 32). In this meditation alone the word "faith" is mentioned 10 times. Jesus Christ, when he enters the soul, raises it up through faith in such a way that it no longer views anything but with the eyes of faith. In this way it raises itself towards God, "knowing, esteeming and appreciating him alone, and so it can do nothing other than apply itself to God... losing all taste for earthly things which only inspire contempt in him". Consequently, St. Francis, full of faith and love, often repeated: "My God and my all". (For grace in general cf. Da 193-198).

3) Other equivalences: *the vine* and the vine shoots (R 156; MR 195,3...); *the sun* that gives life to plants and fruits (EM 10); the beautiful sum-

mary of Paul: "I live... but yet not I, rather Christ lives in me" (EM 19, 31, 85).

4) Finally, De La Salle also summarizes it, and with much insistence, as *the interior* or "spiritual life" (EM 3-6; R 105-124) since "the kingdom of God is within you" (Lk 17,21) and "if anyone loves me... we will come to him and live in him" (Jn 14,23). The Saint stresses that one has to empty oneself of the exterior in order to fill oneself with God and that the more the soul applies itself to God the more it detaches itself from what is created (EM 3-6). From this stems the extraordinary importance which he gives to the presence of God and to recollection.

To have God as the beginning and prime mover underlines *the action of God* in us. It is "to have him as the principal author" and to act only through his divine Spirit (R 81).

In summary: the life of faith, or the theological life, is centred on God, seeking him and the accomplishment of his will (human option) and allowing God himself to lead us (divine action) which is the deepest and most radical aspect of the life of faith. In this way our life drinks from another more profound Life. Lived in its fulness *this life of faith is the same as the spirit of faith* (R 154; MF 139,2; 147,3). There is a progressive development towards this fulness. It is not sufficient that actions be materially good (R 92) because the "soul" or intention is also involved. Thus, it is necessary to explicitly unite oneself with the will of God (R 85) — for example, in reading the Scriptures (R 84), or in fulfilling the Rule (R 87) — i.e. to act through motives of faith (R 84). But for the person to have this intention or inspiration requires that there be another inspiration or Spirit moving and directing him, like the sap which the vine gives to the shoots, and without which the person can do nothing. Thus, Christianity is much more than ethics — it is communion and mysticism. It is profoundly impressive to notice the constant presence in De La Salle of this all-embracing life of faith — as much in his own life as in his spiritual teaching and in his vision of the apostolic ministry. In effect, the Christian educator must bring knowledge, effort, self-giving, love and tenderness but, above all, he must transmit something much more profound — ie. God himself, acting through

his envoy or minister to the extent that he has detached himself from what is created and has filled himself with God (MR 195,2 and 3; 196,1 and 3).

4.5. A continuous presence: the presence of God and prayer

The presence of God has a decisive role in the spirit of faith (R 81, 93). With regard to prayer, it is evident that without faith there is no prayer. It is not surprising, then, that faith takes up a large part — not to say the whole — of *the Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer* (EM).²³ Thus, it is specifically stated that faith is *the basis of the four principal sections* of the work:

a) *The presence of God.* It is the first aspect of prayer and must always be approached in a sentiment of faith based on a passage of Scripture (p. 6). The six means of experiencing the presence of God developed in the work are conceived as truths of faith (p. 30).

b) *The prayer on a mystery.* One must begin by steeping oneself in its spirit, starting from the Gospel, or from the teaching of the Church, be it through a simple expression of faith — simple attention to the mystery which one believes because faith teaches it — or through some reflection on the mystery (p. 59 +).

c) *The prayer on a virtue.* In the first place one must make oneself aware of its necessity, through a sentiment of faith or through reflections, helped in this by Scripture. On this foundation of faith one makes the nine acts of the second part of mental prayer (p. 95).

d) Basically the same is said with regard to the prayer on *a maxim* (p. 110, 112).

The acts of faith always figure in the first place among the acts which may help in prayer and many examples are offered — more than for any other of the acts. Suffice it to remember that the phrase "act(s) of faith" covers more than half of the quotations on faith. They are rich and ample in content and among them one can also find acts of confusion (p. 37), of adoration (p. 41), of resol-

ution (p. 63), of petition (p. 63-65), etc. It is little wonder given that faith is a personal relationship that envelops the whole of the person.

These pages presuppose a faith which is living and practical and whose *principal objective* is not notions or truths but union with God — to unite oneself with God through a living faith is an apprenticeship for, and anticipated taste of, eternal life (p. 4). It is faith which makes us capable of an anticipated possession of God (p. 47). It is a faith whose *motives or foundations* are in God, in Jesus Christ, in the Spirit, in the Scripture — "through a sentiment of faith based on a passage of Scripture" (p. 6; also p. 29, 37, 45, 71) — and even in faith itself "because faith teaches it" (p. 60, 62, 63, 66). The whole work is woven with biblical passages and, obviously, the same occurs when speaking of faith and in the acts of faith.

There are *three ways of praying* and the three *basically depend on faith*;

1. With the help of reasoning and multiple reflections. If it is not based on faith this way becomes blocked or one is led astray since "reason destroys faith or, at least, puts obstacles in its way" (p. 28). However, since the beginner is as yet unaware of the "art of knowing God", he has to be convinced of the divine presence through reasons which are normally tender and affectionate and made through motives of faith. In other words, one moves into the spiritual by means of the tangible, cloaked and animated by faith with the aim of not becoming upset or dispirited (p. 33+).

2. Fewer and more prolonged reflections. This avoids reasoning and is based on some passage of scripture and may lead into simple attention (p. 29+, 71, 96, 99).

3. Simple attention (or contemplation, p. 72). Applied to the presence of God, it consists in being before God "with a simple interior attitude of faith that he is present" and remaining a certain time in this way (p. 30). The mind and the heart cannot occupy themselves in anything else and the soul completely leaves the created aside and unconsciously experiences a most intimate penetration of its being by God and his divine perfections (p. 34). Applied to a mystery, it is a simple interior attitude "de foi vive et respectueuse" which leads to silent adoration, to love, to admiration, to gratitude... and to the desire to unite oneself with Our

Lord in that mystery (p. 72+).

It is unnecessary to say that it is not only in EM but also in other texts that one finds this relationship between faith and prayer (MD 38,2; MF 119,1; 181,3).

4.6. The basic attitude: conversion - "s'attacher - se detacher"

As we have seen, the virtue of faith presented in the Collection (R 154-156) is forcefully structured around the poles of *following* and *renouncing*, as in Mt 16,24: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me". Stable faith is impossible without a deep conversion to God and, consequently, De La Salle constantly insists on renunciation and detachment. It is a call to renounce not only sin and imperfection but also things which are valuable — for example, pleasure, simple utility, and even reason — not because they are bad but because they are fundamentally inadequate or insufficient for the purpose to which they are directed which is to follow and imitate Jesus Christ, not to act simply on the human level. Thus, "the life of the Christian... must be a continual martyrdom because one is a Christian only so as to conform oneself to Jesus Christ who suffered during his whole life" (MF 89,2). Faith must despise all that the world values (MF 96,2) and see everything that one has to suffer at the hands of one's neighbour as presents from God (MF 87,3). One must let go of the body, and of sensible pleasures, "given that you are destined by God, like the holy angels, to be occupied with what concerns his service and with the care of souls" (MD 2,1). Furthermore, "you are to value invisible rather than visible things since the visible are temporal and disappear rapidly while the invisible, being eternal, will forever constitute the object of our love" (ib). In summary, it is the primacy of the All that makes sense of renunciations.

4.7. A constant guide: to obey the voice of God

The specific way to centre on God is to be docile to his voice. In a sense the revelation of God never ends since it is not only a "deposit" but also a personal event, God himself makes us under-

stand what has already been revealed and, in addition, continues to reveal his will to us. According to De La Salle, the voice of God comes to us in many ways: for example

1. *Through the Scriptures* (R 83) with which he insistently highlights his maxims and of which he says, for example, the following; "...The Scriptures are the word of God, as faith teaches us. They have a divine blessing. They lead us to God, ensure that we are drawn to God, help us to have the outlook of God and preserve in us the taste for God" (EM 45). For these reasons Scripture saturates the writings of De La Salle.

2. *Through the Church*. "We have to listen to the Church as to Jesus Christ and to God himself (Da 72; R 155).

3. *Through interior inspirations* (R 118 +).

4. *Through the voice of the catechist*; "... Jesus Christ wants your disciples to view you as they would him, that they receive your instruction as if it was from him, that they be convinced that the truth of Jesus Christ is spoken by you" (MR 195,2).

5. *Through obedience*. Finally, and in a general way, the voice of God is related to obedience: "Pay attention in everything to the commands and the will of God" (R 85-89).

Obedience is one of the words nearest to the spirit of faith in its practical application. "Of all the virtues, obedience is the one which is nearest to the theological virtues since it has faith as its principle and guide, is always accompanied by hope and confidence in God and is the fruit of charity and pure love of God" (MD 12,1). To obey through motives of faith is "the most eminent act of religion that one can practise in this world, given that it refers directly to God, under the guise of a weak and humble man, yet invested with divine authority" (MD 9,1). The texts on the spirit of faith in *the Collection* insist much on this. Thus, the Brothers "are to think only of God and of what he commands" (p. 74) and it speaks of "obeir", "soumission", "regie", "se regler", "devoir", "dependance", "obligation". According to De La Salle, the will of God has a decisive structural role in that it is the way to sanctify everything, including "the most lowly and natural ac-

tions" (p. 89). It is like the royal staircase which descends from God to his creatures. The key elements in this are the following: events — through which the will of God is accomplished (p. 82); the duties of one's own state — which is the surest way of accomplishing the will of God (p. 88); submission to the Rule (p. 87); obedience to the superior (p. 88); natural necessities (p. 89); and the use of the senses through necessity in order to accomplish what we have to do (p. 90).

Meditation number 9, of *the Meditations for Sundays*, is dedicated to the faith which we must manifest in obeying.²⁴ As its starting point it takes the faith and the obedience of the centurion. De La Salle's vision of faith is as follows; in obeying the superior one obeys God himself and, hence, one must obey promptly and blindly. If one has living faith then true obedience absorbs human attitudes and reasonings; "... one must not obey through motives of reason but rather through grace and with the simple attitude of faith» (9,3).

In this same work there are ten other meditations on obedience (MD 7 to 15; 21; 57). In some of them the word "faith" appears.²⁵ For example, the eyes of faith do not seek apparent splendour but rather obedience (MD 11,1). Obedience is founded on faith which "is infinitely superior to reason" and to obey because it is reasonable is not to obey because God commands it, but rather it is to act "as a philosopher who prefers reason to faith" (MD 15,2). One must both have faith in what superiors say (MD 21,1) and see God in them and make acts of faith on this point so as to obey him as one would obey God himself (MD 73,1). Obviously, we know to-day that this has to be nuanced, as the historical mistakes of the Church as well as every day experience indicate. Neither is it enough to say that obedience can change the bad into good — as in (MD 11,3) in the case of invincible ignorance.

In synthesis: It is important to know and to obey truths but it is much more important to accomplish the will of God, There are many important things in the Church but the most important is God himself and the vocation, or call, that he has for each one. Finally, in the face of this overwhelming insistence, we must not forget that, for De La Salle, obedience was the true and daily name for love — in accordance with "who-

ever holds to my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me" (Jn 14,21).

4.8. To journey together and to pass on the light

Our faith does not depend solely on God, it depends, too, on others. It depends on the Saints, beginning with the Blessed Virgin, who teach us the way of faith (MF 83,2; 112,1).²⁶ It depends on all educators in the faith – parents, Christian teachers, co-operators with Jesus Christ in the salvation of souls. However, those who have to educate in the spirit of Christianity must be deeply imbued with the spirit of faith (R 71 +).

The ministry of Christian education is the theme of *the Meditations for the Time of Retreat* (MR).²⁷ Of the 23 references to faith more than half are found in meditations 199 and 200 which deal with the ecclesial dimension of the ministry of the Christian educator. Faith is necessary to please God (199,1). It is the foundation of our hope (199,1) and it comes to us through the preaching of the Gospel (199,3). It connects us with our origins — with the preaching of Paul (199,1) and of Peter (199,2), and with the first Christians (200,2). There is a special insistence (at least 7 times!) on the uselessness of faith which is unaccompanied by good works (200,3).

The ten remaining quotations (along with two others which use the word "croire") form small and varied segments which may be threaded together in the following manner. God wishes the light of faith for all men (193,1) and for this it is necessary to have preaching (193,1). God sent his son so that all who believe in him would not perish (201,3). Faith is a gift of the Spirit (201,1) and is related to the work of Paul with Titus (204,2) and with the Corinthians (207,2). There is a renewed insistence that faith without works and without charity is dead (194,3: twice; 197,2; adding these three quotations to the previous seven on the same theme we have a considerable total of 10 out of the 23 quotations on faith). The Christian teacher has to instruct his disciples in the practical truths of the faith and in the maxims of the Gospel (194,3; 198,1) and he must always give witness to faith and to sanctity. Finally, it will be a great consolation for him to contemplate the fruits of faith in his disciples (207,3).

We can underline three other aspects:

a) *The biblical origin* of a large part of the texts on faith.

b) It is true that the spirit of faith is never mentioned and that there is no meditation on the theme of faith despite the fact there are two on the spirit of zeal (201, and 202). The reason for this is that here, more than in any particular nucleus, faith is the linking fabric embracing the whole work in a more or less explicit manner. Its starting point is that the objective of the Christian is to know and love God and that faith is the light and guide on this journey. The whole text is forcefully and marvelously linked around God's plan of salvation (193; 194; 201,3) through the proclamation of faith in the school, in such a way that the Christian teacher is a minister of God, an ambassador of Christ, a guardian angel to his disciples, and a minister of the Church; "... St. Paul wishes that all those who announce the Gospel are considered ministers of Jesus Christ, that they write the letter which he has dictated to them, not with ink but through the Spirit of the living God" (201,2). In the eyes of faith this is an incomparable vocation — a vocation in which one has to lay down one's life and for which there awaits a splendid reward.

c) There is an insistence that one has to educate in *the spirit of Christianity*, a spirit which, for De La Salle, in essence, is equivalent to the spirit of faith (R 72, 94). The spirit of Christianity leads to the wisdom of God (MR 194,2). The apostles procured it for the faithful (200,3) and it is linked to the teaching of the practical truths of faith and to the maxims of the Gospel (194,3). It is the work of the Holy Spirit (195,2). The Church entrusts us with the ministry of procuring it for children (199,1). Those who acquire it in childhood will, from that time, live in justice and piety (207,3). Finally, in heaven, it will be seen which educators have formed in the spirit of Christianity and which have not (208,1). In a word, to educate in the spirit of Christianity is to give a complete Christian education.²⁸

It should be noted, too, that *the spirit of the Christian* is also mentioned (3 times) especially in

the following context — the teacher must ensure that his disciples "live the Christian life and that (their) words are spirit and life for them; ... in the first place because they will be produced *by the Spirit of God who lives in (them)* (I Cor 3,16) and, in the second place, because they will instill the Christian spirit in them and, possessing this spirit, which is none other than the spirit of Jesus Christ, they will live this true life which draws so many benefits to man that it leads him with certainty to eternal life" (196,3).

4.9. Signposts on the way: God present in creatures

We know that the heavens proclaim the glory of God yet De La Salle puts creatures on a level with God only in the sense that God has first descended to creatures and thus one can view them "as God knows them" (R 77). Every creature reveals a relationship with God who created and preserves it. All goodness comes from him (EM 13, 18, 31). Consequently, creatures are always in second place if not secondary. They are always insufficient and, at times, dangerous. It is true that Paul mentions the way which leads from creatures to God (Act 17, 24 +) but that was in a particular circumstance — the fulness of time had come and the touchstone is no longer creatures but Jesus Christ. De La Salle moves in the same direction but he does not neglect the beginners. Children go to God through the sacramental mediation of people — the tenderness and affection of the Christian educator who puts himself in the hands of God to be a guardian angel, a minister of the Church, an ambassador of Christ and of the same God. The beginners in prayer must start very slowly, aided by others (EM 29).

On the other hand, from De La Salle's existential point of view, things are not considered solely in themselves but rather are threaded through the basic options of a particular life and which, for him, are summarized in making the will of God the rule of one's life. We know that creatures have their own *raison d'être* and autonomy, their laws and particular purposes (GS 36). Thus, De La Salle clearly accepts, for example, that psychology and pedagogy have their own laws — their auton-

omy — that one cannot treat all children in the same way, that it makes more sense to begin from French rather than from Latin, etc. For such initiatives he has his place in the history of western pedagogy. On the other hand, however, it falls to man to link it all to God according to the divine will in each specific case. In other words, it is a question of living in the world but not of the world. Creatures form part of the journey towards God in that they are forms of his voice and of his presence, elements in a divine plan that we have to bring to fulness. But what is always the most important is God himself.

4.10. On high seas without either sails or oars

What is the will of God for me here and now? As we have seen, De La Salle indicated appropriate ways of discovering this — e.g. Scripture, the duties of one's state, the Rule, the superior, and also natural necessities. But this does not exhaust everything since there still remain ample areas of mystery. De La Salle dramatically experienced this in his own life and he was a persistent and zealous watchman of the revelation of the will of God in his personal history — through fasts and sacrifices, in seeking advice and in nights of prayer, in struggles and shocks — full of faith and abandonment into the hands of God. Thus, "poverty is the secure foundation for those who have true faith" (ME 176,2) and detachment from everything indicates "great faith because he who detaches himself from everything puts himself in the hands of Divine Providence, like a man who throws himself into the sea without oars or sails" (MF 134,1). Such was the life of De La Salle which came to an end with the admirable "I adore in all things the will of God for me". What was the result of this attitude? Something rather surprising — i.e. the profound conviction, and his solemn and reiterated confession, that the founder of the Christian Schools was not De La Salle but rather God himself. His whole life was a difficult but beautiful maieutic experience which continually enlightened this conviction which he experienced and appreciated. In this experience, as in the Bible itself, revelation and credibility were merged.

5. CONCLUSION

According to De La Salle, there were many grades of faith. In its full and constant form it was equivalent to the spirit of faith. To have the spirit of faith is to live the theological life — faith, hope and charity — intensely. It is to centre oneself in God, and in his will, seeking him and allowing oneself to be led by him. Hence the primacy of the Scriptures and their maxims, linked with the presence of God, prayer, and total abandonment into the hands of Providence. From this, too, stems the constant importance of obedience in all its forms - the Rule, the superior — and the vocation to the ministry of education in faith. However, to centre on God is, the same time, to relativise everything else, to detach oneself from all that is created.

It is true that the expression "the spirit of faith" does not figure prominently in De La Salle's work, yet its contents flourish there with richness and vigour, including in texts which do not mention it a single time as in, for example, Da, EM, L, or MR. The explanation of the spirit of faith (R 76-94), on which we have commented, is the basic score which gives us the key for re-reading the other writings and for discovering in them different orchestrations of the themes which we have seen and analysed. It is the context which enables us to situate the texts in the deep and living unity of their author.

¹ We will leave aside the possible sources and the biographies.

² In the entries on faith, spirit, and Holy Spirit in VL there are two quotations too many and there are 19 missing.

³ At times this distinction is both very slight and difficult because the religious context of the work and of the author give religious connotations to many secular words. When in doubt — which was frequently — we have opted in favour of meaning A. If we say, for example, that the word "*foi*" is mentioned 9 times (A: 7) and that "*croire*" is mentioned three times, we wish to indicate that with the word "*foi*" there are two examples with meaning B and that with the word "*croire*" each example carries meaning A.

⁴ Altogether the word "*foi*" figures 733 times (A: 714, of which 55 figure in the expression "*esprit de foi*"; B: 19). With regard to meaning A it is necessary to note the following: it appears with most frequency in MF (122 times), Da (119), R (89), EM (78), DC and MD (61 in each). It appears least frequently in FD (once), L (2), CE (3), RC (9), PA (10), E (18), I (19), MR (23). The word "*foi*" does not appear in MH or in RD, in either meaning A or B, while in FV and RB it appears only in

meaning B (once in each work).

⁵ In the following words we will indicate three categories: A) the words which do not appear in VL — they are presented here without any special significance. B) those words which appear fewer than 12 times (the number is indicated in parenthesis) and C) those which figure more than 12 times (indicated by an *).

A) Fidele * (adj/noun), infidèle * (adj/noun), fidèlement *, infidèlement, fidélité *, infidélité (5) fier (verb), se fier (1), se défier (4), défiance (3), méfiance, méfier, se méfier, méfiant, confier *, se confier (10), être confié *, confiance *, confidement (4), loyauté, déloyauté, loyal, déloyal, perfidie (1), perfide, trahir (11), trahison, traître (3), agnosticisme, scepticisme. B) Croyance, croyant, incroyance, incroyant, croyable, incroyable (3), créance *, incréance, créancier, crédible, crédibilité, crédit (3), crédule, incrédule (3), crédulité, incrédulité (5). C) Véritable *, véritablement *. vérité *, vrai *, vraiment (7), doute *, douter*, douteux (5), faussement (4), fausser, fausseté (2), faux(-sse) *.

Put another way, of these 58 words, 26 do not figure in VL and 17 of the others appear only infrequently. There remain 15 words (7 of which are rather distant in meaning — i.e. group C) which need to be studied in more detail. For example, "creance": appears 19 times (A: 17) especially in E, Da and Db (7, 5 and twice respectively); meaning B (twice) is found in RB.

⁶ The spirit of faith is mentioned as follows; R (40 times), MF (6), RC (4), MD (3), CE (1) and FD (1). The R mentions it as such 29 times and a further 11 times in an equivalent form: "*cet esprit*". Consequently, the spirit of faith is not mentioned in texts such as EM, L, MR, or Da.

⁷ "*Esprit*" appears 1,694 times (A: 1,541 — of which 55 are in the expression the spirit of faith; B: 153). It refers to God (11 times), is used with reference to the spirit of Jesus Christ (112), to the Spirit of God (166) and, above all, to the Holy Spirit (426). All of this gives a considerable total of 715 occasions in which it is mentioned. Then, much further behind in usage, we have, in descending order of frequency: the spirit of Christianity (43 times), the spirit of the mystery (39 - EM 30, R 8 and MF 1), the Christian spirit (26), the spirit of the Institute (26), the spirit of penance or penitence (25), the spirit of the world (21), the spirit of religion (20, of our state (19), of the Church (19), of a maxim (16- EM 15, R 1), the spirit of prayer (13), of life (8), of childhood (8), the interior spirit (5), the spirit of a community (4), of piety (4). The following are quoted three times; the spirit of adoration, of humility, of justice, of mortification, of prayer, of your vocation, of zeal (at least indirectly) while the following are mentioned twice: the spirit of charity, of community, of the Gospel, of dissoluteness, of obedience, of poverty, of regularity, of retirement, of satisfaction, of union. Finally, the following are mentioned once: the spirit of accusation, of disinterestedness, of intelligence, of 'martyrdom, of wisdom, of sacrifice, of St. Joseph, of the Society, the Catholic spirit, the ecclesiastical spirit, and the episcopal spirit.

⁸ We will see, for example, that in Da, EM and MR one finds the essentials of the spirit of faith despite the fact that it is not mentioned as such. To take another example, in Meditation 90 — on behaviour towards God — it is surprising that De La Salle could touch on a theme very close to the spirit of faith without even mentioning the word "faith". Something similar appears in Meditation 91 with regard to obedience and the apostolate. Finally, one should not forget that the expression "the spirit of faith" does not appear in either the Bible or in the Latin vocabulary in general (cf. Bovis, I.e., 604) Neither, for example, does it appear in Berulle, which, perhaps is not exceptional, despite the fact that he often speaks of the life of faith.

⁹ The words "piety" and "religion" frequently go beyond the confines of a particular virtue and become synonymous with the whole Christian life so that, at times, there emerge equivalences for the spirit of faith in (the spirit of Christianity, the spirit of piety, and the spirit of religion (MD 58,1; MF 160,1).

¹⁰ "Wisdom" is one of the words used by St. Paul in speaking of the spirit of faith (cf. Bovis, I.e., 605 +). According to De La Salle, the education in the spirit of Christianity leads to the wisdom of God (MR 194,2). God has called us to the ministry "to procure his glory and to give to children the spirit of wisdom and of light so that they will know him and in order to enlighten the eyes of their hearts" (MR 206,1). "It is for God alone to confer true wisdom which is the Christian spirit" (MF 157,2).

¹¹ Christian prudence judges things "by the maxims and rules of the Gospel and according to the discernment which God himself makes of things" (Da 185). This description could also be appropriate for the spirit of faith.

¹² Cf. *infra* IV,7.

¹³ Cf. R 76, 94; MF 84,3. As we have seen, the spirit of Christianity is mentioned 43 times and the Christian spirit 26 times — 69 times in all (more than the 55 references to the spirit of faith).

¹⁴ R 71, 72. The following, taken from all the texts, are mentioned: the spirit of the Institute (26 times); the spirit of the Society (1); the spirit of our state (19); the spirit of your vocation (3) — 49 times in total.

¹⁵ Cf. "Stylistic analysis of the chapter on the spirit of faith" in MAYMÍ, P., " *Vida de fe y catequética de la fe, según S.J.B. De La Salle*", Instituto Pontificio San Pio X, Madrid, 1966, p. 187-217.

¹⁶ In effect it is sufficient to compare the frequency of vocabulary among the different texts: (1) *Foi*: Da 124 times (A: 119); Db 68 (A: 60); DC 61; GA 39; PA 10. (2) *Croire*: Da 81 (A: 53); Db 89 (A: 74); DC 22 (A: 10); GA 32 (A: 29); PA 9. (3) *Esprit de foi*: it is not quoted specifically in these works. However, we can mention the reference in Db (p. 22 +) which is a little technical: with respect to God there are three ways of believing — "croire Dieu": to believe that there is only one God — "croire a Dieu": to believe all that God has revealed because it is the very truth — "croire en Dieu": to believe that God is good, that he is our ultimate end, and to put all our confidence in him. Sinners believe in the first and second ways but not in the third because they do not put all their confidence in God. In this we encounter the traditional formula: "Credere Deo, credere Deum, credere in Deum" (cf. for example, de LUBAC, H., *Meditation sur l'Église*, Desclée de Brouwer, 1964, p. 24 +).

¹⁷ Cf. GALLEGO, S., " *Vida y pensamiento de S. Juan Bautista De La Salle*", BAG, Madrid, 1986, Vol. II, p. 797 +.

¹⁸ Chapter 2 of the RC (p. 3-5) adds important variants to this chapter of the R. 1) It replaces the introduction to the R with another (p. 3) on the importance and necessity of the spirit proper to each Community. 2) It adds that the New Testament must be considered as "their first and principal rule" (p. 4). For comparison of these texts and of the Rule of 1705 cf. MAYMÍ, op. cit., pp. 43-73, and for a study of the contents, pp. 89-115. In the RC the spirit of faith is mentioned only four times, twice in this chapter and twice in chapter 16 on regularity. It figures among the interior supports (p. 39) and among the commandments proper to the Brother (p. 40): "By the spirit of faith you will do everything for God alone". "To act only for God" is the briefest possible synthesis of the spirit of faith.

¹⁹ Cf. MAYMI, P., op. cit., pp. 117-120. For the "spirit of

our Institute", cf. ib., p. 91 +, 120.

²⁰ These three effects of faith are indicated in this systematic enumeration. Occasionally other effects, which are concretions of the previous, are also mentioned — for example, in MF 96,2 and 3 it speaks of the disdain for what the world values and of zeal for the education of the poor.

²¹ In the rest of R the expression "spirit of faith" appears only 11 more times, in speaking of the commandments proper to the Brother (p. 5), of the four interior supports of the Society (p. 6, 65), in the directions for the examination of conscience (p. 28), in the topics of conversation for recreation (p. 64, 65 and 66, lines 11,13 and 19), in the passages referring to acting through the spirit of faith (p. 95, lines 5 and 6) and, as we have seen, in speaking of faith (p. 154). They are very short quotations or simple references which are intended to indicate in what the spirit of faith consists.

²² We must not forget, as St. Thomas says in the "*Summa*" (2-2, q. 2. a. 9), that faith is the assent of the understanding to the extent that it is moved by the will (attracted by God). As we have seen, De La Salle consistently recalls that faith without works is dead. He is not interested in knowledge which is not virtue nor in faith which is not also life and the spirit of faith. Is it the primacy of faith or of charity? Cf. LOTTIN, O., "*Raison pratique et foi pratique*", in "*Études de Morale, Histoire et doctrine*", J. Duculot, Gembloux 1961, pp. 183-199; also MAYMÍ, P., op. cit., pp. 28-35 and 126-138. In synthesis: speculative faith enlightens (speculative judgement) while practical faith directs (practical judgement) and charity moves to action. "The Christian must do everything for the love of God but his love must be directed by a great spirit of faith" (LOTTIN, op. cit., p. 198H with author's emphasis). "That your faith be effective and animated by charity and moves you to detachment in everything..." (R 155). The fullest expression of faith is martyrdom which De La Salle considered as a favor and blessing (MF 84,3; 87,3; 89,2; 117,3).

²³ In EM the word "faith" appears 78 times of which 41 (more than half) refer to the phrase "act(s) of faith".

²⁴ In MD the word "faith" appears 62 times altogether. In Meditation 9 alone it appears 10 times — 5 of them in this form: "this (simple) attitude of faith".

²⁵ Altogether it appears 8 times which, added to the 10 previous quotations, gives a total of 18 quotations. This is almost a third of the total in the text — i.e. 58.

²⁶ In MF more than half of the quotations on faith (67 out of a total of 122) are found in only 8 meditations with the following frequency: St. Thomas Apostle (MF 84:12 times — with precisely his incredulity as the starting point; similarly in MD 32); St. Peter of Verona, martyr, (MF 117: 11 times); St. Stephen, the first martyr (MF 87: 10 times); St. Peter Apostle (MF 139; 10 times); the Epiphany (MF 96; 8 times); St. Denis (175; 6 times); St. Barnabas (MF 134; 5 times) and St. Catherine (MF 192: 5 times).

²⁷ The 16 meditations have their own numeration but it seems better to quote them according to the overall numeration of the meditations of the Saint which has usually been used since 1922. In that numeration they are numbered from 193 to 208.

²⁸ Because of this it is a little surprising — it must have been a lapse — that he says in (197,2) that it is not sufficient to give the spirit of Christianity to children and to teach them the mysteries and the speculative truths of religion. It is surprising in the sense that, as we have seen, the spirit of Christianity involves all of this (194,3).

Complementary themes:

Abandonment; Christian; Detachment; Direction by God; Disciples; Employment; Heaven; Inspirations; Institute; Maxims; Motives; Obedience; The presence of God; Recollection; Renunciation; Sacred Scripture; The spirit of Christianity; State; The will of God; The work of God; Zeal.

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37. FORMATION

Summary:

1. De La Salle's intention: to form¹ children. - 2. A journey with many stages: forming a new society. 2.1. At first forming schoolteachers in Reims: 2.1.1. bringing them into his own home, 2.1.2. with a consequent change in the teachers. 2.2. They formed a new community. 2.2.1. Influenced by Père Barré, 2.3. De La Salle accepted his call to be a Formator, 2.4. and was led to form a small congregation, 2.4.1. notably in the assembly of 1686. 2.5. At the end of his life he admitted that he had begun to form the Brothers: 2.5.1. by forming a novitiate, 2.5.2. a preparatory novitiate; 2.5.3. in 1691 he decided to form a novitiate to form candidates. - 3. A broader area of concern: forming schoolteachers: 3.1. by providing a professional formation, 3.1.1. and genuine competence. 3.2. It was the kind of formation that many at that time were looking for but that was not generally available. 3.2.1. Consider, for example the program of De Chennevieres, 3.2.2. the work and the programs of Demia, 3.2.3. to understand better the attempts of De La Salle to open "seminaries" for training teachers. - 4. The theological meaning of these activities: formation in the light of the doctrine of creation and incarnation. 4.1. directed towards interiority: forming acts of faith; 4.2. in a creature formed in the image of God; 4.3. such as would serve to form the man-God; 4.4. in order to form the Church.

Except for those occasions when he temporarily replaced a missing Brother — in Reims at Saint-Jacques (B1 244 B), in **Paris** at Saint-Sulpice (Ibid. 288 A, 302 C), or in Grenoble at Saint-Laurent (B2 101 B) — De La Salle was not di-

rectly involved in **forming** the children of the artisans and the poor.

That is the reason, however, why he became progressively involved with a group of schoolteachers and was able to contribute to their **formation**. In the same way he was led to **form** the brothers, to form a novitiate, and to **form** a new Society in the Church.

He thus brought into being and gave stability to an enterprise that many of the leaders of the educational and catechetical movements in seventeenth-century France had barely begun or only envisioned.

In the writings of De La Salle the verb *former* is not limited to these institutional images. The abstract *noun formation* is used only once (CE 65 B), and that in reference to forming the letter of the alphabet. For that reason, if we want to penetrate the idea the Founder had of **formation**, we must

¹ Translator's note. It is not always possible to translate the French verb *former* directly into idiomatic English in expressions such as "to form children" or "to form a novitiate." Furthermore, English has no single word to translate *formateur*, the one who forms. Since, however, words related to formation, including even "formator" have become customary in Institute usage, and since the original French of this article analyzes the implications of the verb *former* in De La Salle's writings, it seems best to transliterate the original rather than to provide an idiomatic English translation.

Similarly, the word "seminary" in English is used almost exclusively for institutions for the training of candidates for the priesthood. The French sources, however, refer to the training schools for rural teachers, as well as the junior novitiate in Reims as *seminaires*. It seems best for the purposes of translation and context to use the corresponding English word, but in quotes to indicate this variant English usage.

examine the various ways he uses the verb *former* in the light of his experience and decisions, as well as those of his predecessors.

1. FORMING CHILDREN

Four passages in the Founder's meditations speak of "forming children" and three others use equivalent terms, i.e., "to form your disciples" (MF 100.2), or "those whom you ought to instruct" (MD 37.1).

Concerning the origin of this "assignment", this "obligation", this "duty", De La Salle writes it is "God himself who has brought them to you, ... Providence which has charged you to form them to piety" (Ibid.); or, providing a more interior motive, "If you really love Jesus Christ..." (MF 102.2).

To form children means also to "instruct" them, to "teach" them, to "implant" in the hearts of the children the holy love of Jesus Christ (Ibid.) This involves "forming them in piety... a piety that is solid" (MR 208.1); "forming them in Christian living" (MF 170.1), "in the spirit of Christian living", "to put into practice the truths of the Gospel"; forming them "to be disciples [of Jesus Christ]" (MF 102.2), who "has entrusted to your care the building up of his body which is the Church" (MR 205.3).

Like Saint Cassian or Saint Ignatius of Antioch, both of them martyrs, the Brothers apply themselves "with all possible care" by acquiring the necessary competence to instruct the children. The personal formation of the teachers means "feasting on", "filling oneself with the sacred books (as did Saint Jerome: MF 170.1), in order to be "completely filled with God" (as was Saint John Chrysostom: MF 100.2).

When applied to children, the *verb former* can have a more restricted meaning as, for example, in expressions such as "having been formed to hold the pen properly" (CE 55 B), or controlling properly the carriage of the body and its parts (RB 3 A).

De La Salle will say of children who are not yet capable of serious reflection that "their minds are not as yet well formed" (MR 203.2). In this case, they "usually conform to the example of their teachers" (MR 202.2). At about the age of

12, "when their minds are well formed and they have been instructed in the mysteries of our religion" (GA 373 A), children should receive their first communion.

With "the intent of forming Christians" (Da II A), John Baptist de La Salle composed a series of catechisms entitled *The Duties of a Christian towards God and (he Means to be Able to Perform them Well* (1703).

The seventeenth century was aware of this meaning of the *verb former*: to take someone as a model, to arrange, to instruct, to fashion, to propose examples for imitation, e.g., "This tutor has formed the mind of his disciple very well. He formed his style on that of Cicero". The originality of De La Salle consists in the fact that he "formed" schoolteachers for their specialized work and gave stability to their commitment to it. Among these teachers, a certain number of them became the first Brothers of the Christian Schools.

2. FORMING A NEW SOCIETY

De La Salle's Memoir on the Origins covers the first fourteen years (BER 22) of the emerging institution of the Society of Brothers, years that also saw the Founder discover his personal vocation. "I had thought that the supervision that I assumed over the schools and teachers would only amount to an external supervision which would not have obliged to anything more than to provide for their living expenses and to make sure that they did their work with piety and attention" (CL 10, 106). The difference between John Baptist de La Salle and his predecessors in the educational movement of the seventeenth century lies in the fact that he threw in his lot with the teachers and adopted their lifestyle, albeit after a progressive involvement lasting four or five years.

2.1. Forming *schoolteachers in Reims*

Considered at first by Nyel as "the protector and promoter of his work in Reims" (BL 1 166 B), Canon De La Salle was concerned about the situation of the teachers who had been recruited to open the schools at Saint-Maurice and Saint-Jacques. Accordingly, as Christmas was approach-

ing in 1679, he rented a house for them that was near his own.

In this way there was a developing reciprocity between the initiative of De La Salle and the response of the teachers. The teachers profited by their life together but not quite as much as the canon would have wished. As for Nyel, he was unable to keep track of the teachers from day to day (BL 1 170 A), and so he left the responsibility for their personal formation more and more in the hands of De La Salle.

De La Salle gave them a daily schedule (MAC 15, see translation¹ p. 24) and brought them into his home for meals, "during which there was reading; while De La Salle took these occasions to give them some useful suggestions of their duties as teachers" (MAC 17, translation¹ p. 27). During Holy Week in 1680 he kept them in his home all day long, from morning prayer until after night prayer. "In this way he motivated them to be faithful to the religious exercises he had prescribed for them earlier. The principal practices that he had enjoined were meditation, vocal prayer, and control of the senses. He had never before realized the need they had for this kind of support until he observed the teachers and had to deal with them close at hand" (MAC 17).

"He noticed in some of them, that their piety was superficial and vacillating; some of them even had base tendencies due to their lack of a good upbringing. Accordingly, he determined to form their exterior conduct and at the same time to develop their self-control" (MAC 18). Their life together was in this way directed to the formation of the teachers as total persons; it was not merely an academy where they were taught nothing more than how to carry out the duties required by their employment.

2.1.1. *Having them live in his own home*

Once Nyel saw the transformation of these five or six teachers, he urged the young canon to keep them permanently in his home. This was accomplished in 1681 on June 24, the day usually assigned for the renewal of leases in the province of Champagne. Nyel, who had been part of the group for six months (BER 45), had the joy of seeing the residence assume the form and the lifestyle of a community,

The Memoir on the Origins tells us of the profound feelings of repugnance that De La Salle had to overcome: "If I had even suspected that the care I was taking of the schoolteachers out of pure charity would ever have made it my duty to live with them, I would have dropped the whole project. For since, naturally speaking, I considered the men whom I was obliged to employ in the schools, especially at the beginning, as being inferior to my valet, the mere thought that I would have to live with them would have been insupportable to me. Indeed, I experienced a great deal of unpleasantness when I first had them come to my house. This feeling lasted for two years" (BL 1 169).

2.1.2. *A change takes place in the teachers*

"The first thing that the man of God did, after bringing the schoolteachers into his home, was to convince them that they should all go to confession to the same confessor" (BER 43). Very soon, in spite of his own reluctance to confuse the roles of superior and confessor, he did in fact become the confessor for them all. This produced "marvelous results" since "the servant of God had a remarkable talent for that ministry and a very special grace to perform it well" (BER 44).

"At the end of six months, as Christmas was approaching, he sent M. Nyel to Rethel to establish schools there" (BER 45), but he was unwilling to send with him any of the young teachers since he felt it was still necessary "to keep them with him in order to complete their formation" (BL 1 180 D). In this way there developed a division of responsibilities: Nyel would guide the communities in Rethel, Guise and Laon, while "De La Salle guided and formed the community at Reims" (BER 45). De La Salle had not wanted to expose the young teachers to the risks involved in a new foundation: "All that he had done up until then in Reims to form the schoolteachers was, in his mind, only a first step toward the perfection to which he wanted to bring them. He feared to expose these tender young plants prematurely" (MAR 32, translation¹ p. 21).

But "once he thought he had brought the schools to the point where they could survive" (MAC 24, translation¹, p. 24), the teachers that he had brought to live with him became disenchanted with the lifestyle they had so much appreciated in

the beginning. Almost all of them went away and "renounced forever the idea that they had entertained of devoting themselves to the instruction of the young" (MAC 25, translation¹, p. 24). No doubt, they did not all leave of their own accord, since Brother Bernard explains that "De La Salle was even obliged to send away some of them who, although they were devout enough, had neither the talent nor the calling for teaching school, and who had been accepted in the first place only because they were needed" (BER 46). And so, "in a short time, that is to say in less than ten months, it was an entirely new community composed, with one or two exceptions, of entirely new candidates" (Ibid.).

The dialogue between John Baptist de La Salle had thus come to an impasse. The ideal of the Christian teacher that he wanted to share with them had at first seduced them, but then became a burden. That was because it was a matter of forming candidates to a way of life that can only be entered as the result of a call.

Momentarily discouraged by these departures, De La Salle soon saw a new generation of teachers present themselves: "It was after the first six months, toward the beginning of the year 1682, that new candidates came forth who had both the talent for the school and piety as well as the disposition to be able to live in community. And it was thus that there began to appear in the house an authentic form of community life" (BER 47).

2.2. *They form a new community*

Maillefer, too, notes the radical transformation that occurred. The new arrivals, "together with the small number that had remained faithful formed a new community, more numerous and more perfect" (MAC 26, translation¹, p. 25). The new regulations adapted to their lifestyle, a poor but identical habit which distinguished them from people of the world (Ibid.), and eventually calling themselves by the name "Brother", all these characteristics which were developed between 1682 and 1686 reveal that a very distinctive group was coming into being, the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Prior to these developments, John Baptist de

La Salle himself had taken a new step forward: on June 24 1682 he left the mansion on the Rue Sainte-Marguerite and went to live with the teachers in the house on the Rue Neuve "which the Brothers can rightly honor as the cradle of their Institute" (BL 1 224).

2.2.1. *The influence of Père Barré*

The Memoir of the Origins has already been cited to indicate Canon De La Salle's reluctance to admit the teachers into his home.

In order to resolve the "great perplexity" (BL 1 171) on what course to follow, he had recourse to Père Barré, "the one man in the world who seemed the best suited in these circumstances to give De La Salle advice that would conform to the designs of God" (Ibid.). "Since he was the first to conceive of and the first to establish the Christian and gratuitous schools in France, he had a special grace in this matter" (BL 1 172).

"In this period of uncertainty, God provided De La Salle with an opportunity to make the trip to Paris on some business. He took the opportunity to go to visit Père Barré, who at the time was living with the Minimis in the Place Royale" (BER 37).

The holy Minim strongly advised De La Salle to bring the teachers to live in his own home. He encouraged the canon to commit himself totally to the schools, "fully convinced that God had chosen him to direct the work that Barre himself had not been able to bring about. Père Barré had succeeded well enough with the schools for girls, but those he established here and there for boys, especially at Saint-Gervais, where he had six teachers, were less satisfactory. The teachers he recruited became so discouraged that they began to go astray and left, one after the other" (Ibid.).

We have already noted how De La Salle followed the advice of the Minim and how authentic vocations came to replace those who had departed. How was it possible that he would have a better chance to succeed than his advisor? De La Salle was not a religious. Therefore it was possible for him to live on a day-to-day basis with the first Brothers and so to devote himself completely to the formation of those with whom he had become completely incarnated.

2.3. *A vocation to be a formator*

"Towards the end of the year 1682, it became apparent to De La Salle that God was calling him to take charge of the schools" (BER 49), an important statement which could well be based on the Memoir on the Origins (BL 1 193 D). The discovery of what was needed to stabilize the teachers in their vocation was, for the young canon, the beginning of an awareness that his personal vocation was changing.

Now that he was living with the teachers, he was thereby exposed to being challenged by them. When they became anxious about their future prospects and their security, he replied that they should abandon themselves to divine providence. "You speak inspiringly in the midst of your ease, they told him, ...if our enterprise fails, you will land on your two feet and the ruin of our situation would not involve your own... Where shall we go and what shall we do if the schools fail or if people tire of us?" (BL 188 C).

This intervention sets in opposition the "we" and the "you". He was still not one of them, he was only living among them. His word had no formative weight because it did not arise out of their situation itself. (It was doubtless this perception which would lead him to work tirelessly to have a Brother elected to head the community). Here is a new moment of discernment: "If I remain what I am and they remain what they are, their temptation will persist" (BL 1 191 C D). "I must decide to resign my canonry to free myself for the care of the schools and the training of the teachers who will direct them. Finally, since I no longer feel any attraction to the vocation of a canon, it would seem that it has already left me before I have given it up" (BL 1 192 B).

On August 16, 1683, De La Salle resigned his canonry in favor of Father Faubert, a deserving priest. As for De La Salle's patrimony, the teachers expected, as did everyone else, that he would use it to set up a foundation for the schools. But on the advice of Pere Barre, he distributed his wealth to feed the poor during the famine of the winter of 1683-1684. Now, he could write, as he did in the Memoir on the Habit, "This community is neither established nor founded on anything except divine Providence" (MH 2).

When Adrien Nyel returned to Rouen on October 26, 1685, this left the schools in Rethel, Guise and Laon without direction. (Chateau-Porcien it seems had already been closed). Yielding to the pleas of his friend, Father Guyart, the pastor of the church of Saint-Pierre at Laon, De La Salle finally agreed to assume also the direction of these establishments (BL 1 230-231).²

2.4. *Forming a small congregation*

"Seeing himself in charge of a number of schoolmasters scattered in various towns, De La Salle thought that the time had come to form them into a small congregation" (Ibid.).

His meditations on the founders of religious orders, give a graphic description of this process of foundation. Writing on Saint Norbert, De La Salle writes: "The Spirit of God which animated this saint led him to resign his benefices, sell his patrimonial goods and distribute the money to the poor... He led, besides, an extremely austere life and chose for himself several companions... Like him, they lived in great austerity and bodily mortification... Their religious exercises consisted in obedience, applying themselves to prayer and mortification, and in preaching the Gospel. It was in this way that Saint Norbert formed his order" (MF 132.2).

The progressive pattern of renouncement that we have just seen in De La Salle is at the same time the process by which the community of the Christian Schools was formed. Furthermore, the Founder wrote for his Brothers that the purpose of their Institute was the same as that of Saint Ignatius who "began to form his company" (MF 148.3), as also that of Saint Norbert.

Blain portrays De La Salle at the head of twenty or so teachers, thinking "of forming them into a small congregation" ... "To change the group of teachers into a regular community what was required was to give them a special garb, rules and constitutions, and to establish among them, perfect uniformity in all things, in conformity with their vocation" (BL 1 231-232).

The Founder did all this from within the community, since he shared the condition of the teachers and devoted himself to forming them. It was not as if an ecclesiastical superior were leading the

teachers into the structure of an established religious order. (In this regard, it is important to understand not in a technical sense the expression "regular community" as Blain uses it). The structure of the Community of the Christian Schools derives from the various assemblies held by the Brothers and their creativity in establishing programs of formation.

2.4.1. *The Assembly of 1686*

From the feast of the Ascension until Trinity Sunday in 1686 (and not 1684 — see CL 2 21-22), "the humble Founder called together his principal disciples... He did not suggest to them his own views, nor did he insinuate his own ideas. He left them free to think and to say whatever they liked... All that he reserved for himself was to listen to them and to follow whatever the majority might decide" (BL 1 232-233).

This was not the moment to set for themselves a definitive Rule. "Apart from divine revelation, nothing but experience can teach people all that they need to know about the commitments they might wish to contract... In a word, by having the Brothers live it first, the Founder established little by little what he hoped to see established one day on the basis of wise regulations" (Ibid. 233-234). The same attitude prevailed with regard to perpetual vows. They were content for the present with a temporary vow of obedience.

Here can be seen at work his formative strategy, helping the teachers to take into their own hands the organization of their community life, modifying the rules as the need would arise. Since the question of the habit was not yet ready for decision, this was remanded to "the prudence of the virtuous Founder" (Ibid. 238), a matter which he settled a few months later.

It is worth rereading the inspired page where Blain comments on the name "Brothers" by which the teachers would be known from then on: "The change in the habit brought about a change in their name... This name reminds them that the charity which gave birth to their Institute must be its soul and its life; that it should dominate all their deliberations and give form to all their proposals" (Ibid. 241).

2.5. *"I had begun by forming Brothers" (L 117)*

"May I say, Sir, that you were apparently misinformed when you were told that I have been doing much good in the Church and that I have been sending teachers to towns and villages to teach the young. It is true that I had begun by forming Brothers to conduct schools gratuitously, but for some time now I have been relieved of the responsibility for directing them. It is one of the Brothers, Brother Barthelemy by name, who is now in charge of them. He lives here in this same house and the Brothers, even those of Saint-Denis acknowledge him as their Superior" (BL 2 413; L 117).

In this letter, written toward the end of his life, the Founder recognized his vocation as a formator for the Brothers, and he distinguishes this role from the responsibility of being Superior which he was finally able to hand over to a Brother from the Society. Despite his humble protestation, one can see that the work which God had led him to undertake had met with success.

It is well known with what tenacity De La Salle had tried to persuade the Brothers to choose a Superior from among their number "since the Good of the Institute demanded that it be governed by one of them" (BL 1 262). In the face of the opposition to a lay Superior on the part of some "ecclesiastical authorities", the Founder was planning to prepare Brother Henri l'Heureux for the priesthood. The death of that Brother gave strength to the conviction that the Brothers should all remain laymen.

The Memoir on the Habit, composed undoubtedly in 1690, presents in concise fashion the lay character of the Community of the Christian Schools: "Those who compose this community are all laymen, without clerical training and with an education that is at best mediocre. Providence has willed that those few who presented themselves for admission to the community and had received the tonsure, or had begun clerical study, should not continue along that path" (MH 9).³ (For the meaning of these terms in the original French, see CL 5 304). This refusal of the priesthood is something close to a fundamental presupposition: "the exercises of the community and the

work in the schools demand the commitment of the total person" (MH 10). The teachers recruited by Nyel did not have the vocation to become Brothers. In several places, on the other hand, the biographers report that some young men, attracted by the spiritual personality of De La Salle and by the atmosphere in the group that he animated, renounced clerical studies in order to join the community (BL in 1 224 C says "several"; in 236 A he says "most").

2.5.1. *Forming a novitiate*

Letter 117 makes allusion to the teachers sent into the villages. We shall shortly have the occasion to see De La Salle, probably in 1687, contribute to the establishment of a "seminary" for teachers in the rural schools. Blain depicts the zealous Founder, during the same period, "**forming** another seminary distinct from that of the Brothers" (BL 1 278).

The Founder himself uses the same term in writing from Marseille on December 16, 1712 to Brother Gabriel Drolin in Rome: "It is to be expected that the novitiate that I have just begun will be well **formed**" (L 31.9). The preceding letter says something similar "I expect that the novitiate will soon be ready".

The Memoir on the Habit mentions three distinct institutions: the Community of the Christian Schools, the Seminary for Rural Teachers, and "some young boys who have the capacity and the disposition for piety; as soon as it is judged appropriate and they themselves determine to do so, they then enter the community" (MH 7).

2.5.2. *The preparatory novitiate*

Blain gives us further details about the origin of this last-mentioned institution: "A third community, distinct from the other two, was formed at about the same time in De La Salle's house [on the Rule Neuve]. It was composed of a number of boys, fourteen or fifteen years old, whom the Spirit of God had inspired with the desire of joining the new Institute... They were absolutely determined to be the children of the one they had chosen as their father... He made of them a group apart and assigned to them exercises suitable for their age and likely to nourish their vocation, preparing them for the Brothers' ministry and helping them

to grow in virtue and piety... This junior "seminary" for these young fellows, which served as a preparatory center and a novitiate for the Institute, was a place the servant of God loved to visit" (BL 1 280).

Brother Maurice-Auguste does not hesitate to see in the program that Blain details the schedule of an authentic novitiate (CL 11 50). Blain compares it with the novitiate at Saint Yon without discerning any essential differences. The Brothers who organized the junior novitiates in the nineteenth century adopted the same program without scruple.

It should be noted in passing that, in accordance with the dictionaries of the time, that the *verb former* is a term applied to the gardener who, e.g., should "take care to form the trees." The terms *pepiniere* (BL 1 312 A) and *seminaire* (BL 1 280) that Blain uses to describe this institution correspond to this cultivation of plants and trees.

2.5.3. *Establishing a novitiate to form candidates*

The transfer of the "seminary" for junior Brothers to the parish of Saint-Sulpice proved to be its demise. The candidates, assigned frequently to serve the parish Masses, were distracted from their intention to enter the Community of the Christian Schools. By the end of 1690 this institution disappeared, as did the "seminary" at Reims. To make matters worse, half of the community Brothers left. The Founder saw his work profoundly shaken.

After considerable reflection, he was inspired, as Blain relates, to adopt a four-point program which concluded in this fashion: "to establish a novitiate to **form** candidates" (BL 1 312). This time it was no longer a question of young men between 14 and 17 years old. The novitiate was to serve, on the one hand, to form new subjects who would be forthcoming, and, on the other hand, "to assemble there under his eyes all those who had entered the community in the previous three or four years in order to renew their spirit by a good retreat" during the vacation period.

They had such a great need to complete their formation that the holy Founder "thought that he could not do better than to keep them with him for as long a time as possible for the purpose of **forming** them by all the exercises of the interior

life. By good fortune, he had at his disposal some externs from the Seminary for Rural Teachers, and these he used to replace the Brothers that he kept at Vaugirard" (BL 1 315).

The formation of the novices remained a major preoccupation of the Founder, who consecrated a notable part of his efforts to this work, even when he would appoint a master of novices to this function. The letter to Brother Barthelemy, written no doubt in March 1718, since the Founder addresses him as the Superior, manifests the acute awareness the Founder had of the importance of this formation:

"I am writing to you, my very dear Brother, because I am astounded to see the sorry state of your novitiate: the two or three novices are not being **formed** at all and they do not observe the rules any better than when they first entered the house. The new master of novices, himself not having been **formed** for his work, scarcely knows what he should do or what the novices should do. He says he has no rule to follow and neither do the novices... You know that the strength of the Institute depends on whether the novices are well **formed** and fully observant of the rules" (L 4).

The zeal of De La Salle was not limited to the formation of the Brothers. He also played a significant role in the formation of teachers for the rural schools.

3. FORMING SCHOOLTEACHERS

We have already seen in the Memoir on the Habit some references to the Seminary for Teachers in the Rural Schools.

3.1. A professional formation

"There [in Reims] attention is also paid to **forming** schoolteachers for the rural areas in a house distinct from the community which is called a 'seminary.' Those who are formed there live there for only a few years until they are completely formed both in piety and in what relates to their employment" (MH 4). The vocation of the Brothers' community has a much broader scope, even if, before the adoption of the habit, "several candidates came in order to be given a formation and then

to leave" (MH 43). The future teachers "are instructed to sing, to read, and to write perfectly... and then they are placed in some small town or village to perform there the function of clerks, Once they have been assigned, they have no further relationship to the community, except perhaps a sense of gratitude" (MH 6).

3.1.1. Competence

The "Conduct of the Christian Schools", in several contexts provides a detailed treatise on competency for the beginning teacher, with all that he needs to know about methodology, pedagogy, and psychology, as applicable in the first instance to the Brother in his school.

The "Conduct" lists the reasons why students are often absent, among them that "this can come from the fact that the teacher is a beginner who is not yet sufficiently **formed** and does not know how to conduct himself in a school" (CE 184 D). The remedy is not to assign to such a one the sole responsibility for a class "until he can be completely **formed** by a Brother with extensive experience in the schools" (CE 185 A), a reference no doubt to the Brother that the preface calls "the **formator** of beginning teachers" (CE V D, VI A).

The teacher, therefore, "ought to be **formed** to do several things at the same time: to supervise the class, to follow the reader and to correct him when he makes a mistake" (CE 19 C). The Brother also ought to know to give his lessons adapted to the ability of the children: "that is why you ought to study the subject matter and to **form** yourself to understand well the questions and the answers you will use during catechism" (MD 33.3 on the Gospel of the Good Shepherd).

3.2. A formation that was needed but not as yet generally available

This use of the verb "to form" to indicate a professional formation is hardly ever found in the dictionaries of the period. Furetiere, as well as the Dictionary of Trevoux, give a meaning that comes close but not as a technical term: "To take for a model, to equip, to instruct, to fashion, to propose examples to imitate, e.g., a tutor has formed well the minds of his students; a person is formed according to good models; a young man formed for

the world." There is nothing here that expresses exactly a complete preparation for a profession, above all for that of a schoolteacher. The reason is that such formation was unfortunately lacking. There were, however, many proposals in that direction. Brother Maurice-Auguste has researched those from 1685-1688 in a series of four articles in the Bulletin of the Institute from 1969-1970.

3.2.1. *The proposal of M. de Chennevieres*

On the day after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (October 18, 1685), M. de Chennevieres, "priest and servant of the poor," gathered the signatures of 25 of the 42 pastors in Paris, some Doctors of the Sorbonne, as well as the Grand Chantre of Notre Dame, to support his manifesto: "The Incomparable Necessity of Establishing in Every Diocese Seminaries for Schoolteachers, one for Males and one for Females."

"Ever since the world was the world, it has never been heard nor spoken of that there was ever in France any specialized academy to **form** and to equip good schoolteachers capable of instructing and **forming** from the ground up the minds of children... It is true that some pious persons, filled more with zeal and good will than ability and influence, have taken on the duty of beginning something along these lines, but not being supported in such a lofty and holy enterprise, they have not been able to produce any results."

3.2.2. *The work and the proposals of Demia*

"The Urgent Address Concerning the Establishment of a Kind of Seminary for the **Formation** of Schoolteachers" of Charles Demia can be dated sometime after February 1688, since he proposes to finance these "seminaries" with the confiscated goods of the exiled Huguenots.

Children are described as "soft wax, which one can **form** into all kinds of shapes: if the teachers are virtuous, they will make angels out of them, if the teachers are found to be vicious, they will make demons out of them... There is no skill that does not require a suitable time for apprenticeship before being considered a master [the French word for teacher is *maitre*]. Will someone say that the art of teaching young people and governing their minds wisely... will not also require in truth an apprenticeship, which cannot be done properly ex-

cept in a community established for the **formation** of such teachers?... It should be remarked that neither priests nor married persons ought to be considered as suitable candidates for teaching in the schools... If his majesty were to establish seminaries to **form** such teachers, he would thereby procure for the whole kingdom the advantages that the cities of Lyons and Reims are beginning to enjoy by reason of the establishment of such seminaries for teachers."

Demia had already 20 years of experience. His seminary in Lyons formed a number of future priests who were willing to devote some years to elementary teaching before being appointed to a parish. Such an arrangement led the institution, after the death of its Founder, to discontinue the program and to prepare thereafter the future priests for parish work only. But the foundation for women, known as the Sisters of Saint Charles, would perdure.

3.3. De La Salle's attempts to establish "seminaries" for teachers

The experience at Reims to which Demia alludes seems to be that of the Brothers' community at Reims, but not the Seminary for Rural Teachers. De La Salle believed that lay teachers could have a permanent vocation, something that Demia contemplated only with reluctance. That is what gave birth to the Brothers of the Christian Schools.⁴

Aware that the Brothers would need to lead a community life, their Founder soon became preoccupied also with the needs of the teachers in rural parishes that could support only one teacher living alone. There are notarized documents dated April 2, 1683 and August 20, 1685 that contain rough drafts for a "seed bed" for such teachers. The first effective realization of such plans seems to have been the "seminary" on the Rue Neuve, opened, it seems certain, in the fall of 1687.

It seems that at each juncture, De La Salle responded to certain precise requests. He was approached because he appeared to be able to provide the type of formation that was wanted. Blain describes the formation of these teachers as roughly similar to that provided for the Brothers, but in a distinct institution: "he formed another

seminary separated from that of the Brothers" (BL 1 278).

The institution was without doubt far advanced for its time. But once the positions were filled with the teachers they had hoped for, the rural pastors saw no need to provide for others to follow. The evidence is that the institution had collapsed by the year 1691. It experienced a rebirth in Paris in the parish of Saint-Hippolyte from 1699 to 1705; its ruin was caused by the "schism" of Brother Nicolas Vuyart (BL 1 313). Then the Clement affair put an end to the "seminary" at Saint-Denis. After that experience, **De La Salle** gave up all interest in establishing such seminaries (BL 2 56).

In connection with the "second attempt to establish... a seminary for schoolteachers for the rural areas in the parish of Saint-Hippolyte in Paris," Blain asserts that "no other establishment so interested that holy man. The plan that he had conceived for his Institute included both the Institute of the Brothers for the cities and the formation of Schoolteachers for the countryside" (BL 1 364).⁵ However that may be, it is obvious that the "seminaries" that were in fact established by De La Salle and the Brothers to whom he entrusted them enjoyed a remarkable success. Blain quotes a rather lengthy letter from the pastor of a parish who recognized the quality of these teachers. He thought that if they were to be followed up after completing the seminary course, they could well be reorganized into a third order (BL 2 179).⁶

4. FORMATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE CREATION AND THE INCARNATION

We have seen how De La Salle set about providing formation for the Brothers and other Christian teachers. But he never made explicit the profound significance of this formation. By studying his use of language we can, nonetheless, attempt to discern some of the constituent elements.

4.1. Forming acts of faith

It would require a full study to develop the theme of interiority in the writings of De La Salle.

It will suffice here to note such expressions as "the hand **forms** the sign of the holy cross" (Da VII D), that "the heart **forms** acts of faith" (Da 7 A) and, that God himself forms in their hearts the desire to do what the Church requires" (I 22 B).

De La Salle writes that it is not with the mouth alone that we **form** an act of contrition (I 100 A) and a firm purpose of amendment (I 110 B); we ought to **form** in our hearts a sincere resolution (Da 297 E); concupiscence **forms** obstacles within us (Da 164 C). Again, like David, who **formed** prayers in his heart (Da 470 C), the communicant asks Jesus for the desired dispositions: "It is up to you to **form** them in my heart" (I 247 E). In this way "prayer **forms** our hearts into temples for Jesus Christ" (Da 418 E).

The approach is sometimes psychological, as when the Founder writes that evil desires are **formed** within the mind (Da 149 B and D), that one has a plan that is **formed** (MR 204.3, I. 206 E) or that one **forms** an intention (R 183.12, R 220.18) or a resolution (EM 82 A, R 21.15). But the approach is more properly moral when he writes that it is not permitted "to **form** one's own conscience in matters that are not entirely evident" (Da 153 B).

4.2. A rational creature formed in the image of God

Sometimes the verb "to form" means simply "to make": "it [St. Yon] **forms** a veritable town" (MF 272 D); "the bread and wine are such as nature **formed** them" (Da 246 A). But in the context of creation the word often carries a quite different meaning: the body of Adam "was **formed** from the dust of the earth" (Da 22 A), and "God **formed** the body [of the woman] from one of Adam's ribs" (Ibid. B).

In the questions and answers in the catechisms, the equivalent meaning seems clear: "From what did God **form** the body of man?" (GA 233 D), "of the first man?" (Db 30 E): "**He formed** him from the dust of the earth" (GA 322 D, Db 30 E). "From what did God **form** the soul of the first man?" (GA 322 D), "From what did God make or **form** the soul of the first man?" (Db 31 A): "He made it from nothing, since He had created it" (Ibid.).

A powerful meaning is thereby conveyed when

he speaks of man as a "rational creature **formed** in the image of God" (Db 30 B), or as a "rational creature created in the image of God" (GA 322 C).

All this gives a new perspective on the formation of children which we have already examined (See 1 and 3 above): the process of formation participates in God's creative act. That is the source of the optimism of the Christian educator, trusting in the potential for development that has been put there by the Creator in every human being. "God has formed man in His image" (Dictionary of Furetiere) is a classic formulation of the seventeenth century.

De La Salle himself found the dignity of the human being to be rooted in the divine image: sin "makes men like unto beasts," and "disfigures in us the image of God" (I 178 D). The preface of the *Rules of Politeness and Christian Civility* gives as a foundation for these rules the obligation to recognize the presence of God and the respect that is due to the members of Jesus Christ (RB III). This establishes a link between creation and incarnation, such as the Church celebrates on the feasts of the birth and the immaculate conception of Mary.

4.3. *That which was needed to form the man-God*

In this connection, it helps to reread the entire first point of the meditation for the nativity of the Most Blessed Virgin: "God, who guides all things with wisdom, having the design to save men... it was necessary that the body of this holy virgin be so perfectly **formed** and organized..., [she] who would be called upon to **form** the man-God" (MF 163.1). Indeed, "God had **formed** her in this way, both in soul and in body" (MF 82.1) in order to make her capable of containing and **forming** within her body the man-God" (MF 82.2).

"The body of Jesus Christ, having been **formed** in the womb of the Most Blessed Virgin" (Db 35 D), faith teaches us that it is God Himself who has brought that body into being: "It was the Holy Spirit who **formed** the body of Jesus Christ from the pure blood of the Most Holy Virgin and who, at the same time, created his soul and united it to the body which **He had formed**" (Db 25-26).

There is a striking parallel between Mary, formed by God in a special way, and Jesus, formed in the womb of Mary; between the language

of the *Duties of a Christian* and that of the *Meditations for the Principal Feasts of the Year*. It is the same mystery on which the Brothers meditate and which they proclaim.

The meditation for the third Sunday of Advent reminds the Brothers that it is not enough to be aware that salvation is available: "It is necessary that God Himself, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, show us the road that we must follow... It is God who has **formed** us for that purpose and who has given us his Spirit as a guarantee. It is by God alone, therefore, that our straight path to heaven is **formed**" (MD 3.3).

The expression in Ga 4, 19 gives to the verb "to form" the meaning of engender. This is found in the Berullian School as P. Deville notes (See *L'école française*, p. 118): "they desired that Jesus might 'be formed in them.'" De La Salle uses the two verbs interchangeably: "You are destined by God to engender children for Jesus Christ and even to bring forth and engender Jesus Christ in their hearts" (MF 157.1). "**To form** Jesus Christ in the hearts of the children confided to your care" (MF 80.2).

4.4. *Forming the Church*

On the day of Pentecost, after receiving the Holy Spirit, the apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ "began to **form** a new society of the faithful" (Da 63 A). This was no merely human initiative: "It was Jesus Christ who **formed** it; he continues to **form** it every day by uniting the faithful into a single society" (Da 73 B).

The Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles "to fill them with the Holy Spirit and his grace, and to **form** the Church" (Db 51 B). By extension, Saint Joachim is worthy of veneration because "he gave to the world the most holy Virgin Mother of Jesus Christ... as the one who contributes to **form** the Church and to whom the Church is indebted for what it has become" (MF 157.1).

The Founder of the Brothers does not tell them that they contribute to forming the Church. Also, we ought to avoid giving too strong an interpretation to the expression that we have cited concerning the founders of religious orders (See 2.4), e.g. "to **form** his company" (MF 148.3).

Finally, concerning the spirit of faith there is in the Collection and in the Common Rules a usage of the verb "to form" which can lead to ambiguity: does it mean to "form" the spirit of faith? The spirit of the Institute is "firstly a spirit of faith, which should induce all those who **form** it" (R 72.12, RC 3.2) not to look upon anything except with the eyes of faith.

The parallel with the first article added to Chapter 2 of the Rule of 1718, seems to provide an interpretation: "That which is of the utmost importance, and to which the greatest attention should be given in a Community is that all those who compose it possess the spirit peculiar to it" (RC1 2.1).

"To form" in the ambiguous passage is the equivalent of "to compose," to compose a community, as these cenobites "who were said to **form** a monster rather than a real community" (MD 7.2). There is, perhaps, a more active nuance in the passage, the idea of playing a part in the gathering process: forming the Institute need not mean, as in 2.4, to found as the "Founder," but to participate actively in its constitution, by being "living" members, as distinct from the "dead member" spoken of in the text.

In this text, we find all the dynamism that characterized the activity of John Baptist de La Salle as a "formator," notably by leading the Brothers to become an active part in the emergence of their Institute, putting himself in the background so that they might assume full responsibility for it.

This was not at all a human tactic, but one calculated to liberate the powers that God had given them for the human and Christian formation of "the children of the artisans and the poor."

¹ Dom Elie MAILLEFER, the Life of John Baptist De La Salle, translated by Brother Didymus John. PSC. 1963.

² The biographers tell us that priests sometimes made a retreat under the direction of De La Salle and that he often had priests as his houseguests. An entire study might be made of De La Salle as a formator of priests.

³ Without Latin the Brothers could not benefit from ecclesiastical studies. Furthermore to evangelize the young from the lower classes, they had to develop a "culture" adapted to their milieu. This would lead De La Salle to compose writings for the formation of both the Brothers and for the children.

⁴ The integration between the different aspects of formation (professional and religious, for example) did not always go smoothly. On the one hand, the Founder had often to challenge the Brothers with respect to the duties of their religious commitment and the duties of their employment (See the meditations for the end of the year); on the other hand, we have the example of some Brothers refusing to study drawing so as not to be tempted to leave the community as had those who had been teaching in the Sunday Academy (MAC 83 and MAR 208, translation¹, p. 120).

⁵ This does not at all oblige us to accept the view that the "manuscript 103" represents the thought of De La Salle. It is known that this text presents the draft of a threefold plan: in addition to the Brothers for the city and the "seminary" for the rural teachers, there would be a society of priests to provide spiritual direction for the teachers and to hear the confessions of the students. Brother Maurice-Auguste sees in this document, rather, the hand of the Lazarist Fathers. Nothing is said there that the seminaries envisioned would be under the direction of the Brothers.

⁶ Rigault, Volume VIII, 99, describes the beginnings of a sort of a Third Order in Belgium "in the spirit of De La Salle": the "Society of Christian Teachers" formed by the graduates of the normal school at Carlsbourg, about 1890.

Complementary themes:

Brothers of the Christian Schools; Catechism; Christian Teacher; Employment; Heart; Novitiate; Profession.

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(The other works cited by HOURS, including BL and — see note 1 — BER, are not generally available. There is a translation of Ma that does not distinguish MAC from MAR. In any case, English versions would translate "**former**" and its derivatives with a variety of English expressions, so the force of the citations would be lost. See translator's note at the beginning.)

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Translation from French by Bro. Luke SALM, FSC

38. GOD'S WORK

Summary:

1. The "opera ad extra". - 2. God's lasallian undertaking. 2.1. The Institute. 2.2. The Ministry. -3. How De La Salle behaved in God's undertaking. 3.1. The light of faith. 3.2. Total abandonment to God. 3.3. Expectation. 3.4. Discernment through prayer, advice and the search for consensus. 3.5. God's order and the union of Jesus-Christ. 3.6. Human responsibility.

Although the notion of "God's work" is paramount for St. John Baptist de La Salle, in his thoughts as well as in his actions and life, nevertheless, the expression does not figure under his pen more than four times. It is no doubt because he reserves it for some particular purpose that he uses more commonly (sixteen times) its equivalent "God's undertaking".

1. THE "OPERA AD EXTRA"

In the *Devoirs d'un Chretien*, he uses for the latter a traditional definition: "Whatever God does outside of himself and in his creatures" (Da 17). All he has to do then is to apply it later on to the various divine operations.

Thus in Chapter V of the Rules of Decorum, he justifies the use of entertainment by referring to the rest God allowed himself "according to the expression used in Scripture, after he had toiled for six whole days at the great work of the creation of the world". (RB 131), the very same which in the *Devoirs d'un Chretien* will become owing to a "howler" "un si grand outrage" "such a great insult" instead of "un si grand ouvrage" "such a great work" (Da 19).

From the first article of the Apostles' Creed, "creator of heaven and earth", he draws two inspira-

tions: in the *Instructions et Prieres*: "Heavens, you who make known everywhere the glory of God and are the work of his hands, come also to bless in me the God who made you and that Divine Word that made you." (I. 265) and in "*L'Explication de la Méthode d'Oraison*": "It is doing me too great an honor to say that I am dust and ashes since this dust and these ashes are the work of God and thus not mine but God who is the Author" (EM 49).

With regard to Mary, the masterpiece of Creation, he writes in *Les Devoirs III*: "Why did God want Mary to be born through a miracle? - It is so that she would be considered more the work of God than that of man" (Dc 199), an idea which he repeats and develops in the Meditation for the Feast of her Nativity: "Oh, how fitting it was that she who was to be the Mother of a Man-God, should have been in every way worthy of His power, and the most perfect of all pure creatures." (MF 163.1)

Two other texts concern the redemption and the Church. The first echoes St. Paul: "It is up to us to finish and crown the work of our redemption" (MR 195.1). The second puts in evidence the executioners of St. Bartholomew "being persuaded that with the death of the Saint, the religion he preached would disappear. But as this was the work of God himself, all their plans came to nought." (MF 159.3)

2. THE LASALLIAN WORK OF GOD

2.1. The Institute

There exists in the bosom of the Church a sector which appeals personally to St. John Baptist de La Salle: the new religious family which he is called to establish in it. It is in connection with it that he uses the expression "oeuvre de Dieu" God's work. If he requests Bro. Gabriel Drolin to "pray a lot Our Lord to bless his work" (L. 26.9), it is not only the school in Rome that he has in mind, but the whole Institute, as is evidenced in his Testament where he recalls "that he sent two Brothers to Rome to ask from God the grace that their Society would be entirely submissive to Him." (CL 26, 286). And in their letter of April 1, 1714, the principal Brothers, using his own language when addressing the Founder, will not refer to the Institute otherwise than by the name "the holy work of God which is also yours, since it has pleased God to make use of you to establish and manage it for so long," (Blain 2.118)

2.2. The Ministry

St. John Baptist de La Salle uses also this expression conjointly with its equivalent "ouvrage de Dieu" when applying it to the Brothers. He then intends to refer to their ministry some aspects of which he describes in detail:

- *God makes of them his cooperators:*

"St. Paul says: that is the field which God cultivates, and the building which he is erecting, and it is you that he has chosen to help in this work by announcing to children the gospel of his Son and the truths that are contained in it. This is why you must glory in your ministry and try to save some of these children". (MR 193.3)

- *Yet God remains the master of it and presides over it until it is completed:*

"Be convinced of what St. Paul says, that you plant and water the seed, but it is God through Jesus-Christ Who crowns your work with growth and perfection." (MR 196.1)

- *That is why they must not claim the authorship of it:*

"Is it not, in fact, thieving to attribute to oneself a work such as the preservation of innocence in children, and the conversion of souls, since this is something which belongs to God and to those whom He employs." (MD 62.1)

- *That is why they ask help from on high:*

"Earnestly¹ ask Jesus-Christ to make his Spirit come alive in you, since he has chosen you to do his work." (MR 196.1)

- *They pray...:*

"As soon as you lose the spirit of prayer, and a love for this holy exercise, God will cease to look favourably upon you, but will consider you rather as one unworthy of your employment." (MD 62.1)

- *... and work zealously...:*

"Do not doubt that it is a great gift of God, this grace he has given you to be entrusted with the instruction of children, to announce the gospel to them and to bring them up in the spirit of religion. But in calling you to this holy ministry, God demands that you fulfil it with an ardent zeal for their salvation. For this is the work of God and whoever does God's work carelessly is cursed." (MR 201.1)

- *... obediently...:*

"Compare what you do purely through obedience with what you do through your own impulse, and look upon the former as the work of God and the latter as the labor of man." (MD 57.1)

- *... and in total humility:*

"Your only thought should be to acquit yourself of your ministry in so far as God requires of you towards your pupils, and to inspire them with the Spirit of Christianity. Thus, after the example of the Holy Family, you will not cause your name to be noised abroad, but you will be in the world merely as passers-by, occupied solely in the work of God, causing Jesus to live in the hearts of those he has given you to instruct." (MD 62.2)

- *They are convinced that God cares for them...*:

"If therefore you are engaged in gathering a harvest of souls, how can you fear that he who so employs you and whose workman you are, will refuse you the nourishment you need to do his work?" (MD 67.3), "You who do the work of God in your employment, rest assured that he will take care of you, provided that you serve him faithfully and omit nothing that he expects of you." (MD 59.3)

- *... and that he will protect them;*

"Often ask God to give you this generosity and fidelity so necessary to obtain the gift of perseverance and not to suffer the misfortune of those of whom it is said in Scripture: "Woe to him who performs negligently God's work" (RD 79)²

- *They also know that he holds them accountable:*

"You are co-operators with God in his work, says St. Paul, and the souls of the children whom you teach are the field that he cultivates through your labors. Since he is the one who has given you the ministry you exercise, when all of you will appear before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, each one of you will give an account to God of what he has done as a minister of God and as an administrator of his mysteries for children." (MR 205.1)

3. LA SALLE'S ROLE IN THE WORK OF GOD

St. John Baptist de La Salle's deep conviction that the task to which he has dedicated his life comes from God made him decide on an appropriate behavior which he tried hard to share with his Brothers. This behavior concerns what he commonly calls "the responsibility" (cf. the *Règles que je me suis imposées* No. 3 and No. 7, CL 10, 114), that is the particular task, the mission received from Providence and which entails "duties":³ for him, the management of the Institute; for the Brothers, "the children God entrusted to you" (MF 133.2). 166.2). Let us not however forget according to the *Bonne Règle* which he borrowed from Father Julien Hayneufve, this order,⁴ "Do

not make any difference between your personal responsibilities and the business of your salvation and perfection" "You must always try to have this in view." (CL 10, 114)

3.1. The faith viewpoint

It is through the "eyes of faith" that St. John Baptist de La Salle considers this "inseparable pair". Of some significance is the use La Salle makes of the verbs "regarder: to view" and "considerer: to consider, to think carefully about": "I will always consider the work of my salvation and of the setting up and management of our community as God's undertaking... and I will often say these words of the Prophet Habakkuk to him: *Domine opus tuum*". "I must often consider myself a useless instrument unless it is in the hands of the Divine Workman", "If I regard myself as holding the place of Our Lord in their regard, it must be because I am obliged to carry their sins as Our Lord carried ours, and because that is a responsibility God has imposed on me in their regard."⁵ (CL 10, 115). He demands the same attitude from the Brothers: "Reflect on what St. Paul says, that God has established in the Church apostles, prophets, and teachers, and you will be convinced that he has also established you in your ministry; you must not doubt that it is a great gift of God this grace he has given you to be entrusted with the instruction of children... Show through your relations with the children entrusted to you that you look upon yourself as ministers of God." (MR 201.1)

3.2. Total abandonment to God

With this in view, he relies on God with total confidence: "That is why I will entrust the care of the Institute to HIM..." (CL 10, 115), a tendency in which self-denial,... "A thing which I must insist on is abnegation of my own judgment and of my own opinions, never abiding by them in anything that concerns me" (Blain 2.301), is coupled with a filial trust in God: "...with the help of Our Lord on which I rely to see it through" (CL 10, 115). He gives plenty of such advice to Frere Gabriel Drolin: "You must rely only on God and leave in his hands the management, the care and other consi-

derations" (L. 21.17), "Pray much that God may do with you what he pleases. You must abandon yourself completely to his will and be careful not to do anything without asking advice" (L. 13.14).

3.3. Expectation

An essential consequence of this is what the Founder means by the expression "not to move ahead": "I must await the orders of God's providence before I decide" (CL 10, 115). This implies of course an eager expectation, intent on knowing what God wants, since he adds immediately "and not ignore it when it becomes known" (CL 10, 115). And "whilst waiting to know what is to be done", one must "do perfectly what one knows" (CL 10, 115). We find numerous examples of this attitude in his correspondence: "As for me, I do not like to undertake anything and I will not do so with regard to Rome no more than I did on other occasions. Providence must make the first move and that makes me happy." (L. 18.17) "let no one (of those you live with) take the initiative in that matter; let God do what is necessary." (L. 37.2), "carry out your school duties quietly and without over eagerness. For, I think that God will not bless you otherwise." (L. 24.6). "Do not miss any opportunities that come your way but do so without haste (L. 24.8). "You do well to await God's orders" (L. 20.3).

3.4. Discernment through prayer, advice and community dialogue

In order to achieve the desired discernment, the Founder has recourse to prayer, a genuine divine consultation: "I will consult him often on anything I will have to do", "I will only do it after I have prayed", "I will ask the Lord to give it to them... I will find some time to pray him a little about it... T will be careful to be very recollected during that time and to raise my heart to God for a while" (CL 10, 15), "... without taking a quarter of an hour to go over the matter with God..." (CL 10, 114).

"I have a strong feeling that having spent quite a while without doing some mental prayer, I must dedicate to it much time in order to find out God's

will regarding what I have to do." (L. 5.1,2) He recommends this habit of his: "It seems to me that you have to pray God and make the pupils continue to recite the rosary and send every Sunday two Brothers to receive Holy Communion in the Chapel of Our Lady in the Cathedral of Notre Dame" (L. 37.2). However, he also turned to others, either for advice: "In his dealings with Mr. de la Barmondiere, he never did anything without the advice of Mr. Baudrand and concerning the latter he never failed to ask the wise opinion of Mr. Tronson. Without this advice, he would not have budged an inch, he did nothing on his own" (Blain 300, CL 10, 108), or through seeking community backing, as we see in the well known sentence used in the "Heroic Vow" "in the manner which will seem to us most fitting." (CL 10, 116).

3.5. God's command and union with Christ

In this manner, he makes sure that he is acting on orders from God: "We can attain a very high degree of perfection in the performance of our duties, only if we accomplish them with a view to obeying God", "... in order to do therein only what concerns God's orders" (CL 10, 114, 115), "When I seem to be acting only on his orders, I have nothing to reproach myself, whilst when I undertake something, it is always my doing and I cannot expect good results, nor does God usually give the work his generous blessing" (L. 18.18), "I do not like all these worldly views and they are not the ones the saints adopted" (L. 24.13). Done in this way, actions "are related" (EM 10) to those of Jesus Christ, with which they may "quite conveniently" (RM 10) be "assimilated" (EM 10): "I will unite at least twenty times a day my actions to those of Our Lord and I will strive to perform them with views and intentions similar to his" (EM 114).

3.6. Human responsibility

In his study of the spirituality of self-abnegation of Pere Barre, Frere Michel Sauvage quotes this sentence: "I will act as if everything depended on me while relying on grace as if everything depended on God alone."⁶ He then comments: "If it is God's work, I must do it seriously

because I am co-responsible for it, but at the same time, I am aware that he does it by his Spirit irrespective of what I will do."⁷

To understand that God's work rather than generate inertia and disaffection, helps human activity to attain its highest level, one has only to refer to the life of the Founder and of the first Brothers. Fully aware that they were guardians and managers (of the Institute), they proved that they were its architects with a determination which has been called quite rightly heroic: "... we consecrate ourselves entirely to you to procure with all our strength and all our dedication the setting up of the Society of the Christian Schools. For this purpose we promise to do unanimously and by common consent all that we will believe in conscience and without any human consideration to be conducive to the greatest well-being of the said Society" (CL 10, 116). History has shown that these were not empty words. St. John Baptist de La Salle had every right to require from his disciples zeal and fidelity: "When God called you to this ministry, he wanted you to carry it out with an ar-

dent zeal for their salvation, because it is God's handiwork..." (MR 201.1). "Ask God often to grant you this firmness and this fidelity which are necessary to obtain the gift of perseverance..." (RD 79). It is significant that the Founder completed these two texts with a quotation from Jeremiah: "Woe to him who does the work of God negligently." (Jr 48.10)

¹ That is: without any doubt, certainly.

² Concerning fidelity "in the practice of what is right and particularly with regard to the Rules and your exercises". We know that for him regularity, which develops the Brother's spiritual life, is the condition on which depends the success of the apostolate. Refer to the article in "Themes Lasalliens" entitled "Exercises".

³ Duties are the outcome of a given objective situation while obligations follow from an inter-personal agreement (for the Brothers, their consecration to God).

⁴ Julien HAYNEUFVE, *Méditations pour le temps des exercices qui se font dans la retraite des huit jours*. - Paris 1645.

⁵ This same disposition is to be found in the Meditation for the Feast of St. Dominic (M 150).

⁶ Nicolas BARRE, *Maximes de conduite chrétienne* - Paris 1694.

⁷ Michel SAUVAGE, *L'abandon chez le Père Barre* - Rome.

Complementary themes:

Conversion; Duty; Disciple; Church; Employment; Spirit of Christianity; Holy Ghost; Example; Fidelity; Grace; Humility; Inspiration; Instruct; Ministry; World; Mystery; Obedience; Perseverance; Prayer; Redemption; Religion; Salvation; Truth; Zeal.

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39. INCARNATION

Summary:

1. The meaning of the word. 1.1. In the time of the Founder. 1.2. Today. -2. The socio-historical and ecclesial context. - 3. The mystery of the Incarnation in the writings of the Founder. 3.1. Catechetical writings. 3.2. Spiritual writings. 3.2.1. *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer*. 3.2.2. *Meditations*. - 4. The mystery of the Incarnation in the life of the Founder. - 5. Practical applications for today.

1. THE MEANING OF THE WORD

1.1. In the time of the Founder

According to the French Language Dictionary of the 17th Century, the fundamental meaning of the term incarnation is the "union of the Son of God with his human nature, a mystery whereby the eternal Word became man for our redemption".¹

In an age that put great stress on the grandeur of God, the mystery of the Incarnation *was approached from God's side. Without denying its redemptive purpose, the important element in the Incarnation was considered to be the self-emptying of God, the fact that he had taken on human flesh and become one of us. This was a distinguishing mark of Sulpician spirituality, and especially of Berulle, as will be seen later on. It was said that the self-emptying of God is as incomprehensible a mystery as the mystery of the Trinity itself.*²

From another point of view, the principal reason for the Incarnation is said to be "in order to satisfy divine justice and to redeem human beings".³

1.2. In the present historical moment

The evolution of the spirituality of the Incarnation has progressed from an almost exclusive emphasis on its transcendental aspect to its immanent significance. From this point of view, the Incarnation is an affirmation of the value of the material reality that the Son of God willingly assumed. By the very fact that the Word became flesh, the material world is a sacrament of the presence of the Word. Christianity, therefore, has the responsibility to affirm the divine potential enfolded within the material universe. The Incarnation is not only a mystery to be contemplated; it is a dynamic force that commits us to the building up of the world and to the betterment of the human person and society in the world.⁴

Gaudium et spes of Vatican II recalls and admirably summarizes this evolution of incarnational spirituality. On the one hand nothing human can be merely neutral for us (GS 1); on the other hand, the mystery of being human can only be understood in the light of the eternal Word: "In him, human nature was assumed, not suppressed. By the same token, the humanity we possess has been elevated to a sublime dignity" (GS 22).

2. THE SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECCLESIAL CONTEXT

In his understanding of the mystery and the spirituality of the Incarnation, John Baptist de La Salle is indebted in a particular way to the 17th century French school of spirituality. Berulle, who founded the school, wanting to work for the reform of the clergy, founded the first French Oratory designed for the sanctification of its members.

Berulle was a prolific writer and his works were published in 1644. His spiritual vision was taken up by Charles Condren, who succeeded him as the superior of the Oratory. It was through Condren that Olier encountered Berullian spirituality. He gave it a stamp of his own and passed it on to his followers in the Seminary he founded at Saint Sulpice, where De La Salle would be trained in the tradition.

The cornerstone of this spirituality is the grandeur and majesty of God who is worthy of all reverence. We, in turn, render homage and adoration through Jesus Christ, with whom we ought always to remain united. For that reason this is a Christocentric spirituality. The epitome of this doctrine is to adore God in Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ. Berulle focused his doctrine on the mystery of the Incarnation, with Christ in his twofold nature as God and man at the center of it all. Pope Urban VII described Berulle as "the apostle of the Word incarnate," an expression we find often in the writings of the De La Salle (Da 25, 467; Db 34; DC 199; EM 91; GA 326; MF 130, 131).

Berulle can be considered as a spiritual Copernicus: "Jesus is the true sun around which the whole world, as well as our own hearts, take part in a movement with Christ at its center."

The part of the teaching of Berulle that De La Salle will make his own more than any other is the perennial character of the mysteries of Jesus Christ. We ought to participate in the spirit of these mysteries, whose effect is always present to us.

Our task is to give the mysteries of Jesus their full meaning. This applies, of course, to the mystery of the Incarnation, which we ought to perpetuate and to make ever-present. We shall see later how De La Salle applied this teaching.

With Saint Augustine, Berulle envisioned the mystery of the Incarnation as a mystery of humility. The raising up of our humanity supposes the self-emptying of the Word. "We adore an infinite God who has become finite and limited within the confines of a human nature. We adore an eternal God who has become mortal; an invisible God who has become visible; an impassible God who has become subject to heat and cold, to the cross and to death; a God completely indivisible composed of elements; in a word, a Creator who has become a creature".⁵

3. THE MEANING OF INCARNATION IN THE WRITINGS OF THE FOUNDER

For practical reasons the writings of the Founder will be treated in two sections: those intended for catechetical use and those of a more spiritual nature.

3.1. Catechetical writings. There are abundant references in these writings to the mystery of the Incarnation. In the several volumes of the *Duties of a Christian* they tend to be repetitious.

3.1.1. In the *Daily Exercise of Piety for the Christian Schools* the Founder summarizes his own faith and the faith that he wants the Brothers to pass on to their students in a beautiful prayer. This prayer was to be said at regular intervals every Wednesday: "My Savior, Jesus Christ, I firmly believe that you are the only Son of God the Father, that you became man for the love of us, and that you assumed a body and a soul like ours in the womb of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, your mother. In this belief I adore and workshop you with all my heart" (E 20).

3.1.2. In the *Instructions and Prayers* the Founder likes to repeat frequently the Berullian expression relating the "Incarnate Word" to the mystery of the Eucharist (I 96, 263, 265, 269).

3.1.3. In the same kind of prayer, the Founder highlights the Ave Maria as the principal Marian prayer because it recalls to our minds the mystery of the Incarnation (Da 468). He notes that the

same mystery is also found in the Apostles' Creed (Db 21).

3.1.4. Another way the Founder recommends us to honor this mystery is to make frequent acts of faith in it and to recite the Angelus three times every day (Dc 138).

3.1.5. The celebration of the feast of the Incarnation ought to be special in every way. This is one of the major feasts of the Church and is celebrated in connection with the Annunciation. To celebrate it fittingly, we should:

* On this holy day, adore frequently the Son of God incarnate in the womb of the Most Blessed Virgin.

* Honor as we ought the Most Holy Virgin as the Mother of God since she became such on this day.

* Thank God for the grace he has given to his people and the love he has shown to us by sending his own Son to turn us away from sin.

* Ask the Holy Spirit for a share in the graces with which Jesus Christ was endowed at the moment of his conception with a view to communicating them to all people.

* Ask Jesus Christ, through the intercession of the Most Blessed Virgin, an interior and an exterior purity, as well as the profound humility that will dispose us to receive him worthily in Holy Communion" (Dc 137).

3.1.6. For the catechetical instruction of the pupils, the Founder presents the mystery of the Incarnation in question and answers form, from which we can extract some of the more important ideas. The purpose of the Incarnation is seen as the desire on God's part to free his people from the state of sin into which they had fallen. For this purpose, the Son of God became man, taking on a human soul and body like ours. The Son of God made man is called Our Lord Jesus Christ or the Word Incarnate. He is one person in two natures, divine and human, totally human in everything except sin, the inclination to sin, and ignorance.

He was conceived by the Most Blessed Virgin through the work of the Holy Spirit. This action is attributed to the Holy Spirit because it was through love that God gave us his Son. The works

of love are proper to the Holy Spirit, although inseparable from the action of the other persons of the Trinity.

The precise meaning for the Founder of the word incarnation is the union of the body and soul of Jesus Christ to the person of the Son of God.

Finally, the Founder refers to the liturgical feast of this mystery on March 25. The feast is called the Annunciation because of the announcement of the Angel to Mary that she would conceive a son who would be the Son of God (Db 34-37; GA 325-326, 430-440).

3.2. Spiritual writings. We shall examine first the *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer* and then the *Meditations*.

3.2.1. *The method of Mental Prayer*. It is important to recall de La Salle's teaching on the mysteries, derived from the French school of spirituality. The mysteries are more than a recollection of past events. Not only should they be contemplated, but also lived and proclaimed.⁶ It is in this perspective that we must read what the Founder tells us about the spirit of the mystery of the Incarnation. He alludes to meditation on this mystery in the second part of the *Method*.

"The spirit of the mystery of the Incarnation is charity. Our Lord tells us that it was through charity and love that the Eternal Father gave to us his only Son, that the Son himself became incarnate, and that this mystery was accomplished through the Holy Spirit. The spirit of this mystery is also humility. As Saint Paul says, the Son of God emptied himself by taking the form of a slave" (EM 60).

Notice that the Founder contemplates this mystery from a Trinitarian perspective and that he sees the mystery as rooted in charity. It is only God's love for humans that explains his self-emptying. Humility is thus the consequence of love.

Similar to what was found earlier in the catechetical texts, the Founder says that the principal reason for the mystery of the Incarnation is the redemption of humans and their liberation from sin. "Would I ever dare, my Lord and my God, to commit sin again, realizing, as Saint John says in Chapter 3 of his first Epistle, that you manifested yourself to us to remove sin from our midst and

so to destroy the works of the devil, namely, our sins."⁷

The act of faith the Founder proposes for the mystery of the Nativity refers in fact more to the Incarnation. It expresses the profound admiration that De La Salle felt in the presence of this mystery: "My Lord Jesus Christ, I firmly believe that you, the only Son of God the Father Almighty and eternally God with him, have deigned to become man and to clothe yourself in our flesh by taking on a body and a soul like ours in the womb of the most pure Virgin through the operation of the Holy Spirit; that you were born a tiny infant without ceasing to be God" (CL 50, 191).

Through his Incarnation, Jesus Christ has merited for us a twofold grace that the Founder never ceases to emphasize: we are sons of God and also brothers of Jesus Christ. "Oh infinite charity of the eternal Son of God! Because you are willing to be the Son of Man you have made yourself my brother" (CL 50, 65); and again, "You have merited for me the grace to be a son of God, your Father" (DL 50: 64, 65, 84, 86).⁸

In the face of such gifts, De La Salle gives full vent to the sentiments of his heart: "What an immense happiness! What a prodigy! My dignity and my worth surpass everything in the whole universal For all eternity I can be the son of God and the brother of God! What a great honor! What an advantage and what a blessing! My soul, would you ever have thought such a thing possible?" (CL 50, 65).⁹

That is why, De La Salle tells us, when we contemplate the Nativity or the Incarnation, we ought to assume the attitude of a new-born child, to make ourselves as little children before God, to abandon ourselves totally into his hands. "Grant me, O Lord, your spirit of son ship that gives me the confidence to address God, in union with you, as Abba, Father!" (CL 50, 232).

3.2.2. *The Meditations.* If we look for merely literal and material references to the Incarnation in De La Salle's meditations, we do not find very many and some of them are rather superficial. Thus the Angel who announces the mystery of the Incarnation tells the Virgin that Jesus is the name she should give the child (MF 93, 2). Again, it is through Saints Joachim and Anne that the mys-

tery of the Incarnation will have its beginning (MF 146, 2 and 163, 1); or that it was Saint Leo who defined for the whole Church its faith in the mystery of the Incarnation (MF 114, 2).

There are two additional allusions which relate Mary to the mystery of the Incarnation in which the Founder uses two of the most beautiful of her titles, "Tabernacle of the Word" and "Mother of the Word Incarnate" (MF 163, 1).

The situation is quite different, however, if we look for references to the "spirit of the mystery of the Incarnation." Here we discover much that is rich, especially in reference to Christian education. As Michel Sauvage has well put it, "Through the medium of the Brothers as educator, as for everyone who is sent" by the Church, the mystery of the Incarnation is prolonged in time; in manner adapted to the nature of each one, salvation is made available to others; by sending the Brother and entrusting him with a mission "in a real and mysterious way the Church continues in him, as its minister, the mystery of the Incarnation" (Retif).¹⁰

Such is the teaching of the Founder that one can pick out from any number of his meditations.¹¹ The Brother is "minister," "ambassador," "representative" of Jesus Christ and called as such to prolong in history Christ's redemptive incarnation. "It is Jesus Christ himself who desires that your disciples see you as if they were looking at him, and that they receive your instruction as if he were giving them himself (MR 195, 2).

The Brother should incarnate himself in the world of the poor in order to lead them to God. He does this by manifesting to them the gratuitous love God has for them in such a way as to transform their lives. "The Son of God has come down to earth in order to make us sharers in his nature and so to change us totally into heavenly persons" (MF 82, 2). The Founder expresses the same idea with greater force in the meditation for Christmas: "In choosing our state in life, we ought to be resolved to live in a lowly condition as did the Son of God when he became man. That is what is most characteristic of our profession and our employment. We are poor Brothers forgotten and little thought of by people of the world. It is only the poor that come to seek us out" (MF 96, 2). The Brother ought to be for his pupils the sacrament of the gratuitous love God has for them. "You

must imitate God himself to some extent, for he so loved the souls he created that when he saw them involved in sin and unable to redeem themselves. his zeal and desire for their salvation led him to send his own Son to rescue them from their miserable condition... Ought you not, therefore, to do the same for them through your ministry" (M R 201, 3). This applies especially to the poorest among them with whom the Brother ought to identify himself in a process of incarnation and kenosis. "Since you have been granted the good fortune to be engaged in religious instruction, especially of the poor, you should, in the spirit of your Institute, have much greater concern for them than for the rich. You should, besides, live as poor men, detached from everything in order to be more like them in every way" (MF 143, 2).

The Brother ought to imitate the love of the Father who gave up his Son, and the love of the Son who gave himself up for his people. This the Brother should do by cultivating an attitude of profound humility. Incarnation means to adapt oneself and abase oneself to the level of the little ones. "The more they become like little children... the more will they move the hearts of their pupils" (MD 72, 2; Cf. MD 66, 2; MR 193, 3; 197, 1-2).

In the *Method of Mental Prayer*, charity and humility express the spirit of the mystery of the Incarnation; in the *Meditations* it is in the ministry of Christian education that these expressions of charity and humility become apparent, are lived, and take on bodily form.

4. THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION IN THE LIFE OF THE FOUNDER

It is often said that we should read the writings of the Founder, especially his spiritual writings, as a form of autobiography. Many of the ideas and expressions in the *Method of Mental Prayer* and the *Meditations* reflect his experience in the process of incarnating himself into the world of the teachers and the poor. We shall try to deal with some of these aspects in greater depth.

With Michel Sauvage, we can interpret De La Salle's process of incarnation as a personal journey of renunciation: of his family, his social status, and his functions as a canon. It was a journey that

took place in history: From one commitment to another the Lord led De La Salle and his disciples to assume completely the mission of the Son of Man. Through the service of poor and abandoned youth, the Founder participated in Christ's incarnation among the poor, and in his obedience to the Father.

Of special significance is the incarnation of the Founder into the world of the schoolteachers, men who in the beginning he considered "inferior to his valet." Little by little they would constitute themselves into a community. We can consider the Brothers as the first among the poor with whom the Founder was incarnated as he became one with them in their lives and in their weaknesses.¹² "It was very difficult for him to leave his comfortable world to incarnate himself in the midst of these ordinary men. It was equally difficult, as the biographers point out, for him to embrace a new lifestyle in things such as food, lodging, and the level of conversation."¹³

No less exemplary is De La Salle's incarnation into the world of the poor. In sharing his history with them, he had to free them from their alienated situation, to give them hope and freedom, to announce to them the saving message of Jesus, but always from within. "The decisive option in favor of the poor, the living faith that the poor are indeed blessed, these were at the center of De La Salle's thinking and were the motivating force in his life and in all of his struggles. There is no doubt that in all of this he was giving witness to the Spirit who led him to understand in a concrete way the mystery of the saving incarnation of Jesus Christ."¹⁴

The personal journey of the Founder was an incarnational journey. His fidelity to God presupposed his fidelity to persons. "His original journey of seeking out the will of God converted him progressively to a journey with others, among whom he incarnated himself. He took it upon himself to meet their needs which he perceived as a call: to strengthen the teachers, to establish the schools, to see that they functioned well, to put at the disposal of poor children the benefits of schooling, and to educate them in a Christian manner, disposing them, in a practical way and in their world, to the saving in break of the good news of salvation."¹⁵

5. PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FOR TODAY

Out of the richness in De La Salle's teaching on the Incarnation, we can draw a few applications for our lives in today's world.

5.1. In reference to what we could call the Founder's "theology of the mysteries" and applying that to the mystery of the Incarnation, we discover an invitation to contemplate the mystery in silence and prayer in order to announce it and live it as the heart of our educational ministry. We live it and announce it out of a boundless charity, such as Jesus had in his Incarnation, and with a profound humility that leads us to identify with and to share the lot of young people and the poor.

5.2. Lasallian spirituality is an incarnational spirituality that unites body and soul, the sacred and the profane, the school and prayer, liberation and contemplation, human progress and evangelization. It is a spirituality that belongs in the real world the Founder "became aware" (1987 Rule 1), which makes an impression (the Founder "deeply moved" Rule 11), with the Word of God illuminating that real world ("by God's grace" Rule 1), in the light of faith (Rule 11).

5.3. In order to be faithful today to the myst-

ery of the Incarnation, it is necessary to undergo a process of "inculturation," which brings us ever closer to the world of the poor and the young. In Latin America it is an invitation to a style of religious life more closely "inserted" into the life of the common people. We cannot forget the axiom that only that which has been taken on can be saved. The incarnational journey of the Founder is a model for our own. Because the Word became flesh, religious life is called to become a life with the common people, the Lasallian school a school for the common people.

¹ Dictionnaire de la Langue Française du XVII^e Siècle, T. 3, p. 922.

² Idem, p. 923.

³ Idem, p. 923.

⁴ *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, T, VII 2, pp. 1639-1640.

⁵ OP 16, 770.

⁶ Cf. Sauvage-Campos in CL 50, pp. 385-390; L. DIUMENGE, *L'amour dans la doctrine spirituelle de SJBS* (Salamanca: Sinite, Tejares 1971), pp. 153-157.

⁷ DIUMENGE, L, Op.Cit., p. 159.

⁸ Idem, p. 162.

⁹ Idem, p. 163.

¹⁰ M. SAUVAGE, *Catechese et Meat*, p. 831.

¹¹ M. SAUVAGE and M. Campos, *Announcing the Gospel to the Poor*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, 1981, p. 116-117.

¹² Idem, p. 178.

¹³ Idem, p. 190.

¹⁴ Idem, p. 127.

¹⁵ M. Campos, *Itinerario evangélico de S.J.B.S.* (Madrid: Ed. Bruno 1980), p. 117.

Complementary themes:

Charity, Community, Contemplation, Eucharist, God, Humility, Mass, Mystery, Poverty, Redemption, School, Trinity, Virgin Mary, Word.

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40. INSPIRATION

(Movements of the Holy Spirit)

Summary:

1. Dictionary definitions. - 2. La Salle's definition. - 3. Inspiration and the Holy Spirit. - 4. Inspirations and discernment. - 5. Inspirations and fidelity. - 6. Inspirations and the transmission of grace. - 7. Inspirations and transcendence. - 8. Conclusion.

1. DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS

There is an inspiration that refers to the realm of art, such as literature, music, painting, sculpture; there is the inspiration that includes everyday human actions and seems to arise from human intelligence or ingenuity; there is also inspiration in the realm of religion, which refers to the action, the movement, the motives that come from the Holy Spirit. (See **Holy Spirit**)

2. LA SALLE'S DEFINITION

"Inspirations are ordinarily enlightenment that God gives to a soul in order to guide it to what it ought to do for its own good." (R 18) Here the source of inspirations is given, God; the nature of inspirations is given, light; the purpose of inspirations is given, to guide the soul to what ought to be done for its own good.

There is a certain existential quality in this. Inspiration is a movement of the spirit and the heart that leads to action here and now in relation to something that is good or evil. La Salle does not exclude the possibility of an inspiration coming from the devil, but this would not be for something good. (MD 68,1; 19,2) On the contrary,

when we are inspired by the angels, or by God, it is truly for something good. (MF 141.1)

3. INSPIRATION AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Inspiration is also described as the result of the action of the Holy Spirit in the soul.⁴ Or it is attributed simply to the direct action of the grace of God. "The inspirations of God lead to the faithful observance of the Rule, which alone is able to preserve [religious] in the grace of their state; or they lead to some particular practice that God asks of his disciples." (MD 64,1)

It is in the Collection especially that La Salle emphasizes the relation between inspiration and the action of the Holy Spirit. In this respect he is in tune with the spiritual writers of his day, especially with his teacher, Tronson, and the French School of Spirituality. The examinations of conscience written by Tronson include a long article on "Fidelity to the Inspirations of God." In it the action of the Holy Spirit is clearly described: "Let us adore the Holy Spirit as a faithful counselor who continually suggests to the ear of our heart what it is we have to do." Tronson proposes that we ask ourselves, "Whether we keep silence in order to be able to hear the Holy Spirit speaking

in the depth of our heart, since he is only heard by those who are in a very profound peace. ... There are so many other who speak: the world, the devil, and the flesh."²

It is necessary to avoid these voices of distraction in order to center our attention and our efforts on the inspiration that comes from God. La Salle also expresses this recommendation. "Let your spirit be always so attentive within itself that it may be able to receive the light that the Spirit of God is pleased to give, and in order that [your spirit] may be guided according to this light with wisdom in all its functions."³

4. INSPIRATIONS AND DISCERNMENT

It is not necessary to follow "every spirit" but to test if they come from God (1 Jn 4:1). La Salle reflects this teaching when he writes, "It is very bad to be guided, or to let oneself go after, everything that comes to your spirit, for there are very many thoughts that are false."⁴

It is prudent to have recourse to a counselor. La Salle gives some recommendations in this regard; he warns against preferring "so-called inspirations" to what is commanded, counseled, or in the Rule. (R 44) For example, on the topic of the conversion of Saint Paul he writes:

[God] only wishes that you understand by these heavenly lights that he asks of you something you are not doing. But he does not want you to act on your own, enlightened only by these heavenly lights. He desires that you have recourse to your Directors and superiors whom he takes care to teach about what you ought to do, and whom he makes responsible for explaining this to you. Do not trust, then, in your own lights, nor those that seem to come from God; share them with those who are guiding you and submit yourself to them. (MF 99,3)

Among the means to become interior La Salle has emphasized the importance of being faithful to inspirations. According to the plan of the little treatise on his recommendations concerning fidelity, La Salle planned to give a brief development on "the fidelity to openness of conscience to the superior."⁵ But in the developments that follow the topic is not treated where it ought to be found. (R 119) This lack is regrettable and it

seems never to have been explained, or even noticed. It remains altogether mysterious and seemingly inexplicable, especially if we are really dealing with the edition of 1711.⁶ Be that as it may, the lack can be overcome by some passages from the meditations of which La Salle shows the connection between the direction of conscience and fidelity to inspirations.⁷ (See also **Direction of Conscience**)

5. INSPIRATIONS AND FIDELITY

"One thing you ought especially to work at, is to be faithful to the inspirations coming to you that call for you to overcome yourself; this is a sign that they are coming from God." (L 5, 17).

It is not enough to be enlightened on the nature and the importance of inspirations; it is necessary to be faithful to follow them. This fidelity to the inspirations and "interior movements" is recognized as a "means to become interior." (R 118-119). Such fidelity is important for our advancement on our journey towards God, "because when a person is not faithful to inspirations, God stops giving them, seeing that they are useless." Even more, this refusal of the light can be a fault that the Apostle condemns, "because infidelity to inspirations is what Saint Paul calls extinguishing the Spirit in oneself; it can even be said that to do this is to resist the Holy Spirit which does him a great injury."

6. INSPIRATION AND THE TRANSMISSION OF GRACE (See also **Grace**)

There is a close relationship between inspiration and grace. Grace is a gift of God just the same as the inspiration that comes from him. Inspiration is grace, a sort of prevenient grace in the sense of the author of the Imitation: It is easy to serve God when you are carried by grace.⁸

Without using the term, prevenient grace, La Salle tells us that "actual grace is a supernatural light, or a good impulse (movement), that God gives us to flee evil and do good."⁹

Just as resisting inspirations is to "resist the Holy Spirit," so the same is true of resisting

graces. Resistance to inspirations has the same result as resistance to graces: God ceases to give them.

It seems possible to conclude that an inspiration is like the first movement of grace, coming under its form of prevenient grace, whereby God first loves us — always and at every moment of our lives.

7. INSPIRATION AND TRANSCENDENCE

Inspirations lead to the accomplishment of good. But good has many forms. It will not be surprising that La Salle presents inspiration for a variety of situations. Nevertheless, if inspiration teaches that God holds the first place, this inspiration transcends all the inspirations that concern particular choices. Thus La Salle writes, "Inspirations that lead you to renounce the world and to give yourself entirely to God are like the apparitions of Saint Michael,¹⁰ since they lead you to rise above all created things in order to attach yourself to God alone." (MF 125,2)

8. CONCLUSION

The substance of what La Salle understood by inspiration is that it is an important element of the spiritual life; it places us on the journey of prefer-

ring God above all things and has for its purpose a greater love for God.

¹ The theme of the action of the Holy Spirit in Lasallian spirituality has been carefully studied by Brother Clement-Marcel Martinais in his book, *Par le mouvement de l'Esprit*. See also in the Bibliography, R. T. Laube.

² Tronson, *Examens particuliers*, ed. ms. prior to 1692, pp. 86-89.

³ R 162. 17; "... since we ought to live by the spirit of God, according to Saint Paul, so let us walk and let ourselves be guided by the same spirit." (R 113. 16).

⁴ Letter 60, 14. See *The Letters of John Baptist de La Salle*, 1988, Lasallian Publications, Romeoville, Illinois, p. 174.

⁵ R 107, 4. Note that La Salle designates two persons, the Director and the Superior, as he does in the meditation cited in this article (MF 99, 3).

⁶ It could be that an edition dated 1718 and after could account for this absence, because in certain texts of 1718 the "account of conscience and of conduct" is reduced in some instances to "account of conduct." That could be a result of a distraction by the copyist, because those instances are not in all the texts. The "amputation" cannot be assigned to any formal decision of the "legislators" of the Institute.

⁷ For example, MF 107, 2: "You ought to do nothing and not proceed to any undertaking without the advice of your superiors, for it is their responsibility to make known to you and direct what God wants of you..." Also, MD 71, 3: "Be faithful to reveal the bottom of your heart to your Directors; this will ordinarily prevent you from falling into this kind of weakness. ..." See also MD 19.

⁸ "How sweet it is to travel when you are carried by the grace of God." ("Satis suaviter equitat quern gratia Dei portat." *The Imitation of Christ*, II, 9,1,4). The expression could also be translated, "Carried by grace you jog comfortably."

⁹ *Da*, part two, avant-propos, p. 196. Note that the use of the word "light" is part of the definition of grace as it is part of the definition of inspiration.

¹⁰ La Salle often makes angels be messengers of good inspirations. See MD 6,1 and 3; MF 172, 2; MF 125, 1,2,3.

Complementary themes:

Direction of conscience; Faith-The spirit of faith; God's work; Grace; Holy Spirit.

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41. JOY

Summary:

1. Was John-Baptist de La Salle a sad saint? Set up of the article. - 2. Lexicography. 2.1. Joy and related sentiments in 17th century vocabulary. 2.2. Sentiments that are the opposite of JOY. -3. A few elements of Biblical approach. 3.1. In the Old Testament. 3.2. In the New Testament. - 4. Christian joy. 4.1. God, a source of joy in himself, for the angels and the saints, for man still here on earth. 4.2. God's presence as an anticipated heaven. - 5. Grounds for joy. 5.1. For the Christian. 5.2. For the Brother. 5.3. For the Christian teacher. 5.4. For the pupil. - 6. How St. John Baptist de La Salle manifested his joy: Rules of decorum and Christian Civility and the Spirit of Faith.

1. WAS JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE A SAD SAINT?

The progress made in the last few decades in lasallian studies¹ gives of the Holy founder a picture which brings out the human side of his character. Although he owed a lot to the influence exercised on him by the masters of the French school of spirituality² whilst he was at the same time strongly influenced by his family environment, profoundly Christian, rather austere with no doubt a hint of rigorism, it is easy, from his writings, to answer the question his biographers asked themselves: was he a sad saint?³ This school of spirituality has sometimes been blamed for its pessimism but it must be understood in the context of what were the great characteristics of this school and the times impregnated with the doctrines of St. Augustine and often with rigorism.

In the present article, we shall see the place St. John Baptist de La Salle gave to JOY in his writings, whether these were meant for the pupils or for their teachers. We shall describe it in the Christian, in the Religious, in the Christian teacher and in the lasallian school. In our conclusion, we shall examine how he expressed it in his life and in his relationship with his Brothers.

2. LEXICOGRAPHY

2.1. Joy and related sentiments in the vocabulary of the 17th century

The Founder does not define JOY nor other related words used here. Trevoux says that joy is "an emotion of the soul, a pleasant and lively movement that the soul feels when it possesses a real or imaginary good". It differs from CONTENTMENT which is an interior feeling of the heart, whilst it refers to an exterior manifestation; it is an expression of the heart which sometimes stirs the mind. SATISFACTION on the other hand concerns passions. PLEASURE is principally related to the taste, just as the word DELIGHT. Joy and gaiety are synonymous but joy is in the heart, gaiety in manners. The former consists in a sweet sentiment of the soul; the latter in a pleasant state of the mind which manifests itself in the eyes and on the face. Joy may often affect the soul rather strongly without showing itself outwardly.

We notice therefore a certain variation in these definitions. JOY is said to be at times residing in the soul, at others it is an external manifestation.⁶ He who possesses something good may REJOICE. The possession of this good, whether it be

life, or health, material goods, honours, friends, results in BEATITUDE and renders one BLISSFUL. This applies to whoever is enjoying the sovereign good, eternal HAPPINESS. BLISS refers to a happy state that occurs haphazardly and can give rise to PLEASURE. The difference between these two lies in that pleasure is an agreeable feeling, whilst happiness, considered as a sentiment, is a sequence of pleasures. This last word has a broader meaning than all the others because it is related to a greater number of objects in whatever concerns the mind, the heart, the senses, fortune.⁷

2.2. Sentiments opposite to Joy

Quite differently, SADNESS is the opposite of joy, just as GRIEF is to gaiety. Sadness is caused by great afflictions and is described as a state whilst grief is like an action compared to a habit. The melancholic mind is dissatisfied with itself and with everything that surrounds it and only conceives sombre ideas. It typifies the modern pessimist.⁸

As we said earlier, De La Salle does not define any of these words. He uses them according to the sense they had in his time and allows himself, as others would, a certain liberty in their use so that he often mixes them up, in particular, pleasure and bliss, the latter being often associated with eternal happiness; on the other hand, as was said before, the word pleasure, in the writings of the Founder will refer especially to the senses while the words gaiety and gay will be used especially to describe facial expressions.

3. ELEMENTS OF BIBLICAL APPROACH

The Bible and Christian revelation provide us with a more relational approach to joy. It is true that St. Paul tells us that we must work out our salvation in fear and trembling (Ph. 2,12), but one must keep in mind that the teaching of Jesus is first of all good news — the meaning of the word GOSPEL itself — and his birth was announced as a joyous event for the people (Lc 1,52; 2,10).

3.1. In the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, we are exhorted to be joyful. The just man places his joy in the Lord (Ps 1,1); a joy meant to last (Jb 20,5) and which is externalised (Pr 29,6). Man may also place his happiness in material goods (Ds 127 B) considered as a blessing from God (Jb 42,10-12) but the greatest gift of the Lord are the paschal exploits, the celebration of which culminates in the liturgical service in the Temple.⁹

3.2. In the New Testament, the exhortation to rejoice will be greater still for Jesus fulfils the promise and the messianic expectation to its perfection. (Lk 1 and 2). By participating in the joy of the trinitarian community, he wishes our joy to be perfect (Jn 15,11). His resurrection not only washes away sin but its consequences as well, so that we can always be happy (1 Th 5,16). Joy is also a fruit of the Spirit (Ga 5,22) for the kingdom of God does not consist solely in eating and drinking but in justice, peace and joy in the Spirit (Rm 14,17; R 97.5). Luke underlines with satisfaction the presence of joy during the persecutions (Lk 6,23; Ac 5,41) in welcoming the word of God (Lk 8.13; Ac 2,46) and in the conversion of sinners (Lk 15.7 and 32; Ac 8,8). This joy is not called into question by the adversities of life (2Co 7,4) or by persecutions (Mt 5.10; Ac 5,41) for by conforming himself to Jesus Christ, the Christian avoids what may hold a threat in creation (Ap 21,4). Just like his ancestors in the faith, the Christian is called to celebrate his joy and it is in the Eucharist that he can thank God with the community (Ac 2,42, 46, 47). All along the liturgical year, he will find opportunities to manifest his joy through the commemoration of the mysteries of Jesus and particularly of the Resurrection.¹⁰ The joy he may experience in the Lord will follow from the peace which reigns in a good conscience and for that he may rely on certain signs (Da 96) such as those given as examples by saint Thomas; the joy one finds in God and in matters of faith, makes one shun any relations with worldly seductions, and the knowledge that one's conscience is free from grave sins." In this way, we can see that

the joy of the Christian is intimately related to charity and hope.

4. CHRISTIAN JOY

Faithful to the teaching of the Sorbonne and St. Sulpice, the Founder was convinced that the only way to happiness was the knowledge of God, source of all that is good. It is the Christian's duty to know and love God, for without faith and charity one cannot be happy (Da X C).¹² Consequently, the highest proof of human happiness and joy lies in a vision of faith, such as it emerges from the Gospel and the teaching of the Church.

4.1. God, a source of joy for himself, for the angels, the saints and man on earth

The Founder never ceases to repeat that God is the only happiness, the true joy. "To know God, he says, and to love him must be the sole occupation of the Christian, as these are what he must aim at and all his happiness in this life" (Da 198 D). God is his own happiness in the love he lavishes on himself (I 196 B) and "the joy of the angels is only an overflow of that which God has for himself (I 214 C). "He is also the happiness of the saints": Is there anything I can long for in heaven, if it is not you, o my God, who constitute the happiness of the saints — for to adore God is what makes up all their happiness. (Dc 215 D) — just as you are the only object of your happiness? (I 257 B-C) For this reason, St. Augustine "detached himself from anything human and natural, and acknowledged in this manner that man's happiness is made up of true joy, which is to be found only in God (MF 123.3). Once more, the Founder insists: "It is only in him that we shall find our true happiness, even in this life" (MF 169,1).

The idea that God is our true happiness even in this life, and not only in heaven, is repeated several times: "Our soul having been created by God to enjoy him, all its happiness on earth consists in attaching itself only to him" (MF 90.2); "It is in you alone that I place all my happiness" (I 91 B); "You are also all my joy" (I 91 A). In order for us to enjoy this happiness, we must "ask God for this perfect detachment, in order to attach ourselves only to him, for in him is all the happiness of this

life and of the next (MD 35.1). Already on earth, one can experience this happiness when thinking of God's presence in our midst for, he writes: "Can we experience greater happiness than to have you in our midst?" (E 39).

4.2. The presence of God considered as an anticipated heaven

This happiness and this joy which one experiences on earth are like an anticipated heaven: "It is a source of happiness to have God always present in any place where I go and find myself (...). It is some kind of anticipation of heavenly happiness to be able to be always with you and to always think of you" (EM 8 D). And he insists: "It is satisfying to always have one's mind occupied with God and it is an anticipation of the happiness we will enjoy in heaven. (EM 28 D). God gives certain souls "the grace to lose only rarely or not at all his presence, and that is for them an anticipated happiness and a foretaste of heavenly bliss" (EM 31 A). One must even ask God for the grace to meditate well in order to acquire the habit of the presence of God... because it is an anticipated source of happiness already in this life" (MF 177.3 A). Consequently, the joy of him who loves God is continuous here on earth and throughout all eternity. He possesses in through faith and hope.

5. REASONS TO REJOICE

5.1. The Christian has many reasons to be happy. He may rejoice because he was brought up in the Christian faith (MF 140.1), he was made a child of the Church (Da 213 A), a brother of Jesus (EM 65 C), and he received the gift of Faith (I 95 C) and he possesses divine grace. As a child of the Church, he takes part in its liturgical life and has thus the opportunity to rekindle his joy at the different feasts, on the occasion of the birth of Christ, (Dc 70 C-D-E), his incarnation (MF 112,3), his resurrection (Da 440 A, Dc 94 C, Dc 96 A, MD 29.1). On Sunday, through its hymns and its alleluias, the Church reminds him of his reasons to rejoice (Da 440 A). The Christian finds his happiness in the sacramental life, particularly in the Eucharist and the Mass (I 264 E, 270 C, 43 D,

259 C, 272 E). The sacrament of reconciliation and divine pardon are for him occasions of joy (Da 312 A; I 210 D, E). This joy, is made available to him through prayer (Da 418 C, EM 9 B, MF 130.1, 177.s, 179.3) during which he converses with God who is all his joy (Ps 42.4; I 44 D). He may also rejoice because of the protection afforded him by the angels (MF 168 D). During trials, especially those arising from injustice, in conformity with the beatitudes (Mt 5,8) he may find solace in the promise made by Jesus since "through the practice of the beatitudes, we are promised the full happiness enjoyed in heaven, for Christ has promised those who practice them happiness even here below (Da 189 D, F). On the feasts of the Saints, he can show his happiness, as was done on the Feast of St. John (Dc 206 A) through bonfires. Even death does not dampen the joy of the Christian (Dc 219 E - 220 A).

The joy of the servants of God

In his very fine meditation for the 3rd Sunday after Easter, (MD 34), the Founder enumerates for the Brothers the characteristics of the joy of the servants of God comparing it to that of world lings. The servants of God possess a joy which is never ending because nobody will ever be able to take it away from them (Jn 16,22). If they suffer, it is only for a short time, because joy will soon follow. Their joy is therefore deep seated, little subject to alteration, for it is built on the love of God which keeps them alive and in God's grace. This joy is interior because it is in their heart and nothing of what is external can penetrate there except what they allow under the influence of the senses. On the contrary, the joy of the world ling is short lived and will end with this life: an eternal sadness will take its place. Their joy is superficial because it is based on splendor and appearances and the pleasure of the senses which are very fragile and perishable. Finally the joy of world lings is exterior, and that makes it vulnerable to the misfortunes of life and the preoccupations which upset it and causes them to yield to dejection. It is therefore the servants of God that enjoy genuine happiness whilst that of world lings is an illusion.

5.2. For the Brother of the Christian Schools

As for the Brother, he has the same reasons to rejoice. Basically, his joy is not different, just as his consecration partakes of the same baptism. It is in intensity that the Brother's joy is greater, because his occupations provide him with more opportunities to have a more intimate contact with the Lord. More particularly through meditation and the sentiment of the presence of God which he should practice continually.

However, the Brother has his own reasons to rejoice and to let happiness overwhelm him. He must "consider himself happy to be able to receive the bread of angels which is offered by Jesus Christ himself (MD 150.3). The practice of meditation will "provide him with the happiness of always having his mind taken up by the thought of GOD, and that is an anticipation of heavenly bliss (EM 28 D). He may, even, through meditation of simple attention "enjoy an interior consolation which will make his soul find much pleasure in these thoughts" (EM 34 C). The Founder adds that "it is a great satisfaction, when the Brothers are assembled for meditation or for some other exercise, to feel assured that God is in their midst" (EM 9 B). Regularity is another source of happiness for those who live in the Society (R 64 10), just as the help of the exterior supports on which the Brothers should converse during recreations (R 66 21). The Brother may also find his happiness in "being able to read or listen to the reading of Holy Scripture" (MF 100.1). Even more than the exercises and regularity, the religious vocation the Brother has embraced is itself a source of joy. "The holy vocation to which God called us in his kindness is our mother; the novitiate is her bosom; that is where the novices, her spiritual children are conceived, engendered in Jesus Christ, according to St. Paul's expression, and trained to live a truly Christian and religious life. Act in such a way, therefore, you who have the happiness of enjoying this advantage in the novitiate... make sure your conception is immaculate..." (MF 83.3. 12.A). Through his withdrawal from and renunciation of the world, following the example of the saints (MF 109.1, 173.2, 182.1) and of Mary (Dc 202 A)

who thought it a great happiness to have left the world, the Brother must be convinced that it is on the day he bade farewell to the world that "his happiness began on earth to be consummated one day in heaven" (MF 191.1). It is in this vein that he writes to a religious, his niece, that she is "fortunate to be in the religious life, a holy state, conducive to holiness, and which is an honour for her and her salvation (L 120.3). He had written the same thing to Bro. Matthias: "You are fortunate to be in your present state..." (L 47.7). The Founder considered "the advantage of being in a community the highest form of happiness on earth; for him it was heaven in anticipation for in it he enjoyed God as far as faith rendered that possible (EM 47 C). He made his the word of the author of the Imitation that the religious life is "a pleasant and attractive form of slavery... through which are acquired the sovereign good and a happiness that will last forever" (MF 83.1, 12 A).

Hence the Brother must not be afraid to be deprived of sensible consolations (MD 35.2) and believe, that in times of aridity and interior trials, he would decline appreciably in the state of holiness God had placed him in" (MD 135.2). He should look for the privation of sensible consolations (R 106.13, 206.16) to form a much more intimate relationship with God. He should not feel dejected (L 47.10) or yield to the false sadness of world lings (R 206.16). On the contrary, he must "always show happiness on his features (RC 55.3, R 176.7-9).

5.3. For the Christian teacher

The Christian teacher too has special reasons to feel happy. He must admire the kindness which God shows in providing for the salvation of children (MR 193.3, 197.1) and feel happy to be associated with so holy and exalted a mission (MR 199.1) thanks to which he can be an honour for the Church, in spite of the trials and sufferings of his ministry (MF 78.3). He should rejoice to be able to exercise the same ministry as St. Paul and numerous saints who were useful to the Church (MR 199.1. MF 153.1, 170.3, 78.3) He has his reward here on earth in seeing that God is well served (MR 207.2) by those whom he has instructed and realising that his work has not been useless. (MR 207.2). Like St. Paul, he derives his glory

from the knowledge that the Gospel has been preached gratuitously (MR 194.1, 207.2). He finds his joy also in the good conduct of the children who live according to the principles of justice and piety (MR 207.3), in that religion "has gained ground"; for all these reasons, the Brother is grateful to God (MR 207.3). In heaven, he will have every reason to say, with St. Paul, that the children have been his hope, his joy and his crown of glory (Ph 4.1 - MR 207.3). His happiness will be greater than that of those who will have worked only for their personal salvation (MR 208.1) and his reward will be proportionate to the good he will have done to souls (MR 208.1). His pupils will share in his happiness (MR 208.2) for they will not fail to point out the zeal he used to bring about their salvation (MR 208.2). "The consolation of the teacher described by La Salle is not a narcissistic joy or one centred on the Brother, on his personal salvation, but concerns God's plan being already carried out through his work".¹³

5.4. For the pupils

As far as the pupils are concerned, joy is not reserved for heaven. Several elements may contribute to make them happy at school. First of all, the personality of the teacher and the style of the relationships he has with them. De La Salle wanted the teachers to be like elder brothers for the youngsters, who are not only pupils but also disciples.¹⁴ The teachers should possess a whole set of virtues able to attract the pupils, inspire confidence, and reassure them. Those most often referred to by the Founder are kindness, patience, gravity. In imitation of his master, Jesus, (RB 31 E, MD 65.2), the teacher must show kindness at all times when he talks to his pupils (MD 2.2); when he invites them to come to school (CE 183 E); especially when he corrects them (MD 204.3, MD 33.1, CE 140-179). He must show the severity of a father, a compassion full of tenderness and a certain kindness which must however be lively and efficacious" (CE 144 B). If to kindness he joins firmness (CE 140 C, 141 C), he must know when and how to sympathize with their weaknesses and their infirmities (CE 142 C) and adapt the punishment to the fault and the temperament of the children, several of whom ought not to be reprimanded in

public or severely (CE 157-167). He needs to be patient (R 105.13, L 56.3) and in this, he can find inspiration in the patience of St. Cassian (MF 155.2). As for gravity, it does not consist in putting on a severe appearance (CE 19 B) for "it is wrong to put on a severe or forbidding appearance" (RB 10 E). "The serious man, says Trevoux, combines a reserved appearance with wisdom and maturity of mind, that is why people trust him and he is able to control their minds".¹⁵

A key expression in the writings of the Founder is that the Brothers must love their pupils (MD 33.2). This love must even express itself through fondness (MF 101.3) such as a mother has for her children. It must be shown particularly towards poor children (MF 80.3). When he does that, the Brother will show that he possesses the spirit which Mme de Maintenon wished to see in her schools: "The best means to be obeyed is to deserve to be loved by the pupils. To achieve that, you yourselves must love", she used to say. And add: "Patience, vigilance, gentleness, these words should be engraved on all the doors".¹⁶ As for the Founder, he wanted them engraved on the hearts of the Brothers, who were in duty bound to avail themselves of the affection the pupils had for them to draw them closer to God" (MF 101.3).

To the attitudes and behaviour of the teacher, La Salle adds a certain number of pedagogical principles which renders the atmosphere of the schools welcoming and a source of satisfaction and joy for the pupils. Education, which he considers an undertaking prompted by disinterestedness and zeal, must base itself on a deep and individualised familiarity with the child to be taught (CE 236-237). Thus, the teacher will be able to suit his apostolate to each child's moods (cf. CE Catalogues) and the present and future needs of the pupils. The children's efforts will be encouraged and competition will be spurred on. More than that, they will be deeply involved in the smooth running of the school, in the various duties for which they are responsible (CE 204-218).¹⁷

What is to be thought of the allusions which J. Delumeau makes to some canticles sung in lasallian schools and which according to him could contribute to develop a morbid preoccupation with death and hell?¹⁸ It is true that such texts are

found in certain hymns but the place which they hold does not outweigh positive sentiments better able to generate joy and confidence in God. Shouldn't one acknowledge that the lasallian school was dependent on the values prevalent in its time and its sensitivity and that Abbe de Rane, for example, did not hesitate "to preach to the courtiers, the nobles, the noble ladies whom he knew, humility and remorse in the same way: "Every Christian, he used to say, is bound to live in perpetual penance, experiencing the bitterness of a spirit troubled and afflicted by fear; the Christian must satiate and inebriate himself on crosses and opprobrium".¹⁹

6. HOW DID ST. LA SALLE EXPRESS HIS JOY: RB AND SPIRIT OF FAITH

De La Salle would willingly have subscribed to these ideas and his biographer does not fail to enumerate his mortifications and penances (BLAIN 2, 451-465). However, nobody has ever said that the Founder possessed a forbidding and surly spirit. Quite the contrary, everyone stresses his affability towards everybody, particularly towards his Brothers who called on him with confidence, (id. 476). His demeanour was stamped with a seriousness tempered by gentleness and evidenced in him a joy which made him look amiable (id 308). His conduct drew its inspiration from the rules of decorum like that of every gentleman of his time. Thus, serenity always showed on his face (id 310). He never failed to express his happiness in his correspondence with his Brothers, He rejoiced at their good health (L 19.12, 26.2) as well as the good inclinations they told him about (L 48.1, 10.8) and the successes they achieved in their employment. The Founder in spite of his detachment from earthly goods, did not have a negative view of them. It was legitimate to ask God for them and to possess them provided they were directed towards God and did not harm the process of one's salvation (Db 248). The recreations which he prescribed for the Brothers after meals were to be pleasant as well as edifying, yet he did exclude from them "any type of games, even though they were harmless" to avoid any dissipation which

would have harmed their interior life. He only intervened in the case of an uncontrolled exuberance or excessive manifestations of joy, very loud laughter, buffoonery, anything that was unbecoming in an educated person (BLAIN 2, 313). Neither did he want to see sour and melancholy faces. The face has to be gay, serene, equable, without fluctuating with sad or joyful circumstances (id 310). In John Baptist de La Salle's features, joy is inspired therefore by the behaviour of the courteous man which he describes in "Les Règles de la bienséance et de la Civilité Chrétienne" but it is based substantially on his privileged relationship with his Master and the world of spirituality, thanks to his spirit of faith. If we lose sight of these two fundamental reference positions, we will find it impossible to understand fully his sentiments and convictions concerning joy and all that which defines it in depth, i.e. the presence of God which may amount to the possession of God already here on earth (Em 19 B, 47 D). So, throughout all his life, he has been faithful to the formation received from his parents and his teachers at Saint-Sulpice.

¹ Cf. *Cahiers lasalliens*, POUTET Yves, *Le XVII^e siècle et les origines lasalliennes*.

² DEVILLE, R., *L'école française de spiritualité*, p. 126.

³ MELAGE, Frère, *Le créateur de l'école populaire – Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 213.

⁴ DEVILLE, R., *op. cit.*, p. 173.

⁵ *Ib.* pp. 101-123.

⁶ *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*, T. V, p. 234; T. IV, pp. 374-375; T. II, pp. 853-854.

⁷ *Ibid.*, T. V, p. 251; T. I, p. 815; T. IV, p. 83; T. I, pp. 961-962.

⁸ *Ibid.*, mélancolique: T. V., p. 912; chagrin: T. II, p. 392; affliction: T. I, p. 143; tristesse: T. VIII, p. 000.

⁹ *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe* Band 2, s. 40-42.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, a 42-44.

¹¹ *La foi de l'Eglise*, p. 235.

¹² POUTET, Yves, *Le XVII^e siècle et les origines lasalliennes*, T. 1, pp. 252-253.

¹³ CAMPOS, Frère Miguel, *L'itinéraire évangélique de saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle et le recours à l'Écriture dans ses Méditations pour le temps de la Retraite*, Vol. II, p. 329, CL 46.

¹⁴ PUNGIER, Jean, *Comment est née la Conduite des Ecoles*, p. 54.

¹⁵ *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*, T. IV, p. 606.

¹⁶ In Anselme, Frère, *Aux Sources de la Pédagogie moderne*, p. 87.

¹⁷ PUNGIER Jean, *Ibid.* pp. 65-97.

¹⁸ DELUMEAU, Jean, *Le péché et la peur - La Culpabilisation en Occident (XIII^e-XVIII^e s.)*, 385, 400, 401, 402, 417, 450, 451, 453, 454, 455, 456, 500, 524.

¹⁹ GAXOTTE, Pierre, *La France de Louis XIV*, p. 218.

Complementary themes:

Brothers of the Christian Schools; Child-Pupil-Disciple; Christian; Christian Teacher; Consecration; Consolation-Tepidity-Dryness; Correction; Disciples; Education; Faith-Spirit of faith; Gentleness; Guardian Angels; Heart-to touch hearts; Incarnation; Instruction-to instruct; Love-Charity; Ministry; Peace; Piety; State; World; Zeal.

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42. JUSTICE

Summary:

1. Introduction. - 2. Justice in DLS's time. - 3. Justice in DLS. 3.1. Justice and Satisfaction for Sin. 3.2. Justice as Relationship with God. 3.3. Justice as Human.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are 136 references to *justice* in the writings of John Baptist De La Salle (hereafter DLS).¹ One hundred two of these references appear in the context of catechetical and pedagogical writing in the following texts: Da, Db, DC, GA, I, RB. The remaining references (numbers in parentheses) are EM (5) MD (10), MR (6), R (5) -all writings of a spiritual type intended for the Brothers. This essay will have two sections: the first discusses *justice* as understood at the time of DLS; the second, three principal ways that the word appears in DLS' writings. DLS generally uses the *word justice* in a way that is conventional for the 17th century: to refer in a moral or juridical way to the relationship between God and humanity, a relationship distorted by human sins and requiring that satisfaction be made to restore the relationship. The definite act of satisfaction was that of the passion and death of Jesus on the cross. However, it is necessary, according to DLS and other writers of his time, that human beings also make satisfaction in order to apply to themselves the merits which Jesus had gained for all through his saving death.

2. JUSTICE IN DLS's TIME

The 1705 edition of the *Le Dictionnaire Universel* lists four basic meanings for the word justice.²

In order of their appearance in the dictionary, these are:

- (1) as one of the cardinal virtues;
- (2) in the legal sense: giving to persons according to what is due to them;
- (3) as a characteristic ascribed to God, who renders to persons according to their works;
- (4) as a quality in persons seen to possess the virtue of justice.

The dictionary further specifies the second meaning of justice as: first, commutative justice, the natural equity which establishes reasonable costs for transactions among persons and which causes civil society to function smoothly; second, distributive justice, the actions of a superior authority against those who frustrate the natural equity required for harmony in civil society.

The moralistic or juridical connotations of the second and third definitions above dominated in the spiritual and theological writings of DLS's time. The dominance of those meanings resulted from a twofold process, the beginnings of which the *DS* locates after the time of St. Augustine, that diminished Old Testament and Pauline understandings of justice as God's saving action and inflated notion of justice as moral virtue.³ Eventually this process disconnected (the article on *justice* in *DS* uses the vivid expression "*pratiquement amputee*") the notion of justice from its biblical roots and

even from any theological connections to charity and grace.

Post-Tridentine theology further exacerbated this disconnection or amputation by its extreme emphasis on works in response to what was then thought to be Luther's understanding of the relationship of faith and works.⁴ Contemporary ecumenical theology and the renewal of Roman Catholic biblical theology since Vatican II have combined to reveal that Luther's understanding of justice more closely resembled Pauline theology than it did that of the counter-reformation. DLS's use of the word *justice* largely reflects the results of the disconnection between *justice* understood as God's action and *justice* understood primarily as a moral virtue.

3. JUSTICE IN DLS

DLS uses the word *justice* in one of three chief ways, of which the first is the most prevalent:

(3.1) *justice* as an order or balance in the relationship between God and humanity, an order which sin has distorted and for which satisfaction must be made;

(3.2) *justice* as relationship with God, an understanding closer to biblical usage and thus similar to contemporary understandings;

(3.3) *justice* as a human virtue, actually a miscellaneous category which includes, among other kinds of uses, references to *justice* as the virtue of giving to others what is due to them.

3.1. Justice and Satisfaction for Sin

DLS's uses of the word *justice* in a way that are the most characteristic of the time are found throughout his writings, but particularly in Da, Db, DC, I, GA and RB. A form of the word "satisfaction," or a concept almost identical with it, appears in forty-six of the one hundred thirty-six references of *justice*. That number expands significantly when explicit references to God as judge or to the rigor of God's judgment are included.

The question-answer exchange of Instruction 14, on satisfaction, in the second part of Db is especially illustrative of this group of citations in

DLS's writings.

D. What is satisfaction?

R. It is the reparation of the injury that one has done to God by sins.

D. Why are we obliged to make satisfaction to God for our sins, since Jesus Christ has made satisfaction to him by dying on the Cross? R. So that we apply to ourselves the merits which Christ obtained for us by his death.

D. To whom do we owe satisfaction?

R. To God and to our neighbor. (Db: 198)

In this short section one can see certain characteristic elements of the notion of *justice*, as commonly understood at DLS's time. *Justice* is compensatory: It satisfies God for the distortion in humanity's relationship with God that has been brought about by human sins. Human beings have been fully justified by Christ, but must apply the merits of Christ's death to themselves through works of satisfaction (among many relevant citations, Da: 325-329). DLS gives many examples of acts of satisfaction, including: good works and charity (as in the quote above from Db; also Da: 334); the penance given in the sacrament of Penance (Da: 320), suffering in purgatory (GA: 404 and 405); the interior and exterior satisfactions for sin, which include the difficulties and sufferings of ordinary living (Da: 329-332).

Justice so understood makes the divine relationship essentially juridical, with God as one who judges human actions on the basis of their merits. This juridical effect is very evident in passages in which DLS explicitly portrays God as a judge, as in the 3rd point of the meditation for the feast of St. Romuald, a Camaldolese hermit:

After having lived over a hundred years in solitude, and after having led a most penitential life, this saint declared that the more he thought of death the greater was his fear that he would not die properly prepared. He knew that God will exact such a rigorous account on the day of Judgement that the "just man wins salvation only with difficulty," and that God as the Prophet says, "when the time is ripe, will judge strictly".⁵ (MF 105.3).

The passage is particularly striking because of the evident "justice" of the subject, Saint Romuald, justice which DLS had described vividly in the first two points of the meditation. Even this

holy man, who was so clearly dedicated to prayer and good works of personal penitence, lived in fear that God's judgement would be so rigorous that even the efforts of a good man would not suffice to satisfy for sin.

3.2. *Justice* as Relationship with God

There are instances in DLS's writings of an understanding of *justice* in which the reader glimpses hints of contemporary theological and scriptural understandings of justice. Perhaps sixteen of the one hundred thirty-six references could be read in this fashion, clearly a smaller group than that discussed in 3.1 above. These citations highlight personal relationship with God, sometimes in terms of explicitly biblical images such as the kingdom of God, rather than the juridical or moralistic relationship that emerges *when justice* is connected to the need for satisfaction for sin.

In Da, for example, there are at least five references to responding prayerfully and lovingly to God as "source of all justice" (Da: 276, 291, 470, 472, 493). DLS also refers occasionally to the justice of the kingdom of God (Db: 258 and EM: 121). References to the state of original justice, a theological description of the relationship between God and humanity before original sin, also within this category (Da: 22 and 245; MF 82.2 and 181.2). In these references readers see only glimpses of God's justice understood as "saving

justice... [in which] faithful to the Covenant, the just God accomplishes his promises of salvation".⁶ These glimpses do, however, suggest the presence in DLS's understanding of alternatives to a purely juridical or moralistic conception of *justice*.

3.3. *Justice*: Miscellaneous References to *Justice* as human Virtue

Finally there is a third group of DLS's citations of *justice* which is miscellaneous in character, but in which *justice* as a human virtue is often the common element. He gives, in several texts, definitions of *justice* as that human virtue that renders to each according to what is due (Db: 136 and GA: 384, for example). DLS makes several references to justice in the taking of oaths (Da: 116 and 117, for example). Finally, *Justice* is also: a virtue for which one ought to pray (Da: 414); a quality of the correction to be given to students by teachers (MR: 204.1); a cardinal virtue (GA: 384).

¹ "*Justice*" in *Vocabulaire lasallien*, tome 4, Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes, Région France, 1984, 162-65.

² "*Justice*" in *Le Dictionnaire Universel*, tome 2, compiled by Antoine Furetière, Rotterdam, 1705, 2nd edition.

³ Jean-Marie AUBERT, "*Justice*" in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, 8, (1974), 1629-32.

⁴ *Ibid*, 1636-38.

⁵ The translation is that of William J. BATTERSBY, ed., *De La Salle Meditations*, London, Waldegrave, 1964 edition, 412.

⁶ Xavier LÉON-DUFOUR, S.J., "Justice, justification", *Dictionnaire du Nouveau Testament*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1975, 327-8.

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43. MISSION, SENDING

Summary:

1. The fundamental idea in mission is that of being sent for a specific purpose. The Hebrew and Christian scriptures speak of certain persons being sent by God to accomplish his designs for the world. The Christian mystery centers around the mission of Jesus Christ, sent by God to announce the kingdom of God bringing salvation to the world. The visible mission of Christ is complemented by the invisible mission of the Spirit and entrusted to the Church to continue until the end of time. - 2. The missionary vision of the Church was widened by the discoveries of new cultures by the 16th and 17th century explorers. The missionary spirit was very evident in the Church of 17th century France. - 3. In his writings, De La Salle often refers to the fact that God has sent his Son and his Spirit into the world, that God sends trials as well as blessings, that the Brothers themselves have been sent by God to bring the good news of salvation to the children of the poor. - 4. The Institute of the Brothers has retained a strong sense of its continuing mission to bring the Gospel to the educational world in institutions concerned with the needs of the poor and the promotion of peace and social justice.

1. THE MEANING OF THE WORD

1.1. The fundamental idea in mission is that of being sent. Persons and things are sent for a specific purpose to certain places or to certain other persons. In political life, official representatives sent to act for their superior officers are called envoys, derived from the French *envoyer*.

1.2. The term mission as used in Christian literature has a rich meaning rooted in the mission of the apostles, sent by Jesus Christ in the same way he had been sent from his Father (Jn 20,21), to baptize and preach the good news of salvation. The Church's mission derives from that of the apostles. Those who exercise this mission, especially those who are sent for this purpose to foreign lands, are called missionaries. Sometimes communities of clerics formed to catechize and to preach the Gospel in foreign lands refer to themselves simply as The Mission, notably the Congregation of

the Mission, otherwise known as the Lazarists or the Vincentians, founded by Saint Vincent de Paul. In Canon Law the term mission is applied to an official act whereby an ecclesiastical superior orders or empowers a specific person to perform ecclesiastical actions, such as preaching or teaching, in the name of the Church.

1.2.1. Already in the Old Testament, there is discernment that certain persons have been sent by God, notably the prophets who were seen as the bearers of God's message to the kings and to the people. When the Davidic line of the messiah-kings came to an end with the Babylonian captivity, beginning in 605 BC, there arose an increasing expectation that God would send a new king-messiah to restore the fortunes of Israel.

1.2.2. In the New Testament, the Gospels describe the way in which Jesus became increasingly aware that he had been sent by the Father for a

messianic mission, limited at first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark conclude with the commissioning words of Jesus to the apostles to carry on his mission. The Gospel of John contains the promise of Jesus to send the Holy Spirit to be the advocate, the comforter, to teach them all the truth, in a word to be the internal and invisible force to carry the mission of Jesus forward until the end of time. Saint Luke and Saint Paul emphasize the universalization of the mission that is now seen as extending to all the nations through the constitution of the Church as the new Israel. This is the mystery of salvation, hidden in the designs of God up until now. Mission in this sense is the primordial task of the whole Church before it is a task assigned to any individual or group of individuals to be carried out in a particular way.

1.2.3. Out of the early Trinitarian and Christological controversies and the creedal statements that followed, there developed a theology of missions in relation to the life of the Triune God. In this theology, rooted in scriptural language, the internal activity of the Trinity is spoken of in terms of the processions: the Father proceeding from no one, the Son from the Father, and the Spirit from them both. Corresponding to the processions there are the missions, the external activity flowing over from the divine vitality into the work of creation and redemption. Thus the Father is sent by no one, the Son is sent by the Father, and the Spirit is sent by them both. The theological meaning of the mission of the Church can thus be expressed as an extension in time of the mission of the Son and Holy Spirit.

2. MISSION IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

2.1. Once the known civilized world had become evangelized and the center of Christianity was established in Rome, the concept of mission and the missionary spirit receded into the background. During the middle ages, for example there is very little evidence of a missionary attitude, nor is there any significant papal initiative for the conversion of non-Christians, Jews or Moslems who

were considered as enemies of the Christian faith to be avoided or overcome.

2.2. The discoveries, explorations, and conquests of entire new worlds that began with the Portuguese and Spanish explorers in the fifteenth century gave a fresh impetus for the Church to rethink in wider terms its commission to spread the Gospel to all nations. The initiative for this missionary expansion came at first from the mendicant orders, the Franciscans and Dominicans, many of whom accompanied the conquerors to the lands they were claiming for their sovereigns.

New ways to express missionary zeal both at home and abroad were developed by the Jesuits, founded in the 16th century by Saint Ignatius Loyola, especially with the innovative vow of obedience to the pope with a view to disponibility for mission.

The Jesuit Francis Xavier became the prototype of the new style missionary in his evangelization of the peoples of the Far East. Toward the end of the 16th Century, Francis de Sales initiated a new attitude toward the Protestants, replacing policies of legal and military opposition with a spirit of mission for their conversion through the spiritual means of prayer, alms, fasting, and charitable works. In 1622 the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith was established in Rome for the purpose of preserving the Catholic faith in the faithful and spreading it among the infidels.

Through this newly created office, the church leadership was able to direct and support a concentrated and well organized worldwide missionary effort.

2.3. France in the 17th century was alive with a missionary spirit. French-speaking Canada afforded missionary opportunities for the Sulpicians sent by Father Olier, and for diocesan priests as well. The French Jesuits worked among the Indians throughout much of North America, an effort that cost many of them their lives. The reports of their encounters with the American natives, and the accounts of the trials and martyrdom that many of them endured, helped to keep alive the missionary spirit in their countrymen. In continental France itself, under the direction of Propaganda Fide, new efforts were directed at converting or at least containing the influence of the Hu-

guenots and Jansenists as well as the Jews, Moslems, and the idolatrous sects in the remote regions of the country. Important contributions to the missionary effort to combat widespread ignorance and religious indifference in certain regions of France were made by the Capuchins, the Congregation of the Mission, founded by Saint Vincent de Paul, and the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, founded by the Duke of Ventadour in 1630. In 1663-1664 there was established in Paris a seminary to train priests for the foreign missions. In these various efforts, lay people often participated along with the clergy in the missionary enterprise.

3. MISSION IN THE WRITINGS OF DE LA SALLE

3.1. The instances where De La Salle uses the abstract word mission are rare. In the *Duties of a Christian* he refers in general to the vocation and mission of the apostles" (Da 31 A) and their mission to found and establish the Church (Dc 93 C).

He mentions that God gave great success to the preaching and mission of Saint Barnabas (Dc 272 C). The meditation for the feast of Saint Yon, for whom the motherhouse property outside Rouen was named, refers twice to the ministry of that saint as his mission (MF 269 C, 270 A). Other wise, De La Salle uses the word mission only in referring to the title of the Congregation of the Mission in his letters to Brother Gabriel Drolin in Rome.

3.2. Rather than the abstract word mission, De La Salle characteristically employs the verb send in all of its human and religious meanings. In his letters to various Brothers, he speaks of sending letters, books, documents and other objects to the Brothers. More significantly, he speaks of sending the Brothers themselves to a certain place or to fulfill a certain function. In the *Conduct of Schools* he refers to parents who send (or who fail to send) their children to school.

3.3. De La Salle's catechetical writings abound in references to the New Testament descriptions of the divine missions in the plan of salvation. Thus

God sends his Son, Jesus Christ to earth (Da 1 E, 24 D; Db 8 D, 34 C; Dc 68 C, 71 C). Jesus returns to the One who sent him (MD 35.1), but when he goes he sends the Spirit as the comforter (MD 35.3) to his disciples and apostles (Da 61 A) and to the whole Church (Dc 175 D). More accurately, it is the Father and the Son who send the Spirit (Db 51 B, Dc 181 A, GA 335 A). During his earthly life Jesus send twelve disciples, whom he called apostles because the word apostle means one who is sent (Da 31 B), sending them two by two from city to city (Dc 32 B, C). Then Jesus sends his apostles to preach the Kingdom (MR 199.2). Saint Peter in his turn sent many bishops to preach over the whole world (Dc 238 E, 244 A).

3.4. At other times, De La Salle employs the verb send to express various manifestations of God's providence in dealing with his creatures. He often urges his readers to accept pains and humiliations as being sent from God. This theme occurs in the catechetical works intended for the children (e.g. Da 56 D, 364 C; Db 198 D, 286 D; I 168 A), as well as in the letters and meditations intended for the Brothers (MF 95.3, L 12.8). The Founder reminds his readers that these trials are to be expected (MF 124.3) and can serve as a punishment for pride (Da 170 C). On the other hand, God sends us holy inspirations (MF 141.1), and the children are encouraged to ask God to send his Spirit to give them life (E 21 E). The Brothers should consider their spiritual reading as a letter sent by Jesus Christ himself (R. 144.12). After death, God sends to purgatory for a time the souls that need still to be purified (Dc 218 A).

3.4.1. In the same vein, God sends his angels as instruments of his divine providence. Thus he sent an angel to comfort Christ at the agony in the garden (MD 21.1, Da 46 D). He sends us angels to be our guardians (Db 29 B, Dc 22 B, GA 321 D, I 253 B). God sends his angels as his messengers at the last judgment (Da 85 C).

3.4.2. God also sends his saints into the world. The students should thank God for sending John the Baptist (Dc 229 B). Saint Paul was sent by the Spirit (MF 134.3). To evangelize Armenia and the Indies, God sent "an unusual man" in the person

of Saint Bartholomew (MF 159.2). Concerning Saint Yon, the author of the meditation remarks that God gives grace and power to all those he sends to pagan lands (MF 269 E).

3.5. In his writings to and for the Brothers, especially the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, De La Salle reminds them that their mission and ministry derives from that of Jesus Christ himself and the apostles whom he sent to proclaim the kingdom of God (MR 199.2). The Brother is sent by Jesus Christ for the same reason that Jesus himself was sent, namely, "to announce the good news of the kingdom of God" (MR 199.2). De La Salle urges the Brothers to recognize "that it is God who has called you, who has chosen you for this ministry, and who has sent you to work in his vineyard" (MR 201.1).

3.5.1. The full scope of the Founder's thought on the mission of the Brother cannot be fully appreciated without considering what he writes about the ministry of the Brother, namely, the religious instruction of the students as disciples of Jesus Christ, especially the poor. In relation to mission or being sent, it might be said that the Brothers are sent to a certain group within the Church, namely, the children of artisans and the poor "far from salvation", to perform a certain service or ministry, namely, to bring them to salvation through the work of Christian education.

3.6. At critical stages in his life, De La Salle became progressively aware of his vocation to establish and to guide the Institute. At great cost to himself he accepted this mission as "the work of God". The Brother, too, recognized that this mission had been entrusted to the Founder, most notably, in the letter of 1714 commanding him, in virtue of his vow to obey the Body of the Society, to resume the direction of the Institute that God had given into his care.

4. THE MISSION OF THE LASALLIAN INSTITUTE

4.1. In the *Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (R 1987), approved by church authority in

1987, Chapter II is entitled "The Mission of the Institute". After consideration of some alternatives, the word mission was chosen to locate the apostolic consideration of some alternatives, the word mission was chosen to locate the apostolic works of the Institute within the framework of the divine missions described in the New Testament and the Founder's vision of the Brother's mission as derived from that of Jesus Christ and the apostles.

4.2. Just as the Founder "came to discern in faith what God wanted the mission of the Institute to be", so today, the Institute, "concerned above all for the educational needs of the poor... establishes, renews and diversifies its works according to what the kingdom of God requires" (R 1987, 11). "As 'ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ', the Brothers participate in the Church's mission by consecrating their lives to God in order to bring the Gospel to the educational world" (R 1987, 12). "By virtue of their mission, the Brothers establish schools and cooperate in creating educational communities..." (R 1987, 13). "The Brothers are entrusted with their mission by the Institute, a mission especially to the poor", whereby they become "earnestly involved in the promotion of justice and human dignity through the educational service they provide" (R 1987, 14). The Brothers fulfill their mission "together and by association" (R 1987, 16).

4.3. Although the individual Brother participates in the mission of the Institute and receives his mission by being sent by the superiors to perform a specific ministry, the Brother's role is not merely passive. In making the vow of obedience, the Brother promises "to go wherever I may be sent". By these words he accepts beforehand what ever mission he may be given. The relationship between mission and being sent by the superior is implicit in the letters of De La Salle's when he speaks of sending a Brother to a specific place, but he does not make the connection explicit.

4.4. A significant development that was not foreseen by the Founder is the recognition that the mission of the Institute is a shared mission. It is now recognized that "the spiritual gifts which the

Church has received in St. John Baptist de La Salle go far beyond the confines of the Institute which he founded" (R 1987, 146). For that reason, "the brothers gladly associate lay persons with

them in their educational mission" (R 1987, 17). The mission of the Brothers and the Institute has in this way become the mission of the entire Lasallian family.

Complementary themes:

Apostles; Disciples of Jesus Christ; Instruction; Ministry; Mystery; Obedience; Poor; Salvation; Vow.

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Bro. Luke SALM

44. MORTIFICATION

Summary:

1. Preliminary outline. - 2. Community and personal dimension. 2.1. Within the group. 2.2. As individuals. - 3. Exterior or bodily mortification. 3.1. Sleep. 3.2. Meals. 3.3. The eyes. 3.4. The senses in general. - 4. Interior or spiritual mortification. 4.1. To be open to insights from others. 4.2. To be open to the wisdom of God. 4.3. To cultivate true liberty. 4.4. To open oneself to authentic peace. 4.5. To be a man of prayer. - 5. Attitudes to mortification. 5.1. With regard to the occasions of mortification: A) A willingness to offer daily circumstances. B) Anticipating occasions of mortification. 5.2. With regard to the agents of mortification A) God. B) One's neighbour. C) Oneself. - 6. Why should one mortify oneself? 6.1. To channel one's energies. 6.2. Self-fulfilment. 6.3. To give one's life daily. 6.4. To serve - accomplishing a mission.

1. PRELIMINARY OUTLINE

As my starting point on mortification I have taken the practice and the teaching of De La Salle as expressed in his evangelical journey. From this perspective I will study some of the key moments in the first Lasallian community faithful to the Founder's intuitions. This will be followed by an explanation of various aspects of Christian asceticism which, in essence, continues to be necessary to day although in forms different from those of the 17th century. The evolution of a modern mentality and the advances in technology are facts in the development of humanity and, as Brother Exuperien indicated in 1900, in the spiritual realm it is also essential that we progress in such a way that we live our Christianity in a more mature manner than was possible in previous eras.¹ I will limit myself to indicating this third aspect leaving it to the reader's initiative to pursue it through the material indicated.

2. COMMUNITY AND PERSONAL DIMENSION

These are two types of mortification which

mutually complement and support each other. A similar complementarity appears with regard to interior and exterior mortification of which I will treat in the section which follows.

2.1. Within the group

Making reference to the instruments of penance used at the time, the Rule states that "...There will be no corporal mortification of Rule in this Institute..." (RC 5,1).² Nevertheless, the 7th commandment of the Institute clearly states that "You should frequently mortify your mind and your senses" (RC 16,8). In other words, while there was nothing officially legislated, the principle that mortification formed part of the spirituality of the Brother remained valid. In any case, the Rule concerned itself with a minimum which could serve as a foundation for everybody and from there it was up to the individual to add what was appropriate according to the way in which he was inspired.

With regard to practices of mortification in community there were those which referred to particular liturgical times of the year such as Advent, Lent or other vigils, and normally these practices did not go beyond what was prescribed by the

Church. Other practices indicated could be weekly, daily or have a more permanent application as, for example, in the position of one's hands, or feet, or the use of one's eyes.³ The new Rule of 1987 was to be much less detailed in limiting itself to indicating some important demands which will lead the Brothers to self-control and to renunciation in the steps of Christ (Rule 74a).

2.2. As individuals

Practices of mortification over and above the minimum come into play once there is the opportunity for creativity and when the right to be different is admitted. In such a situation the distinctive opportunities which arise from personal situations and from the changing circumstances in which each one finds oneself with regard to common values will be better assimilated. There will be those who view the lack of a particular thing during the day as an expression of their mortification having already, in their morning meditation, put themselves in the disposition of blessing God and of being happy in themselves should such an eventuality occur (EM 83). The decisive moment presents itself as an interior call to allow oneself to be led like the saints whose "hearts were empty of things of the world" so that they could be filled with the Spirit of God (MF 167,2; MF 171,1). In the same way, the Brother will be disposed to "sacrifice his heart and his will to God" (MF 188,3), «to sacrifice "honour, health and life to the glory of God" (R 155,16). In fact, he will be led in such a way that for him, united to Jesus Christ, "mortification will be a permanent sacrifice" (MD 66,3).

3. EXTERIOR OR BODILY MORTIFICATION

The three earliest biographers of De La Salle place great emphasis on his spirit of mortification and give great importance to this aspect of his sanctity. On occasions they appear to indicate a certain contempt for the body as if matter, as opposed to spirit, were bad. However, on these occasions, it may be that they attribute to the Founder what may be more an interpretation of the writer himself.⁴ It is clear that the former canon of

Rheims did not totally escape from the mentality of his time but, nevertheless, he offers a very positive vision each time that he considers the body as the temple of the Spirit (EM 17,40; MD 62; MF 188). Thus, it would be better to say that De La Salle did not seek personal fulfilment in a flight from the body or by ignoring it. His concern was that the body function in conformity with the plan which the Creator had for it so that it would be a more effective temple and instrument of that divine presence and action.

In any event we know that the Founder was not given to selfishness nor softness. Thus in 1689, when his brother-in-law, John Maillefer, saw him ill he said to the Brothers that the Founder would have to ask pardon of his body at the moment of his death (Bl 2, 454). In his meditation for the feast of St Francis of Assisi, De La Salle says that mortification should "be so vividly present in you that, so to speak, it marks you with the wounds of Jesus Christ» (MF 173,3). Some of the key elements of this mortification are as follows.

3.1. With regard to sleep

Nowadays we are aware that a hard mattress is better for ensuring a good night's rest once the body has become accustomed to it. However, for De La Salle and the Brothers it was a necessary demand by the poverty of Vaugirard which led them to mortify themselves without complaining with regard to sleep (Bl 1, 303). When it came to the moment of getting out of bed there was no concession to natural inclinations as the bell gave the signal for the generous offering of the first moment of the day. A verse from Scripture indicated the attitude which they would deliberately adopt: "...Arise, you who sleep, and Christ will enlighten you" (R 126,9). It should be noted that Roland already had this recommendation in his "Avis".⁵

Reducing the hours of sleep had the effect of ensuring that when the time for sleep actually did come these was no difficulty in getting to sleep while the ensuing sleep itself was also more profound (Bl 1, 328). Despite the exaggerations of Blain (Bl 1, 225), we also know that De La Salle was also led to curtail his sleeping-time both out of fervour and from the necessity of bringing an important issue before his intimate Friend who

would advise him.⁶

It is also important to note that at the beginning of the 18th century the nervous system did not suffer the same wear and tear as occurs today. Classroom activity was more tranquil and the life of the Brother, in general, less hectic. In such an environment the balance of the nervous cells could be restored with less hours of sleep while the absence of noise along with regularity in both rising and in going to bed also contributed to this essential rest. One could say that the Brothers went to bed each evening physically tired from the exertions of their ministry. On the other hand, the psychological and mental exertions were certainly less exhausting than modern demands and, in consequence, it was not considered necessary to adapt the hours of sleep to individual needs even if it is possible that the actual provision favoured those who, through disposition or age, could manage with less rather than more time.⁷ By the same token one would have to indicate that if De La Salle and his Brothers were to limit their hours of sleep to-day it would be in order to dedicate part of the time to such things as, for example, their permanent formation, or to devising time-consuming community or academic programs, or to attending to those people who have different rhythms of working and resting.⁸

3.2. With regard to meals

Coming as he did from a "good family", it took great effort on De La Salle's part to accustom himself to community meals. His success in overcoming his tastes was such that he alone could take the wormwood soup which the cook prepared by accident and he did so as if it were nothing unusual (BL 1, 227). Since he was in the habit of mortifying himself at each meal and of considering himself as "a beggar to whom food had been given as alms", he did not feel led to complain about anything (R 147). When he was exposed to prolonged hunger on more than one occasion (Bl 2, 256) he was to show that what he wrote for his Brothers did not remain as empty words in his own life. Furthermore, when it was necessary one had to act in such a way that in "leaving the dining-room one would be disposed for spiritual exercises" (R 182,9). All this assumes that the fact

of mortifying oneself, whether with regard to the quality or to the quantity of food, is not an external imposition. A good touchstone was the question of travel. In this connection he wrote to Brother Mathias that he should not attempt to change community at a time when the traveller would be dispensed from fasting (L 44,5) while in both the Common Rule and in the Rule of the Brother Director he was explicit that, while travelling, meals "should be frugal" (RC 24,4; RD 118,14).

3.3. With regard to the eyes

The principal "fasting" which De La Salle expected of his Brothers from the beginning of Lent was with regard "to the eyes" (MF 16,2). There was also the duty of their state by which the vigilant attention of their pupils demanded that they be aware of all that happened in class and during recreation. Hence, the "Conduct of Schools" demanded that the teacher exercise "continuous vigilance over the pupils" (CE 91). But if the Brother wished to live an interior life, and not to be carried away by everything to which his curiosity was attracted during the day, it would be necessary to take appropriate measures. This is the meaning of mortification of the eyes as can be seen in his letter to Brother Clement (L 9,4).

3.4. With regard to the senses in general

Among the effects of daily meditation on the presence of God is that the Spirit comes to be totally "lord of the senses" (EM 16). This assumes that, at the same time, "one is lord of one's own senses" (MF 95,2) collaborating in the work of God which begins here and leads, in so far as it is possible, to the "spiritualizing" of our body (MF 156,3). It is from this perspective that the detailed norms with regard to educating exterior conduct make sense since it was through these that De La Salle's teachers educated themselves so that they could then teach those who wanted to learn from them not only through their lessons on "Christian Politeness" but especially through their example.⁹ However, the primary purpose was to facilitate one's spiritual advancement rather than the edification of others as can be seen in the case of the

Novices who did not always go either to the Parish of St Lambert, in Vaugirard, or to that of St Severus, in Rouen, at a later date (Bl 1, 3500-352).

De La Salle was not much given to making comparisons in his writings but he did make use of a common one in speaking of mortifying oneself with regard to silence when he said that too much talking makes "contact with God similar to a liquor which has lost its taste" (R 151,15).

The long and hard winter of 1683 led De La Salle, at the initiative of the mayor of Rheims, to give the Brothers a cloak while in 1709 the possibility of warming oneself around a fire was offered to them (Bl 2, 57). However, in his own life, De La Salle accustomed his body to cope with inclement weather overcoming both cold and heat as circumstances demanded without compromising his ministry. In fact, the contrary was the case when, in the face of adverse weather, he would leave the community to attend to those who needed to meet him (Bl 2, 455). Similarly, one should also note his own rheumatic sufferings and the remedies which he had to undergo whether in Paris (Bl 1, 331), Grenoble (Bl 2,102) or St Yon (Bl 2, 170).

4. INTERIOR OR SPIRITUAL MORTIFICATION

If he was a Christian ascetic in all that refers to overcoming that "enemy" which was traditionally given the ambivalent term "flesh", De La Salle was all the more so with respect to the means of mortifying the spirit. Whether it was from the testimonies which he had before him or from what he himself had witnessed, Blain tells us that De La Salle would often say: "I prefer an ounce of mortification of the spirit to a pound of exterior penance" (Bl 2, 464). The human-evangelical values which may have been present in this interior work which he accomplished in himself and in others can be outlined as follows:

4.1. To be open to insights from others

This openness to other ways of seeing reality is a trait which characterizes the simplicity with which one views oneself. De La Salle opened himself to the insights which were given to him by his

spiritual directors and it was these who had the last word in all his decisions regarding mortification, be it with regard to his actual or future status in the renunciation of his canonry or with regard to human security in detaching himself from his patrimony. The only "light" which was to guide him was the spirit of faith (MD 44,1) which, fundamentally, was the Holy Spirit under whose inspiration he had chosen to live and to make his decisions (MF 79,1). It was for this inspiration for which he was so frequently to intercede so that he would be aware of the moderation necessary with regard to acts of mortification and also be able to make this moderation known to his spiritual directors (R 219,1).

4.2. To be open to the wisdom of God

In the Rule of 1718 we see the repeated insistence on the need for the Brother's conduct to reflect "the wisdom appropriate to his profession". Moreover, this "exterior wisdom would be a sign of what was interior" (RC 21,5). This assumes an asceticism in the acquisition of every habit that the Brothers acquires so that his habits are distinct from those of the world. The biographers tell us that, in the promulgation of the rules, De La Salle did not wish to introduce anything on his own authority in order that the inspiration of God could be expressed through each of the Brothers. This approach applied as much to rules with regard to the community (Bl 2, 411) as to the pedagogical methods and individual accompaniment of pupils.¹⁰ This wisdom of God which he sought in all his conduct was nothing other than crucifying the "old man" in himself so as to "live now as risen in Jesus Christ" (MD 29,3). Consequently, this was to love mortification not for itself but because it helped one to "become like Him" (MF 176.3).

4.3. To cultivate true liberty

With regard to mortification it is not so much the fulfilment of a law as the call of the Spirit who invites one to self-renunciation with a view to greater availability for his work. With the passing of time the essential practices of mortification would be codified by De La Salle, in a personal form as "The Rules which I have imposed on my-

self and in the community form as "The Common Rules". They were norms of conduct which would be observed almost scrupulously, one might say, but they were born out of the depths of the desire for self-transcendence. Thus, for example, to facilitate this liberty, all types of visits were limited with regard to frequency and duration and the reason for this was to ensure that, by not dissipating energies in various directions, the mission could be better accomplished. Similarly, one was not to receive visits in class unless the intention was to meet the poor (RC 9,20). In this connection De La Salle congratulated Drolin on having sufficient time to rest since he had reduced his visiting (L 18,12) while he warned the Brother Director that he should not be so bound by visits that he neglected time for prayer (FD 5). Two other means of interior liberation which De La Salle embraced were his refusal of the general permission which Brother Barthelemy wanted to grant him (B1 2,152) and the acceptance of being criticized.¹¹

4.4. To find authentic peace

There is no better peace than that which Christ himself brings to us since it cannot be taken from us by either people or things. But one must begin by embracing that peace (MD 22,2) and to help in this it is important "to be less concerned with knowing what one has to do than about doing perfectly what one knows is to be done",¹² to "abandon oneself into the hands of God with total indifference" in the face of everything (B1 1, 3;07) while, at the same time, "silencing all interior reasoning" (B1 2, 213). Once this peace has been established it is only possible to maintain it if appropriate measures are taken. One of the most important of these measures is to be disposed to mortify oneself daily and to allow oneself to be mortified by others (MD 31,3; R 165,16) above all on occasions of humiliation (R 102,15). De La Salle was so steeped in this interior peace that he never lost it throughout his mature life (B1 2, 175) even in the difficult moments which he had to endure; for example, when he was unjustly accused of lying (B1 2, 168), or when somebody hit him as he recited the Office in the garden (B1 2, 419), or when he had to read "insulting letters" (B1 2, 471).

4.5. To be men of prayer

De La Salle's insistence on the life of prayer can be found in all the major works which he wrote for the Brothers. However, in order to have the slightest affect on the transforming work of the Brother (MF 95,2) this had to be accompanied by mortification if it was not to be reduced to mere "illusion" (MF 187,2). The constant struggle against fallen nature facilitates this work of "strengthening one in piety" (MF 95,2) and of "sustaining one in it" (MF 160,2). Without this it is impossible given the "dissipation of the mind" (R 161,15) and the lack of attention. This attention was related to "bodily posture" on which the efficacy of prayer so often depends (R 192,20).

5. ATTITUDES TO MORTIFICATION

More than the simple facts in themselves what interests us is the manner in which that new Lasallian community responded to the various forms of mortification with which they were faced. We will see this in considering both the opportunities for mortification which presented themselves as well as the agents involved in these opportunities.

5.1. With regard to the opportunities for mortification

The opportunity for mortification is a grace to be embraced — it is an opportunity to "season" all that one does for God (MF 190,2). To ensure that one is not deluding oneself it is better to take advantage of "the opportunities that occur" rather than to go in search of occasions (L 11,6). For example, the simple fact of wearing the habit will give rise to many occasions for mortification and some of the occasions indicated by the author of the "Memoir on the Habit" were the avoidance of "all occasions of following fashion" and the consequent more or less acknowledged desire to please (MH 35). These opportunities can be understood either in the context of an attitude of receptivity or, in a more active way, as a deliberate seeking of occasions for mortification. The two approaches can be followed by a interior act of oblation.

A. *A willingness to offer the circumstances of life*

There is no more realistic form of mortification than to accept self-crucifixion and to be crucified in a permanent and concrete way. De La Salle's own life was a life full of toils and reverses in which he died daily to his own comfort in favor of the development of that part of the Mystical Body for which he felt most responsible. He was burdened with concerns which were not designed to appease fallen nature; for example, the desertion of a Brother, or the death of another, or a journey in inclement conditions. This receptive-oblatory attitude involved all the designs of Providence which were expressed through circumstances.¹³ Thus, he could write that rather than "fleeing from mortification" (EM 111) one should know how to offer it to the Lord. Paraphrasing the teaching of St Paul (Rm 12,1), De La Salle indicated to the Brother that he should transform his body into a permanent offering pleasing to God (MD 62,2) to the extent of reaching the stage of not permitting any movement or action which was not marked by the inspiration of the Spirit (MD 67,1).

B. *Anticipating occasions of mortification*

From the time that they were in the Rue Neuve and in Vaugirard, De La Salle and the Brothers vied with each other in seeking opportunities for mortifying themselves. In fact, later on, some ecclesiastics would attempt to moderate the practices of the young community.¹⁴ In the following three texts which indicate aspects of Lasallian spirituality we can note the progressive realism with which the disciples of de La Salle committed themselves with regard to mortification; they were to sensitize themselves to "love" mortification since this makes them like Jesus Christ (MF 176,3); in consequence, they were "...not to allow a single day to pass without doing some act" of mortification (MF 160,2); moreover, to the extent that it was possible, occasions should be foreseen in which these acts would be practised and this foresight was not to be restricted to examen time but should be exercised at other moments during the day (R 171,11).

5.2. **With regard to the agents of mortification**

The initiative for a mortified life will come

from God, or from other people, or from oneself and in what follows we can see the attitude taken in response to each of these agents.

A. *Attitude towards God*

With regard to mortification there are two principal attitudes with respect to the Creator. In the first place, one should recognize that the senses, like the capacities of the mind, are his gifts and that they are best used in accordance with his will (R 90,20). However, the crosses which we have to bear are also gifts which we have to "receive with love and respect" as coming from his hand (MF 121,3). In the second place, one should "not be surprised if God frequently gives us opportunities to suffer" (MF 124,3). On the contrary, one should feel honored by this as it is an indication of his love since this is what he did with Jesus and with the saints (MF 177,2).

B. *Attitude towards one's neighbour*

In his meditation for the feast of St Monica (MF 122,2) De La Salle indicates the attitude which it is necessary to cultivate with respect to our neighbour who can be a motive for our mortification. One begins by "arming oneself with patience" and then one "beseeches God for them". This is what De La Salle himself had occasion to do not only with regard to his family but also with ecclesiastics, with members of his community and with many other people who crossed his path in life. Moreover, he did not wish that those who mortified themselves did so "to appear as such before others" (Da 278). There were those who, when with their Brothers, appeared to be mortified and perhaps believed themselves to be so, but in reality their senses were "sleeping" rather than mortified given the community circumstances in which they found themselves (MD 76,1).

C. *Attitude towards oneself*

Gratuitous love brings with it self-forgetfulness to such an extent that one lives mortified. It becomes almost natural to lead a life in which one does not compare oneself with others nor seek an easy life since the only concern is to carry out the work of God and dedicate all one's efforts to that. The interior gaze goes beyond oneself. Having become accustomed to it, the Brother lives a difficult life

in contentment without this becoming a motive for self-glorification. The glory which he receives will be rather more indirect in that it will consist in the glory of having accomplished the mission entrusted to him by God himself (MR 207; 208). When the Brother mortifies himself he will act with as much virtue as when "he is no longer mortifying himself (R. 218,11). This indicates that it is neither mortification in itself, nor that vanity which comes from a more or less inflated feeling of spiritual self-satisfaction, which is sought in mortification.

6. WHY MORTIFY ONESELF?

De La Salle views man as divided in himself and distant from God since he is separated from his "likeness". It is from this perspective that total mortification is sought so that the cross of Christ will triumph and fallen man will be restored to resurrected new life. Another driving force is love of Christ and of others. The specific manner in which the biographers describe this love may be outdated to-day and say little to our modern psychological outlook but the inspirational love behind such practices is what needs to be highlighted and it is this love which is capable of inspiring the Brother to-day to different expressions of mortification more attuned to 20th century sensitivity.

6.1. To channel energies

From a negative point of view the work begins by "mortifying the inclinations of corrupt nature" (MD 45,2) so as not to allow these advancing "flood" waters to cause damage. This is followed by the desire to put some sort of order into these energies. There is a hierarchy of values which needs to be respected rather than leaving things to drift aimlessly. Thus, according to De La Salle, "... it is right that the body be submitted to the spirit; but if one hopes to do this it is necessary to adopt appropriate measures; make use of mortification..." (MF 179,2). Once attained this asceticism is continued by orientating one's intellect in conformity with one's state; hence "...Take care not to apply the mind to anything through mere curiosity... Occupy it with things which are proper

to your profession" (R 162,22). In this way the aim of mortification is to place one's physical, psychological and spiritual potential at the service of God and of others so that all the resources that one possesses are thus positively and consciously channelled.

6.2. Self-fulfillment

In following this narrow road of renunciation in so many areas De La Salle was to pine for nothing. His colleagues in the Cathedral Chapter had a secure position and a bright future of appointments beckoning while his younger brothers were well-looked after.¹⁵ Yet he was happier than they were because his aspirations found their fulfilment in total self-giving through the school. If he envied anybody it was, perhaps, the person who lived more austere than himself; for example, Sister Louise, the Carthusians... those who could devote more time to prayer (BI 2, 100; 105).

In any case, he found fulfilment by transforming his body in a desire to experience the Spirit more fully in his life. These same austerities were to fortify his health which according to Blain was delicate by nature as well as through education in the heart of a well-to-do family (BI 2, 177). In the same way, his disciples, too, "...would overcome the repugnance and difficulty which they found in the practice of virtue" (EM 111). They would accomplish this through daily contact with God in meditating on Gospel maxims. In this way the designs of Providence for them and their own desires to live a meaningful life would be a tangible reality.¹⁶

6.3. To give one's life daily

De La Salle did not renounce life. He was aware of the 5th Commandment and knew that it was his duty to preserve his life. It belonged to him as much as to those who had been confided to his care. Consequently, in living a mortified life he was not seeking self-destruction since that would have been un-Christian. But he did realize that it was in conformity with the Gospel to give one's life freely - not simply for the sake of giving it but so that others would have life, be they Brothers or children of the artisans and the poor. This would be the best way of losing one's life and also to recognize the

Father as the continuous "Giver". It was also to practice true love in helping others to live while imitating Christ in his paschal mystery.

This is authentic living which is only understandable to those whose faith enables them to see everything from the perspective of the Beatitudes. Writing for the Brothers on the feast of the Holy Innocents, De La Salle says that in "...dying daily through continuous mortification you will give life..." so that Christ can continue to live in you (MF 89,3) while he had written a little earlier that, since "...you have neither the privilege nor the occasion to suffer martyrdom for the faith, make yourself martyrs for the love of God through the practice of mortification..." (MF 89,2). We know that the first companions of the Founder did not lack occasions for this daily dying which consisted simply in embracing it and encouraging each other to generously respond "yes" to every moment. This was to be the consequence of the graces received and it was the price to be paid if they were to be fruitful.¹⁷

6.4. To serve - accomplishing a mission

In conformity with his apostolic ministry, mortification in the life of the Brother will have an aspect quite distinct from that of other religious. It is the forms and the circumstances which change. Thus, for example, unlike the Dominican or, especially, the Carthusian, the Brother practically lives all the time in the company of his Brothers and spends the majority of his time in contact with his pupils. Consequently, the Brother's service to others will be through community and school life and it is within this context that decisions with regard to mortification are made.

De La Salle and his disciples did not seek a comfortable life. Within the Brothers' community De La Salle remained as superior in 1694 only as a service to that community and when he was replaced, in 1717, he continued to adopt this attitude of service, choosing "the most mortifying chores" for himself so as to ensure that others in the community would not have to do them (Bl 2, 412). It is clear that it was the community reality rather than that of the school of which Blain and the other biographers were more aware but it was this second reality which determined the majority of the

Brother's options. Suffice it to recall that the final motive for which the three associated themselves on 21st November 1691 was to be disposed to continue the work even if "they were obliged to beg and to live on bread alone" (Bl 1, 323). It was not poverty or a hard life in itself which they sought; they felt called to an educational service to these sons of God and they wanted to respond in spite of the difficulties which would arise.

¹ Cf. the manuscript notes of Brother Exupérien which are preserved in the Generalate, Sous-Série BO 752-1 (17-18).

² De La Salle made use of them and Blain speaks about them while there are various examples preserved in the Generalate in Rome (Bl. 1, 228; 2, 445; CL 40, 255-258).

³ Cf. the whole of the chapter on Modesty (RC 21 +; CL 16, 41-50). MAURICE-AUGUSTE, *"Pour une meilleure lecture des Règles Communes"*, a collection of articles published in numbers 36 to 44 of the periodical *"Entre Nous"*, especially pp. 65-79 and CL 5, 323-403.

⁴ NEWMAN, H. *"Saints d'autre fois"*, Bloud, Paris, 1908, p. 113: - when a biographer attributes motivations to a saint, two-thirds of the time he is expressing his own motivation rather than that of the saint about whom he is writing.

⁵ RIGAUULT, G., *"Histoire Générale de l'institut des FEC"*, Plon, Paris, 1937, Vol. I, p. 120.

⁶ One can recall his nights in St Remy (Bl 1, 230), or the occasion when the Brothers had decided to send Brother Barthelemy away (Bl 2, 282), or when he became aware that one of the Brothers was tempted to abandon his vocation (Bl 2, 369).

⁷ De La Salle educated his Brothers through frequent examens asking them if they "still felt inclined to sleep" (R 91,20; 182,1) and he presents various examples to them of Saints who took the means to overcome sleep (MF 179,2; 79,1).

⁸ In his own life there are examples of De La Salle setting out at night to visit a Brother when his presence rather than a letter was urgently required.

⁹ Cf. RC 7,15; CE 81 on the manner of conducting oneself in front of the pupils during prayers in class.

¹⁰ Cf. the school "offices" and the "files" referring to qualities and defects of each one (CL 24, p. 204; 236).

¹¹ For example, when he sought to abandon his canonry (Bl 1, 197), or when Compagnon spoke against him (Bl 2, 267), or at the end of his life in St Yon (Bl 2, 417). Not only did he not want to judge others but he was also prepared to excuse them in so far as it was possible. He also asked his Brothers that they should speak well of others rather than criticizing them (Bl 2, 417; RC 13,5).

¹² Cf. Bl 2, 319,14; R 190,4. According to G. Beaudet's study, this Rule that De La Salle imposed on himself and which he later proposed in the Collection, was almost exactly the same as Consideration 18 of Hayneufve - cf. Lasalliana 20-4-A-79.

¹³ "Il y a un héroïsme Chrétien, mais sa source est théologique. Ce qui l'anime ce n'est pas le souci de l'excellence personnelle, mais le sentiment de la majesté de Dieu. L'héroïsme de saint consiste non pas à se tenir fortement en mains, mais à s'abandonner entre les mains de Dieu", BRUCKBERGER, R., *"La valeur humaine du saint"*, Braconnière, Neuchâtel, 1943, p. 27.

¹⁴ There were those who while not being in the community wanted to live a mortified life following the example of De La Salle (Bd 62) while others such as Baiÿn admired this type of life (Bl 1, 330). However, there was also no lack of people who were prepared to attack him or who wanted him to temper his generosity; for example, in Paris with Baudrand (Bl 1, 299), in Chartres with Godet des Marais (Bl 1, 373), in Marseilles with the Jansenists and in Rouen with d'Aubigné (Bl 2, 167).

¹⁵ Peter was to be the lawyer that their father, Louis de La Salle, hoped at one time John Baptist, as the eldest son, would become while John Louis was to have an honoured position in the most famous Cathedral Chapter in France - cf. CL 26,

p. 260; CL 27, p. 133.

¹⁶ ROUSSEAU-DUJARDIN, J., "*Du holde kunst, ich danke dich*", in "*La Vie Spirituelle*", 693 (1991), 35: "...Tout plaisir est payé par une peine et certains plaisirs ne s'obtiennent pas sans peine". Here pleasure appears to be understood as joy, the tasting of profound experiences. To accept the privation of certain experiences may facilitate the tasting of others which lead to a more profound joy than those which have been renounced.

¹⁷ BONHOEFFER, D., "*El precio de la gratia*", Sígueme, Salamanca, 1968, pp. 7-17: "...Cheap grace is that which is not accompanied by the following of Christ, the grace of the Cross, grace without the living and incarnated Christ...".

Complementary themes:

Artisans; Associated; Attention; Christian Teacher; Gospel; Faith; God's Work; Prayer; Patience; Peace; Penitence; Renunciation-Detachment.

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45. MYSTERY

Summary:

1. The word mystery refers to something that is hidden or difficult to understand, but also manifest in some external way. In Christian theological writing, mystery refers to the principal truths to be accepted in faith as revealed by God. In Christian devotional writing, the term mystery refers to the events in the life of Christ incarnate as objects for contemplation and as motivation for the Christian life. - 2. In his catechetical writings De La Salle refers often to the importance of instruction in the principal Christian mysteries and also to the mysteries being celebrated on the Church's feasts. - 3. In his meditations, De La Salle reminds the Brothers that they are the dispensers of God's mysteries and so must themselves be penetrated with the mystery of Christ. - 4. Consequently, Lasallian spirituality has both a mystical dimension, focused on the contemplation of the mystery of Christ, and an historical dimension, manifest in zeal for the catechetical ministry to the poor.

1. MEANING OF THE WORD

1.1. The dictionaries define a mystery as something hidden and difficult to understand. The word can refer to a religious mystery that requires faith or to human nature and its capabilities, e.g. human love. The dictionary of Richelet notes that seventeenth century authors such as Moliere, would describe some individual persons as "mysterious" or as "a total mystery." In all the various uses of the word, there appear to be two elements, one visible and one invisible, i.e., a hidden reality discerned or suspected in something externally manifest.

1.2. The religious meaning of mystery in the 17th century evolved out of the history of the concept and the word in Christian tradition.

1.2.1. The Christian use of the term mystery is derived from Saint Paul. For him, the fundamental mystery is the self-communication of God to humans and the initiation of humans into the

mysterious designs of God, God's action, and God's very being. The mystery is the accomplishment of God's design in Jesus Christ, hidden at first and then manifest in human history. Thus the Christian mystery contains both a hidden and a manifest aspect.

The effect and the wonder of the mystery, in the Pauline literature, is that human beings, especially the Gentiles, are brought into relationship with God by incorporation into Christ and into his body, which is the Church. For Paul, Christian marriage is an expressive sign of this mystical union.

1.2.2. In addressing their pagan audience, the early Fathers of the Church compared the Christian mystery to the popular pagan mystery religions, which featured identification with the divine through initiation into the life-cycle of a particular god or combination of gods. The Fathers explained the Christian mystery as something similar, but morally superior and more efficacious, based on the incarnation and revelation of the one true God in Jesus Christ. Increasingly, the Latin

Fathers began to translate the Greek *mysterion* as *sacramentum* and apply it to sacramental rites of the Christian religion.

1.2.3. In the middle ages, two parallel developments provided two distinct but complementary approaches to mystery. The theological tradition, culminating in Saint Thomas Aquinas, in probing the nature of faith and its exercise, stressed the mysteries as truths, inaccessible to reason but not contrary to it, to be believed on the authority of God revealing.

The medieval devotional tradition, stemming from Saint Bernard and Saint Francis of Assisi, introduced a new element in spirituality with emphasis on the humanity of Christ. This spirituality fostered contemplation and mystical identification with certain isolated events in the life of Jesus Christ. These events came to be called mysteries. At first the devotion focused on the "mysteries" surrounding the birth of Christ, his suffering and death. As the number of identifiable mysteries began to multiply, they eventually encompassed the entire life of Christ from his virginal conception to the ascension. The use of the term mystery for these events found its theological justification in the fundamental mystery of the incarnation in virtue of which the events in the life of Jesus contain a human, historical and visible element, as well as a hidden and divine element accomplished in the divine person of the God made man.

1.3. In the manuals of dogmatic theology that began to multiply in the century after the Council of Trent (1545-1563), a mystery is defined as a truth that cannot be known by reason or experience but that must be believed on the authority of God who reveals it. Based on a tradition going back to the Athanasian Creed (DS 75-76), the principal Christian mysteries are identified as the Trinity, the incarnation and the redemption. An explicit act of faith in these mysteries is necessary for the salvation of all those who have reached the use of reason.

1.4. In the Christological spirituality derived from the Berullian School in 17th century France, the word mystery characteristically refers to the mystery of the incarnation as it is manifest in the

various states and actions of God made man in Jesus Christ. The principal object of contemplation is the kenotic act, celebrated in the Letter to the Philippians, whereby Jesus humbled himself and took the form of a servant, becoming obedient unto death (Ph 2:5 seq.). For Berulle, contemplation of this mystery should evoke in the Christian an attitude of humility, simplicity, adoration, admiration and affection: "The desire of the soul in contemplating this mystery will be a desire to do homage, to participate, and to relate to the Holy Trinity, to Mary, and to Saint Gabriel." (Cited in Deville, p. 106). Other authors stress the notion of self-annihilation (*aneantissement*) before this mystery, its manifestation in the "states" of Jesus during the course of his historical life, and its extension and continuation in the life of Christians and in the Church as a whole.

2. THE MYSTERIES IN DE LA SALLE'S WRITINGS FOR THE SCHOOLS

2.1. In the *Common Rules* and in the *Conduct of Schools*, there is frequent reference to the "principal mysteries," which are to be the subject matter of catechetical instruction. In the same context there is also reference to the particular mystery or mysteries being celebrated on a given Sunday or feast.

2.1.1. These two different but complementary meanings of mystery are developed in the three sections of the *Duties of a Christian* and other catechetical works intended for the schools. The obligation to believe (*croire*) the mysteries is among the principal duties of a Christian to God (e.g. Da 4 D; Db 14 D, E). Parents are obliged by the fourth commandment to teach (*apprendre*), either themselves or through others, the principal mysteries to their children (Da 125 A). Instruction in the principal mysteries is a necessary preparation for the baptism of adults (Da 225 A), first communion (Da 156 D), for confirmation (Da 240 B), and for marriage (Da 388 D). It is a sin against the first commandment, and a matter for confession (Da 310 B), to be ignorant of the principal mysteries of the Christian religion and at the same time be unwilling to be instructed (*instruire*) in them

(Da 156 D); inexcusable ignorance of the principal mysteries is a motive for the refusal of absolution (Da 319 B). Those who do not believe one or another of the mysteries are guilty of heresy (Db 12 D, E; 13 D).

2.1.2. The use of the term mysteries to refer to specific events in the life of Christ occurs most of ten in third section of the *Duties* dealing with external and public worship. Thus the Church has consecrated certain times of the year to honor certain mysteries or prepare for them (Dc 4 D). From Christmas to Purification the Church celebrates the mysteries which took place (*se passer*) during the birth of Christ; Holy week is called holy because of the mysteries which were wrought (*s'opérer*) and which the Church celebrates and honors during that week (Dc 70 B). The twelve feasts (in English, "holy days of obligation") were established to honor the twelve holy mysteries of Our Lord (Dc 133 C). Epiphany means manifestation and is celebrated because three mysteries (the birth of Christ, his baptism, and the miracle of Cana) were accomplished (*s'opérer*) on that day (Dc 145 D). *In like manner, the Church celebrates seven feasts and mysteries in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Dc 195 A, B). The principal "mysteries" most often mentioned, in addition to the birth of Jesus, are the presentation in the temple, the transfiguration, the entry into Jerusalem, the passion, the resurrection and the ascension (Dc passim).*

2.1.3. In the book of *Instructions* the students are encouraged during Mass to think about one of the mysteries (I 15 C), or to unite themselves to the mystery that is being celebrated (I 20 D). The introduction to the Preface of the Eucharistic Prayer is interpreted as an invitation to avoid distractions and think only of God and his mysteries (I 30 A). Model prayers are provided for the students to ask for understanding of the mysteries being celebrated (I 76 D) and for the gift of grace as the fruit of the mysteries (I 94 C).

3. MYSTERY AND MYSTERIES IN DE LA SALLE'S WRITINGS FOR THE BROTHERS

3.1. The opportunity and the obligation that the Brothers have to instruct children in the mysteries of the faith is emphasized in the *Meditations for the Time of retreat*. The Brothers are "the ministers of God and the dispensers of his mysteries" (MR 193.1). God has given the Brothers this ministry since, as Saint Paul says, persons cannot be instructed in the mysteries of the Christian religion unless they first hear about them (MR 193.1), God has providentially provided as substitutes for parents persons (like the Brothers) with sufficient knowledge and zeal to introduce the children to the awareness (*connaissance*) of God and his mysteries (MR 193.2). It is not enough, however, to instruct the children in the mysteries if the Brother does not also make his disciples aware of the principal Christian virtues and lead them to put these virtues into practice (MR 203.3).

3.2. In his *Meditations for Feasts*, written for the use of the Brothers, De La Salle consistently refers to the event being celebrated as a mystery. Thus, the circumcision is a mystery (MF 93.1), as is the purification of Mary (MF 104.1) and the offering of Jesus of himself in the presentation (MF 104.3). God's goodness is seen in the mystery of the annunciation (MF 112.2), St. Peter was present and reported the mystery of the transfiguration (MF 152.2-3). Saint Francis had special devotion to the mysteries of the birth of Christ, to his suffering and death (MF 173.2), the Brothers are encouraged to enter into the spirit of the immaculate conception of Mary (MF 82.2).

3.2.1. In some of his meditations, De La Salle reverts to the doctrinal use of the term mystery. Thus, Saint Cassian in his school was occupied in teaching the mysteries to the children (MF 155.2); Saint Luke learned the mysteries of the Christian

religion from the apostles (MF 178.1).

3.2.2. The various senses of the word mystery come together in De La Salle's meditation for the feast of the Holy Trinity, for him the "mystery above all mysteries" (MD 46.1). It is also the most difficult, he says, since in all other mysteries there is some sensibly perceptible element. The Trinity is a mystery that only faith can attain (MD 46.2). In his meditation for the feast, the Founder invites the Brothers to annihilate (*s'anéantir*) themselves before this mystery (MD 46.1). Even though this mystery is so sublime, the Brothers are obliged to teach it (*enseigner*) to their students and to make it known (*faire connaître*) to them (MD 136 E).

3.3. In both the external worship section of the *Duties* and in the *Meditations for Feasts*, De La Salle employs the word mystery in a more profound and mystical sense. Thus he says that Saint Paul saw (*voir*) and learned (*apprendre*) mysteries and secrets permitted to no other mortal (Dc 242 D); Jesus Christ revealed to Saint John the highest mysteries of his divinity (MF 88.1 and DC 253 D); Saint Joseph was privileged to contemplate the mysteries which took place (*se passer*) in Jesus Christ. As with the Berullian school, the fundamental mystery is Christological and kenotic, whereby the Brothers are encouraged to grow into the spirit and mind of Christ. The Brothers do this as they contemplate the mysteries of his birth, life, death, and resurrection and as they participate as his ambassadors in their ministry.

4. THE MYSTERY ELEMENT IN LASALLIAN SPIRITUALITY

4.1. The most extensive development of the

importance of the mysteries for the prayer and the spiritual life of the Brothers can be found in De La Salle's *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer*. The recent publication of a critical edition with commentary of this work, which is dealt with in detail in a separate article, makes it possible to identify the principal characteristics of what might be called a Lasallian spirituality.

4.2. The mystical element in Lasallian spirituality derives from the emphasis that De La Salle places on the ministry of instruction in the principal mysteries, on the one hand, and the contemplation of the mysteries in mental prayer [*oraison*] on the other. In the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, De La Salle compares the Brothers to the angels ascending and descending Jacob's ladder. He writes, "You must do the same for the children entrusted to your care. It is your duty to go up to God every day by mental prayer to learn from Him all that you must teach your children, and then come down to them by adapting to their level and so to teach them what God has communicated to you for them..." (MR 198.1). This new twofold understanding of mystery results in a spirituality that is both mystical and historical at the same time. The mystical element comes from the contemplation in faith of the presence of God, openness to the action of the Spirit of God, identification with the mind of Christ as reflected in the kenotic prayer in Philippians. The historical element comes from a zeal to spread the knowledge of the mysteries, above all the mystery of salvation, to discern and to participate actively in the mysterious unfolding of the history of salvation in providential events and, especially in response to the cry of the uneducated poor.

Complementary themes:

Consecration; Faith; Instruction; Mental prayer; Ministry; Salvation; Zeal.

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46. NOVITIATE

Summary:

1. Old and new definitions. - 2. The context of Christian Spirituality and history. 2.1. Living a New Life in Christ; 2.2. Different Expressions of Discipleship; 2.3. The Novitiate in Western Monasticism. - 3. The Novitiate in Lasallian History. 3.1. Beginnings; 3.2. Community of Young Aspirants; 3.3. First Novitiate in Vaugirard; 3.4. "Novices employes". -4. The Novitiate in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. 4.1. Novitiate as Process; 4.2. A Path of Conversion; 4.3. The Novitiate as Program; 4.4. Requirements of the Rule and Canon Law.

1. OLD AND NEW DEFINITIONS

In *Le Grand Vocabulaire Francois* published in 1771 just fifty years after the death of De La Salle, one finds three definitions of "novitiate". The term meant: *a)* the state of novices before they make profession and the corresponding time in which they are in this state; *b)* the religious house, or that part of the house where the novices stay and where they make their exercises during their year of probation; or *c)* figuratively speaking, the apprenticeship which one undergoes in a certain art or profession (GV pp. 337-8).'

The same dictionary describes a "novice" as a man or woman who has recently taken the religious habit in a convent in order to prove him(her)self for a certain time in the state in which he(he) will make profession. This source then goes on to describe the requirements stipulated by the Council of Trent (1545-47; 1562-1565) for this year of probation. It also mentions that the "laws of the Kingdom" were in conformity with this orientation.

It is obvious then, that by the last quarter of the 18th century the Church had already codified its experience and understanding of the nature of the novitiate. Thus the religious and clergy of Western Europe had access to the essential nature

and objectives of this important stage of religious formation.

A twentieth century definition refers to the novitiate as "the canonical period that the Church and religious institutes specify for candidates to consecrated life to test their divine vocation and to know in a concrete way the life to which they want to commit themselves" (DS p. 484).²

What the definitions do not readily convey is that these meanings evolved only after centuries of experience and reflection on the nature of the Christian life, and that it took even longer for the development of the religious life as a unique response to one's baptismal vows. The religious or consecrated life is nothing else but a particular expression of Christian discipleship in the Church (PC 5).³

In order then to understand the "novitiate" as program and process, we need to trace its roots. This means going back to the fundamental paradigm of the baptismal call and experience of Christian conversion which is the foundation of the religious life. Having done this, we will look briefly at the rise of different forms of religious or consecrated life as unique expressions of this fundamental orientation, as well as the role of the novitiate as initiation into this life. Lastly the particular character of a Lasallian novitiate and its history in the Institute will be presented.

2. THE CONTEXT OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY AND HISTORY

2.1. Living a New Life in Christ. In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul asks his flock: "Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Through baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life" (Rm 6:4-5). Paul taught that the follower of Christ is called to die to the "old self and become the "new man" in Christ: "Your attitude must be that of Christ..." (Cf. Ep 4:22-24, Col 3:10-15, Ph 2:5ff, 3:7ff) (DS 484).⁴

This putting on of the "attitude of Christ" is integrated and ritualized in the rite and process of Christian initiation. The "catechumen" is one who undergoes the process of instruction and formation in preparation for the great Easter experience, when one enters the waters of Baptism as an expression of dying to all that is not of Christ and making a radical commitment to discipleship in Him. Today we witness and commemorate this experience of death and resurrection in the Easter liturgy when we recite our baptismal vows holding candles lit from the Easter Candle.

Life following baptism has a new meaning because it consists of a progressive transformation into a "new creation". Through participation in the life of the Christian community, i.e. the witnessing to evangelical values and the celebration of Word and sacrament, each disciple continues to grow towards the fullness of Christian life. Following in the footsteps of Christ leads to sharing in the mystery of his passion, death, and resurrection (DF 36).⁵

2.2. Different Expressions of Discipleship.

Christian martyrdom and states of "consecrated life" sprung from these roots as different forms of living out one's Christian discipleship. The rise of eremiticism or primitive monasticism (4th-8th centuries) consisted of individual Christians seeking to respond in a radical way to Christ's call to leave all things and follow Him. The anchorites or the monks living in solitary places ("the desert") were examples of this "sequela Christi".

Gradually it became the common practice for

anchorites to submit themselves to a master or mistress who introduced them to the theory and practice of this "new life" in Christ. After some time, groups of disciples organized themselves around such renowned and saintly guides as Pac-homius of Egypt (346) and Basil of Cappadocia (319) and began to live as communities. These spiritual masters and mistresses handed on traditions regarding the initiation and direction of persons in the following (sequela) of Christ. They also institutionalized procedures for the smooth running of the community. Among these, particular attention was given to the instruction and initiation of those who expressed their desire to join the community.

2.3. The Novitiate in Western Monasticism. As monasticism developed and spread from the East to the West, it was in the Rule of Benedict of Nursia (6th century) that this state of apprenticeship and probation of a candidate was very clearly defined. In the historic 58th chapter of the Benedictine Rule, the Father of Western monasticism used the term **novitius** to refer to the candidate seeking admission and **novitiatus** to the candidates' probationary period. Communities were to be selective and discriminating in admitting novices into their ranks. Benedict defined stages through which the novice must pass so that the community and the novice could "test the spirits to see if they are of God" (1 Jn4:1) (DS 4S4-95).⁶

As the novice passed these tests and persevered in his resolve, he was incorporated progressively into the community. This was physically manifested in the places the novice was allowed to stay. He first stayed outside, then allowed to enter, then admitted into the guests' quarters, and much later assigned to the quarters where the senior novices stayed.

Other aspects of acceptance and initiation into eremitic and monastic life were codified: the appointment of elders or "seniores", i.e. someone gifted in the formation of souls to watch over the novice with great attention to see if he/she truly searches for God, applies him(her)self to God's work, as well as to obedience and the practice of humility... After some months the novice was allowed to read and study the Rule. Only when the novice had shown in word and deed that he would observe and obey all that was asked of him, only

then was he received into the community.

In succeeding centuries, with the rise of the mendicant orders (13th-15th) and the clerks regular (16th century), the novitiate incorporated into its program and process the apostolic and clerical character of the new forms of consecrated life. With the appearance of more groups, as well as the onset of problems related to their proliferation, the Church exercised control by giving or withholding recognition of such groups as they laid claim to the status of "orders" or "congregations" (DS 484-9S).⁷

Distinctions were made regarding the type of "vows" which the members professed. By the time of John Baptist de La Salle, only those congregations which professed public and solemn vows were considered religious congregations or religious orders. (Since then other forms of consecrated life have evolved. Many of them have been confirmed as genuine charisms from the Holy Spirit for the building of the Church (Cf. Paul's references to the various ministries in the Church in 1 Co 12:8-10, 28-30; Ep 4:11; Rm 12:6-18) (DI 56-62).⁸

While different programs for initiating new members evolved, the essential nature of the novitiate process remains unchanged: it is understood to be a specified period during which a novice undergoes testing and training under an appointed guide and a specific house or community of the religious order to which he/she aspires, in order to discern and ascertain his/her vocation. The 1983 Code of Canon Law describes the nature of the novitiate in the following manner: (C 646; HC 132).⁹

The novitiate, by which life in the institute begins, is ordered to this, that the novices better recognize their divine vocation and one which is, moreover, proper to the institute, that they experience the institute's manner of living, that they be formed in mind and heart by its spirit, and that their intention and suitability be tested.

3. THE NOVITIATE IN LASALLIAN HISTORY

The history of the novitiate (as program and process) in our Institute parallels our Founder's understanding of the vocation of the Brother. What is quite clear from the studies of Brothers

Maurice-Auguste, Michel Sauvage et al. is that the Founder did not consider the Brothers as "religious" as the term was understood and stipulated during his time. In the "Memoire on the Habit" De La Salle stressed that the Brothers were not clerics. Consequently their dress and training were geared according to their specific vocation (MH).¹⁰ They were not members of a canonical, religious congregation either with solemn or simple vows.

As the Brothers evolved from a "community" to a "Society" to an "Institute", De La Salle continued to see the Brothers as a society of common life composed of men who wore the same distinctive, religious habit, worked together and in association to maintain gratuitous schools for the poor, lived a consecrated life in community with or without vows, and relied entirely on Providence. De La Salle did not worry about, nor was he hampered by, the juridical matters regarding the admission, training and continuation of candidates in the community which governed the 17th and 18th century religious orders (MH, CL II).¹¹

What evolved in the area of the admission and formation of the Brother reflected this. But the novitiate was part of the process of admission and initiation into the Institute. While De La Salle and the first Directors of novices did not go by the canonical requirements of their day, they followed the essential objective of the novitiate process: they initiated the novices into the process of transforming themselves into Christ's disciples. They did adopt many traditional practices from the novitiates of the canonical religious communities of their day: initiation into prayer, practice of the common life, the practice of mortification, the study of the Rule... But the Lasallian novitiate too underwent a process of gradual development.

3.1. Beginnings. The original schoolmasters did not undergo a formal period of religious nor pedagogical formation. In 1690 De La Salle described them as "being for the most part men of no culture" (MH),¹² while Blain (1684) called them "fervent and pious" but "brash and hotheaded" (BL 25).¹³ It was their grave lack of basic, pedagogical, (not to mention cultural, academic and spiritual) knowledge and skills that prompted John Baptist to devote more and more time to their formation. He took the opportunity of the

long vacation periods as well as the shorter Holy Week holydays to form them to become what he eventually described as **Brothers, ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ** (MTR 3,2).¹⁴ But it was their living, praying and working together that became the occasion for them to clarify each other's vision and role: at first as schoolmasters, and later as Christian Brothers and educators.

Admission into the community at first consisted in the mere expression of interest in the work: initially because some were attracted by the example of De La Salle and his companions, and others, by their need to be trained in teaching as means of livelihood. Only later did the majority join because of more altruistic motives. With time these different and conflictual motives became evident and the nature of the Brothers' vocation became clear to new members. This was greatly assisted by the formal adoption of a distinctive habit for the Brothers. The "Memoire on the Habit" vividly describes the profound motivational transformation which took place with the adoption of this common garb. Only later did some pronounce vows of association, obedience and stability. But this was neither required nor expected of everyone (CL II).¹⁵

3.2. Community of Young Aspirants. De La Salle opened a community for young men 14 to 15 years of age who were seeking entrance into the Institute and looked promising as Brothers. These young men formed a separate community from the Brothers and followed their own program. It consisted of religious exercises, especially prayer and spiritual reading, as well as the study of secular subjects which would prepare them for their future work (MH, BL 62-4).¹⁶

Blain described their program as follows:

De La Salle did not change anything in the dress of these young men... The only thing common to all of them, which distinguished them from outsiders, was the collar they wore and their short hair. Their lifestyle was quite different from that of the country schoolmasters, and constitute a sort of introduction to and imitation of that of the Brothers. At the appointed times they learned reading, writing and arithmetic. The rest of the time they spent in exercises of piety appropriate for their age. Every day they recited the Little Office of the Most Blessed Virgin and said the Rosary; they made an exa-

men twice a day, and also devoted themselves to spiritual reading and mental prayer under the guidance of one of the most pious and capable Brothers. As a rule they went to Communion every week..." (BL 63).¹⁷

They stayed in this community for a year or two, and as Blain puts it: "The wise Superior chose those who, at the age of sixteen or seventeen, seemed to have the best dispositions and brought them over to the Brothers' department, gave them the habit, and sent them to teach" (BL 63).¹⁸ What is striking are Blain's comments: "In a word, their lives were organized more or less *like those of the novices today*... This sort of junior seminary for these lads, which took the place of a training stage and of the novitiate for the Institute, was a place which the servant of God delighted in visiting" (BL 63).¹⁹ This group stayed in Reims for two years and later joined De La Salle in St. Sulpice. However their stay in the capital and in the large parish eventually led the young men into crises. While a few eventually received the habit and joined the Brothers, many lost their fervor and left, while some had to be sent away.

This was part of the crisis of 1691 when the number of Brothers declined to a very low level because of deaths and departures. The future looked very bleak with very uncertain candidates from the juniors, and many Brothers experiencing failing health and low morale. Pressure was also being exerted by some members of the clergy to take control over the group and to change the nature and orientation of the community. In response De La Salle associated himself with Brothers G. Drolin and N. Vuyart as they vowed to do everything in their power to insure the establishment of the Society even if only they three remained and even they were forced to live on bread alone.

3.3. First Novitiate in Vaugirard. Among the concrete steps De La Salle took to establish this Society was leasing the house in Vaugirard. The Founder was convinced that such a place was indispensable because it would make possible three measures critical to the establishment of the Society: *a)* the availability of a convalescent home near Paris for the sick Brothers; *b)* a place for the Brothers to go on retreat to recover their first fervor; and, *c)* the establishment of a novitiate for

the training of candidates (BL 103).²⁰

Here we have the first formal reference to a novitiate for the Brothers. As Blain puts it: De La Salle's effort to renew the Brothers "...made it plain how necessary it was to set up a regular novitiate, and to have all the postulants go through it before admitting them to the Society, so as to test their vocation and give them a solid grounding in virtue" (BL 104).²¹ At first Cure Baudran, the parish priest for St. Sulpice, resisted the idea. But eventually with the persistence of the Founder, and the support of Msgr. De Harlay, Archbishop of Paris, Baudran too gave his consent and the novitiate opened in 1692.

The training of the novices was not in view of their becoming Canonical religious nor clerics. They were Brothers of the Christian Schools. Yet De La Salle was guided by the essential objectives of a novitiate: a period and process of testing their vocation and formation in the virtues of their mission. He was convinced that "the desertion of some Brothers, the relaxation of others, and the superficiality and lack of interior life, as well as the irresolution and hesitation of others..." was in great part caused by the fact that they had not made a true novitiate (BL 105).²²

The program of the Vaugirard novitiate was similar in many ways to that of the canonical religious congregations. The day was devoted to many religious exercises: recitation of community prayers and the office of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, three hours of meditative prayer; two hours of spiritual reading, plus other exercises of piety, as well as acts of mortification or penance. Their food was plain and unappetizing. Physical penance was encouraged. Poverty was a given condition but accepted gladly in faith. And although the community was later forced to transfer to the Rue Princesse house due to the severity of a famine, the necessity of having this period of formation and apprenticeship would never be questioned in the Institute.

At the end of several months or one year in the novitiate, the novice was given the Brothers' habit and assigned to a community. He usually was given a teaching assignment. However with the advent of "serving Brothers", i.e. Brothers who took care of household services while the other members of the community carried out their classroom

duties, the novices knew they could be assigned to classroom or household duties. This is the exhortation made by the Founder (or the Brother Directors of novices who succeeded him) in one of the meditations: "...you should prepare yourself to leave the novitiate full of graces and of the spirit of God, to work for the salvation of souls according to the spirit and end of our Institute, or in such employments in the house as may be assigned to you..." (MDF 83.3).²³

Upon completion of the second year, the novice continued on as a member of the community, eventually professing temporary vows. However records show that many stayed in the Society even without professing vows. They were often listed as "novices employes" and the practice continued even up to the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century (CL 2, EL 2).²⁴ De La Salle was the first Master of novices. Later he appointed other Brothers to this post. Brother Barthelemy and Brother Irenee were among the first novice-masters in lifetime of DLS. It is worthy to note that the former became the first Superior General and the latter became Assistant to the second Superior General, Brother Timothy (WY 181, 185).²⁵

3.4. "**Novices Employés**". Brothers Maurice-Auguste and Michel Sauvage point out that due to the pressure of supplying Brothers for the schools and the Institute not being influenced by canonical requirements expected of traditional religious congregations, novices underwent several months of novitiate and were then sent out as *novices employés*. Some taught class, others were given responsibility for the temporal needs of the community, and were called "serving Brothers". Many remained in this category for a long time, some even for the rest of their lives (CL 2, EL 2).²⁶

They were "novices" because they belonged to the Institute without pronouncing or renewing vows for one reason or another. They were "employés" because they lived in a community other than the novitiate, and they either taught class or took care of other community duties. Only with the revision of the Code of Canon Law in 1904 did the number of these "novices employés" begin to go down; this practice continued until 1917 when the Code was completed and it was stipulated that

no one could stay in an Institute without pronouncing vows. It was a tribute to their novitiate formation that what mattered was not the letter of the law. They remained as Brothers because of the spirit of the Institute animating their actions, just as the Founder wanted of them.

4. THE NOVITIATE IN THE INSTITUTE OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

The nature of the novitiate is described in the ninetieth article of our *Rule*:

The novitiate is a unique and important experience in the process of being initiated into the religious life of the Brother. With great respect for the personal progress of each of the novices, those in charge of the formation will urge them to enter progressively into the fundamental spiritual outlook of a disciple of St. John Baptist de La Salle: abandonment to God as a follower of Christ for a community service of evangelization and education available to all but with a preference for the disadvantaged (R 1987, 90).²⁷

4.1. **Novitiate As Process.** What is central here is the nature of the novitiate as process (Ci 418, 55).²⁸ It is an initiation process intended to help a novice internalize the fundamental spiritual outlook of the La Salle Brother. This essential spirit is an outlook that identifies a Brother; it is the source of his motivation, and the key to his effectiveness as an apostle. Without it he is not a Brother. St. La Salle himself puts it in even stronger language:

That which is the utmost importance, and to which the greatest attention should be given in an Institute is that all who compose it possess the spirit peculiar to it; *that the novices apply themselves to acquire it*; and that those who are already members make it their first care to preserve and increase it in themselves; for it is this spirit that should animate all their actions, be the motive of their whole conduct; and those who do not possess it and those who have lost it, should be looked upon as dead members, and they should look upon themselves as such; because they are deprived of the life and grace of their state; and they should be convinced that it will be very difficult for them to preserve the grace of God (RC II, I).²⁹

MF 83 considers the novitiate as "the womb"

of the religious institute, and the novices, the "children" being "spiritually conceived, or as St. Paul says, 'begotten in Christ' by being trained to a truly Christian and religious life" (MF 83.3).³⁰ De La Salle never tired of spending time with the novices, accompanying them in the all-important goal of transforming their outlook by a new spirit. This spirit is the spirit of faith "which leads the Brothers to look upon everything with the eyes of faith, to do everything in view of God and to attribute all to God" (R 5).³¹

This defines the essential process of conversion or personal transformation which is the heart of the novitiate. The novice is someone who experiences and responds to the Lord's call to follow him as a Brother of the Christian Schools. In the novitiate he begins the process of internalizing the way of responding to the Lord which John Baptist de La Salle and other Brothers have discovered. To learn to respond as *Brother* or *minister* or *ambassador of Christ* to the persons he meets, the novice must be helped to realize that certain attitudes and "old" tendencies or ways of "looking" or "seeing" persons and situations will have to "die". This was the evangelical itinerary of the Founder, this too is the journey he must travel (Ci 418, 59ff).³²

4.2. **A Path of Conversion.** This is a path of conversion because it is a path away from self-centeredness towards the love of God and neighbor. "During this process, his own interests become secondary and yield central position to the values of the Gospel and the interests of the Kingdom of God. This other-centeredness constitutes the principal source of the asceticism which he will have to practise" (G 191).³³

Consequently he must enter into the process of encountering and deepening his relationship with the Trinity to whom he wants to consecrate himself. The process of conversion is aided by greater familiarity with the Word of God which must become the source of his inspiration and light; by deepening his knowledge of himself and of the strengths and weaknesses that will influence his effectiveness as an apostle; by deepening his relationships with members of the community with whom he wants to associate himself; and through his interactions with the young, the poor and the needy whom he wants to serve.

The novitiate is effective only to the extent that it leads the novice to begin "to see things with the eyes of faith": "to enter progressively into the fundamental spiritual outlook of a disciple of St. John Baptist de La Salle: abandonment to God as a follower of Christ for a community service of evangelization and education available to all but with a preference for the disadvantaged" (G 189).³⁴

In preparation for such a radical process the novitiate is preceded by a period called the postulancy or pre-novitiate, during which the person makes known his interest in consecrating himself as a Brother. As a postulant he begins the process of initial formation and prepares for the novitiate by continuing to mature as a human person, particularly in his affective life; by enriching his knowledge and practice of his faith; by deepening his experience of God; by discerning the authenticity of his vocation; and bringing to maturity his decision to enter the novitiate (G 164).³⁵

4.3. The Novitiate as **Program**. The process described above must be translated into formative structures, relationship, activities and situations. This is the novitiate program. The program may vary but the essential process remains. Canon Law and the Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes describe the program of the novitiate as a "total initiation that goes far beyond that of simple instruction" because it is: "an initiation into a profound and living knowledge of Christ and of the Father... an initiation into the Paschal Mystery of Christ through detachment from self, especially in the practice of the evangelical counsels according to the spirit of the institute... an initiation into a fraternal, evangelical life... and, an initiation into the history, particular mission, and spirituality of the Institute" (DF 47 & C 652.1).³⁶

The essential goal of the novitiate program is to promote and to effect a transformative process. Consequently the novitiate program includes activities for the individual and for the community. Each one is helped to draw up a personal plan; but they also work together to come up with a community plan. There are times for personal as well as community prayer; and times for formal lessons together as well as times for private study and reflection. Opportunities are provided for individual accompaniment, as well as opportunities

for interpersonal dialogue. Occasions are given for solitude as well as for apostolic involvement. The novices spend time studying Christian and Lasallian themes, and participate as well in leisure and cultural activities.

Each novice is initiated and guided into a progressive living of the journey of John Baptist de La Salle, into a personal dying and rising to new life as described by the Rule of the Brothers. He is accompanied by his formators who strive to help him to be most attentive to the Holy Spirit, who is the formator "par excellence". His co-novices and family also provide additional stimuli in his religious development. But it is primarily the novice himself who is the active and responsible agent for his growth.

4.4. Requirements of the Rule and Canon Law.

For a novitiate to be valid a candidate must be free of any canonical impediments. He must show proof of baptism, confirmation and free status. Canon 643 states that one is considered invalidly admitted to the novitiate:

1. who has not yet completed the seventeenth year of age; 2. who is a spouse, during a marriage; 3. who is presently held by a sacred bond with any institute of consecrated life, or who is incorporated in any society of apostolic life...; 4. who enters the institute as a result of force, grave fear or fraud, or whom the superior receives induced in the same way; 5. who has concealed his or her incorporation in any institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life.³⁷

The candidate is admitted by the Brother Visitor with the advice of the District Council of the District into which he asks to be received. The beginning of the novitiate is usually marked by a special ceremony during which the candidate is given some symbols of his entry into the Institute, e.g. the religious habit, the Rule, a Bible, the six-decade rosary... Other requirements regarding the length of the novitiate, the qualifications of the Director of novices, and admission of novices to first vows are prescribed by Canon Law and the Rule (C 641-56, R 90-95).³⁸

¹ GV: *Le grand vocabulaire François par une société de gens de lettre*, Tome XIX, p. 337-338.

² DS: *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique*.

doctrine et histoire. Viller, Cavallera, Guibert et al. Tome XI, Beauchesne, Paris, 1982, p. 484.

³ PC: *Perfectae Caritatis* 5.

⁴ DS: *op. cit.*, pp.484.

⁵ DF: *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes*, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Rome: 1990 N° 36.

⁶ DS: *op. cit.*, pp. 484-495.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ DI: *Discipleship: towards an understanding of Religious Life* by J.M. Lozano, C.M.F. Claret Center for Resources in Spirituality-Religious Life Series Vol. 2. Chicago: 1983, pp. 56-62.

⁹ C 646: *Code of Canon Law*, quoted in HC: *A handbook on Canons* 573-746 by K. Hite, T.O.R., S. Holland, I.H.M., and D. Ward, O.S.B., editors. The Liturgical Press: College-ville, Minnesota, 1985, p. 132.

¹⁰ MH: Mémoire sur l'habit. Cf. CL 11: *L'Institut des Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes à la recherche de son Statut Canonique: des origines (1679) à la Bulle de Benoît XIII (1725)* par Frère Maurice-Auguste, FSC, pp. 349-354. For the English translation see *De La Salle; Letters and Documents*, by C. Battersby, FSC. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952, pp. 239-257.

¹¹ MH: *ibid.* CL 11: *ibid.*

¹² MH: *ibid.*

¹³ BL: *The life of John Baptist de La Salle* by J. B. Blain. Translated by R. Arnandes, F.S.C. Lasallian Publications: Romeville, Illinois, 1982, Vol. I Book 2, p. 25.

¹⁴ MTR 3.2: *Meditations for the time of retreat* by J. Baptist De La Salle, translated by Augustine Loes, FSC, Winona, Minnesota: St. Mary's College Press, 1975.

¹⁵ CL 11: *op. cit.*

¹⁶ MH: *ibid.*; BL 62-4: *op. cit.*, pp. 62-64.

¹⁷ BL 63: *ibid.*; CL 7, p. 280.

¹⁸ BL 63: *ibid.*; CL 7, 280.

¹⁹ BL 63: *ibid.* Emphasis added.

²⁰ BL 103: *op. cit.*; CL 7, 314.

²¹ BL 104: *op. cit.*; CL 7, 315.

²² BL 105: *op. cit.*; CL 7, 316.

²³ MDF: 83.3: *op. cit.*, p. 766.

²⁴ CL 2: *Cahiers Lasalliens 2: Les vœux des Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes avant la Bulle de Benoît XIII* par F. Maurice-Auguste Hermans, FSC.

EL 2: *Etudes Lasalliennes 2: "Les Temps de la 'Sécularisation' 1904-1914"*, Maison Généralice FSC: Tome 2; Tipografia S.G.S "Note sur le Statut Votal des Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes en France au Temps de la Sécularisation" par F. Michel Sauvage, pp. 127-156.

Cf. CL 11: *op. cit.*

²⁵ WY 181, 185 *The work is yours: the life of St. John Baptist de La Salle* by Luke Salm, FSC, Christian Brothers Publications. Romeville, Illinois, 1989, pp. 181, 185.

²⁶ CL 2, EL 2 *op. cit.*

²⁷ R. 90: *Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*. Rome: 1987.

²⁸ Ci 418, 55: *Circular 418: Orientations for the Pastoral ministry of Vocations and for initial Formation*, General Council. Roma: 1983, pp. 55ff.

²⁹ RC (II, 1) *Règles communes*, Texte de 1718, *Cahiers Lasalliens* N° 25, emphasis added.

³⁰ MDF 83.3: *Cahiers Lasalliens 12 - Méditations pour les Dimanches et les principales Fêtes de l'année*, p. 265c. English translation used here is *De La Salle: Meditations* by W. J. Battersby, Waldegrave (Publishers) Limited: London, 1964, p. 766.

³¹ R. 5: *op. cit.* 5.

³² Ci 418, 57ff: *op. cit.*, pp. 57ff.

³³ G 191: *Guide for Formation*, Brothers of the Christian Schools: Rome, 1991, 191.

³⁴ G 189: *op. cit.*, 189.

³⁵ G 164: *op. cit.*, 164.

³⁶ DF 47 and C 652.1. *Directives on Formation in religious Institutes*, Cong. for Inst. of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Rome: 1990. Canon 652.1 in HC, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

³⁷ C 643 in HC: *op. cit.*, pp. 120-121.

³⁸ C 641-56 in HC: *op. cit.*, pp. 115-157. R 90-95: *op. cit.*

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47. PARENTS OF THE PUPILS

Summary:

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1. THE PRESTIGE OF THE SCHOOL

About 20 years before the birth of St. John Baptist de La Salle Comenius had asserted his faith in the power of education when he stated that the school could no longer remain the privilege of the few, as was the case in the 17th century, but should be accessible to all the children, because it was the only way people could secure social promotion.

The realisation of this wish which became a reality thanks to the progress in schooling made as early as the second half of the 17th century, found in La Salle a tenacious and valuable supporter. As soon as he came across this problem, at once social and Christian, he understood that it was necessary to abandon shoddiness and the precariousness of improvised solutions. On the contrary, things had to be very seriously organised so as to enhance schools for the poor which had sprung up in Christian society under various shapes and with varying success. Above all else, he understood that a consensus had to be reached in order to win over the confidence of the families, primarily responsible for the children's future, and draw them out of their apathetic resignation.

La Salle thus foresaw the dawn of a renovated

"Christian school", entrusted to specially trained men, employed full time and inspired by a lofty ideal. He was saying in effect to the pioneering Brothers of the Christian Schools: "So long as you continue to practise poverty and all that can humiliate you (i.e. by sharing the standard of living of the working-class families, in imitation of Jesus Christ) your work will bear fruit in souls, and the angels of God will spread your reputation around and inspire fathers and mothers to send their children to be instructed by you" (MF 86.3).

Thanks to an evangelical testimony based on conviction and perseverance, credibility and esteem, necessary elements to bring about the diffusion of what is right, were guaranteed. And he continues: "Your profession requires you to mix every day with the world, where your every step is watched. It behoves you, therefore, to be a model of every virtue for the seculars among whom you live" (MD 69.3).

2. ST. LA SALLE'S ANALYSIS

2.1. A realistic observation

The attitude which characterises La Salle in his

educative task is made up of a healthy realism which leads him, to examine before making a decision, the conditions in which are living those he intends to educate. He is well aware of the hardships the working-class people have to undergo to bring up their family. In the *Devoirs d'un Chrétien envers Dieu*, he refers to "the hard work called servile, which is the common lot of the working-class... to earn their living" (Da 120), and elsewhere in the same book, of the "artisans whose work is very arduous, and the poor who lack the wherewithal to make a decent meal" (Da 158). They are obliged to work even on feast days, breaking in this manner a Church commandment" (Da 122 and DC 129).

When they have some free time, they prefer to relax watching "showmen, dancers, rope walkers and puppet shows" (RB 154). These shows lack refinement and are dangerous from a moral viewpoint. Despised by well educated persons, they attract "the working-class and the peasants" (RB 157). When La Salle urges the artisans to make their examination of conscience before confession, he suggests that they reflect on practical topics which are consonant with their life and occupation. "If the artisans have not done their work honestly, if they have done their job badly, if they have charged high prices. If they have used material according to the quality and quantity agreed upon. If they have not held back any of the things entrusted to them, pretending that they did so because they were underpaid" (I 230).

2.2. Duties of the parents towards their children

The disillusioned examination of this situation made up of material poverty, insufficient culture and moral laxity which, if not remedied tends to perpetuate itself among children in a sort of continuous and negative spiral, leads La Salle to point out to the parents a certain number of theoretico-practical remedies. First of all, it is imperative to remind parents of their marriage obligations.

Among others, that of "bringing up their children in a Christian manner" (Db 241 or MR 193.2) and that means that they are obliged to: 1st. Instruct them; 2nd. Correct them; 3rd. make them lead a Christian life (Db 241, Da 124). To achieve that, they must teach their children the ba-

sic truths of the Christian faith, make them attend church services, prevent them from associating with dangerous companions, ensure that they go to confession to a reliable confessor and give them good example (Db 242).

The obligation to correct the children is also mentioned in the *Conduite des Ecoles*, where, with reference to dissolute children, it is said that the Inspector or the Master will not correct them but "compel the parents to correct them at home, before they return to school" (CE 189).

But home correction must be made "gently and charitably and not angrily and abusively" (Da 125).

La Salle returns several times on the parents' duty to set a good example for their children, for "good example impresses much more the mind and the heart than mere words, especially the mind and heart of those who do not have a sufficient capacity for reflection" (MR 202.3). To give good example is one of the fruits of the sacramental grace of marriage (Da 125). Parents are therefore invited to watch over their children especially when their moral life is endangered. For example, when he refers to dancing, La Salle says that on these occasions youngsters feel free to do things that "their mothers and fathers would feel ashamed to permit in their own home" (RB 154).

Likewise, on very practical matters, La Salle does not fail to make some suggestions which denote experience and wisdom. With regard to the use of money, he says that parents should not give any to their offspring, nor tolerate that they have any, even in small amounts, for it is "one of the main causes for which they become dissolute" (CE 258). More generally, we may say that the duty of parents is not only to educate their children in a Christian manner, but to teach them good manners. This topic is dealt with in *Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité Chrétienne*, but the motivations they must inculcate in the children, to make them practise these rules, must not be worldly. They must be practised "through purely Christian motives aimed at procuring the glory of God and their salvation" (RB Preface I).

Nor should the parents' task be restricted to providing only for their children's present needs. They must look ahead and try to integrate the young man in society so that, well brought up, he may work honestly. For that reason, La Salle does

not fail to point out that an important duty of the parents is "to teach them a trade, or to help them find a suitable occupation" (Da 124). When the children grow up and are ready to take on a new type of life, the parents must complete their educative task by praying God for them and examining themselves to see if their children are sufficiently well prepared. If they wish to marry, let them not be guided by "human considerations, or by greed ...and the enjoyment of sensual pleasures without restraint", for "the deplorable consequences of these marriages are known from experience" (Da 385-86 and 125).

Likewise, referring to those youths who wish to join the priesthood, La Salle's advice to parents is one of cautious wisdom which aims at examining their intentions and purging these of any human consideration. Parents must therefore "examine if the young man does really wish to join the clerical state and if he possesses the wisdom and piety needed to aspire to such a holy profession; they must also pray much and do good works to obtain from God the grace to know the vocation of their son, ask advice about it from their confessor and from pious and learned ecclesiastics; they must previously make known to their children which are the obligations of the priesthood, and check with them to see if they intend seriously to conform thereto, having only in mind the good of the Church and the salvation of their soul" (Da 376).

Parents must examine which sins they commit ordinarily, and La Salle singles out, particular preferences for this or the other child "if they have loved their children equally" (I. 224) and whether "they have brought them up in a worldly spirit and vanity" (I. 224).

As these quotations show, La Salle has a very lofty idea of the parents' task. The need for an integral formation of their children and a new style of upbringing and relationship inside the family are his objectives. The very fact that he suggests a new family ideal permeated with the Christian spirit, brings to the fore the needs and deficiencies most commonly found in families. Realism does not induce La Salle to forget that reality is very different from the Ideal and that it is necessary to start with the former if one is looking for an efficient remedy.

2.3. The duties of the children towards their parents

In his writings, La Salle recalls also the children's duties towards their parents. On them depend the union and harmony which should prevail in the family. In the *Devoirs d'un Chretien*, he states: "Children have five duties towards their father and mother according to this commandment: they must love them, respect them, obey them, assist them throughout their life, pray and get others to pray for them after their death (Da 125; Db 93-94).

Let us now examine each of these duties, culling as we do so La Salle's specific intentions. To love one's parents "is to wish them only what is right" (GA 362) and it is gratitude towards them which must motivate these sentiments. "We are bound in particular to love our father and mother, who brought us into the world and have brought us up and to express to them our gratitude for all the kindnesses we have received from them" (Da 99). We also show this love in small gestures of affection" (RB 53). But it is more particularly through obedience and respect that children prove their love for their parents.

In La Salle's view, one of the tasks of education is to "make your pupils docile and very obedient to their parents and to those to whom they are entrusted on their behalf (MF 186.1). Among other things, the educator will render an account of it, if his pupils "are respectful towards their parents, faithful in obeying them" (MD 61.3). In another passage, addressing his Brothers, he tells them emphatically: "Do not forget to help them to acquire gentleness, patience, love and respect for their parents" (MR 200.3). With reference to this matter, the child must ponder during his examination of conscience: "Have I willingly been respectful towards my parents?" (E. 1). This catechesis, the aim of which is to inculcate the full and profound meaning of the 4th commandment, is not restricted to childhood and the school environment. If one keeps in mind the psychological and material dereliction in which numerous parents found themselves when, owing to lack of strength, they could not work any longer, and were not able to rely on a pension or health insurance, one may easily understand this appeal made to youth to assist their parents in need. "Children must assist

their parents, help them in their work in their old age, in their poverty and in their illnesses, and console them in their sufferings; they must especially be very careful to see that they receive the sacraments when in danger of death; immediately after their death, they must execute their testament and pray and ask others to pray for the repose of their souls" (Da 126). The duty to pray for one's parents from one's tenderest age is often repeated in La Salle's writings (Db 245; E. 14; DC 78; I 64 and 87).

Likewise, the guide for the examination of conscience of the young takes up the duties mentioned above and points out more or less ordinary shortcomings towards parents in such actions as (blows, thefts, failure to help...), words (insults, slander...) and intentions (to curse them and desire their death) (I 224-225).

By means of daily reflections, education leads the pupil to realise the pain, worry and suffering parents underwent, the dangers in which they found themselves, the pleasures and the comforts of which they deprived themselves in order to satisfy their needs, the tears they shed before God to draw down on them his favours. All these considerations which appeal not only to the intelligence, but more particularly to the heart, aim at bringing them to commit themselves, to make them more and more aware and responsible, to give rise not only to a situation that is new but also in line with their Christian duties.

3. PARENTAL SHORTCOMINGS

3.1. Religious ignorance

According to the traditional teaching of the Church, the first educators of the child in the Faith are the parents. De La Salle shares fully this view. He states "that one of the main duties of fathers and mothers is to bring up their children in a Christian manner and to teach them their religion" (MR 193.2). However, he knows perfectly well that working-class parents are unable to fulfil this duty. They lack the time ("being taken up with their material needs and the support of the family" (MR 193.2) and "they have to go out to look for work". (MR 194.1) and above all, they

are incompetent. They themselves are ignorant and need a genuine evangelisation. In fact, although they live within a Christian environment, La Salle remarks that their spiritual life, that is, their relation with God, is very deficient: "They have only an imperfect knowledge of God, and for that reason never think of him, never willingly hear Him spoken of, and never pray to him" (MD 41.3).

Even in Christian schools, one may come across "children who know nothing about God because they have been brought up by parents who are ignorant of religion (MD 41.3). The Common Rules refer to the working-class and the poor as "people who are usually little instructed" (RC 1.4) and too busy working for the family; that is why they cannot impart to their children "the necessary instruction or a suitable Christian education" (RC 1.4). Hence, the assertion which looks like a commitment and a promise of total dedication: "The necessity of this Institute is very great" (RC 1.4).

3.2. Inability to educate

La Salle is convinced "that it is a great advantage to be educated, because in that way one acquires virtue with greater ease" (MF 186.1) and he observes that all disorders especially among the working-class and the poor usually arise from their having been left to themselves and been badly brought up during their childhood (RC 1.6). "Few children go astray through depravity of heart" (MD 56.2). If they err, it is "because they are not capable of reflection" (MR 203.2). They need guidance, to have models to imitate, but the family context prevents them sometimes from growing and maturing.

The parents taken up by their daily work, neglect their children: "The poor show very little care and sometimes none at all" (CE 160). The children loiter from morning till evening, do what they like and the consequence of this is that they show very little respect for their parents" (CE 160). The external signs of this negligence towards their children are: dirty clothes, lack of hygiene and malnutrition.

We are therefore dealing here with parents who manifest their inability to educate because of their

excessive fondness for their children. Carried away by their readiness and credulity" (CE 261) they "grant their children all they ask for and never oppose them in anything; they hardly ever correct their defects and seem afraid to hurt their feelings" (CE 16). They seem to "idolize their children" (CE 187) and instead of guiding them, they let themselves be led by their whims "what the children want to do, they too want to do" (CE 187).

4. EDUCATION BY SUBSTITUTION

To describe in detail the educative work of La Salle is not necessary but it is opportune to underline the spiritual, cultural, and protective finality carried out by the Lasallian Institute. La Salle believes that, in the years which precede "the apprenticeship", it is important to keep away the children from the streets, from sloth, from wandering about and from dissoluteness. His mission therefore set "within the framework of the history of a street, which from a place where they live, becomes little by little, a mere place of transit" (Philippe Aries: *L'enfant et la rue*).

Recalling the painful state into which lapsed a large number of parents of the working-class to whom he was addressing himself, he certainly did not have in mind a sterile condemnation; but rather wished to assert even in front of those responsible, the need for substitute educators. All the more so, since vast perspectives opened up for his project. He did not aim solely at treating the wounds of the most down-and-out, the sons of working people and the poor, abandoning them meanwhile to their former state, but thanks to a fortunate social intuition, his ambition was to close the gap between the humblest urban classes and those of the middle working-class which was then gradually making its influence felt in society.

The working-class to which La Salle often alludes was made up of the "Masters" or the owners of the shops, who worked all alone, or with the help of a few apprentices. Availing themselves of a certain amount of mutual aid, some of the workmen attained middle-class status. So, the working-class assured the gradual transition between the popular classes and the middle-class of which it

constituted the lower echelon, "at times working-class, at others middle-class".

By virtue of his calling as an educator, La Salle could not remain indifferent to the psychological frustration of so many people, trodden under foot but not resigned. If from the educational point of view, these parents, represented a state of affairs hard to correct, it was necessary for their children to open for themselves new horizons, new paths. It is therefore not astonishing that he told his Brothers: "In his providential care, God to substitute the fathers and mothers sends persons with the necessary enlightenment and zeal to help children attain the knowledge of God and his mysteries.... God has called YOU to this ministry" (MR 193.2).

It was a substitution laden with responsibility which made him say in a distressed sort of way: "You should look upon the children whom you are called upon to instruct as poor, abandoned orphans, for although most of them have a father alive, they are as if they had not, being abandoned to themselves as far as the salvation of their souls is concerned" (MD 37.3).

Meanwhile, he encouraged them suggesting that they act from a supernatural motivation: "The zeal you are obliged to have in your ministry must be so active and so alive that you are able to tell the parents of the children entrusted to your care what is said in Scripture: Give us their souls, and keep everything else for yourself" (MR 201.3).

A frequent reflection in the writings of La Salle is the following: if the parents' inability to educate their children is obvious, the Church's involvement in the matter is a peremptory duty. So many youngsters cannot be abandoned to the darkness of ignorance, a prelude to vice.

The cry of alarm was that most parents did not possess a sufficient knowledge of the Christian truths. He therefore kept repeating to the Brothers: "You must, then, look upon this work entrusted to you by pastors, by fathers and mothers, as one of the most important and most necessary services in the church" (MR 199.1).

Consequently, "it is not enough that children be kept in school for most of the day and be kept busy. Those who are called upon to teach them must devote themselves especially to bring them up in the Christian faith" (MR 19.2).

5. PARENTS AND THE LASALLIAN SCHOOL

He who decides to commit himself to teach and educate the poor must himself become poor. Parents decide to send their children to the school of the Brothers because they hope to be understood, helped and loved, being convinced that the Brothers have "the grace required to sustain the weak, to instruct the ignorant and correct the wayward" (MD 37.1). But if they do not have the virtues of poverty and humility, they will be little known and little employed. To be the "saviours" of the poor, you have to resemble them and Jesus at his birth" (MF 86.3).

La Salle always looks for spiritual motivations in order to support the engrossing task of the Brothers, but at the same time he tries to programme his action in a pragmatic way to put right precarious situations. If he studies carefully the difficulties met with, it is not in order to withdraw and justify his disengagement, but rather to better overcome them. He thrives more on solutions than on problems. Having examined the situation in which the children and their families live, he contrives to involve the parents in his educational activity. The parents are invited to help in all the important moments of school life. In this manner, not only will educational co-operation be more efficacious, but thanks to the school the parents will be evangelized, for "by means of the establishment of the schools entrusted to you by God, religion and the practice of the faith will flourish among the faithful, especially among the working-class and the poor" (MR 207.3).

5.1. The registration of children

Registration time constitutes the first contact of the school with the parents. "The Brother Director will not admit any child into the school unless he is introduced by his father or mother... or by whoever is in charge of him or who is of legal age" (CE 257). He will enquire and take note of their profession, their address, the age of the child, ask if he has made his first communion and confirmation, if he has attended other schools, why he decided to change, what they expect him to do later, his academic results, his good and bad habits and qualities, if he has any health problems, the

companions he associates with... (cf. CE 257).

Once the child has been admitted into the school, the Director explains to the parents what their future duties are. Among these some are worth recalling:

- the child must have all the books he needs;
- he must attend school regularly, be punctual and never absent himself without permission;
- he should come to school clean, well combed and be totally "free from vermine";
- he should not eat out of school since he can learn to do so with his classmates, "in a Christian and polite manner";
- parents should not listen to the occasional complaints of their child but if they have any remarks to make, they should pass them on to the teacher who will do what is necessary to "make them happy";
- parents should not give much money to their child, for that is one of the main causes of waywardness in youngsters (Cf. CE 258).

If the child comes from another school or if it is noticed that he often changes schools, "the parents will be told that that is harmful to the children; that they have to resolve not to change any more" (CE 260). If the changes took place because of the corrections received in the previous school, the parents must be told that they should not listen to their children's grouses against the teacher (CE 260) but on the contrary they must be pleased that their children are corrected when they misbehave.

When a child withdraws from school, the Director should examine whether it would be wise to re-admit him. "Parents' entreaties should be allowed to go on for a while without however putting them off (CE 261) and after having explained to them that if he is polite towards them, the child will be readmitted into the school. If on the contrary, a pupil who was expelled from school wishes to be readmitted, the Director "will tell the parents the serious reasons for which their son was asked to withdraw from school" (CE 262) and that he will be readmitted only if there is a reasonable hope that he will mend his ways and under threat that he will be expelled definitely "if he does not improve" (CE 262).

5.2. When pupils absent themselves

One of the scourges that affected schools in La

Salle's time, was absenteeism. Children were not obliged to go to school; there was no age when they should begin their schooling or finish it. It was up to the parents to decide freely what was to be done. Appropriate means had therefore to be devised to induce the children to come to school willingly and regularly, and at the same time commit the parents to help those that needed it most. If one takes into account that the pupil had to spend 40 hours per week at school and that the school year comprised 46 to 47 weeks or 280 effective school days, it is easy to understand why certain children were tempted to play truant.

In the *Conduct of Schools*, six causes of pupils' absence are examined: Some of them may be attributed to the pupils themselves, others to the teacher, but "the fifth main reason for the pupils' absence is attributable to the parents, either because they neglect to send them to school, not bothering to see them go, or to make sure they apply themselves to study, which is quite common among poor people, or because they are indifferent about the usefulness of the school, being convinced that their children do not learn anything there, or very little indeed" (CE 186).

The fact that sometimes parents connive with their children and try to excuse their absences casually, may be seen from the great care that must be shown when appointing the "visitor of the absentees", that is the pupil whose duty is to call at the house of his absent companions and then report to the teacher: "The Visitors should not allow themselves to be bribed, either by their schoolmates, or by the parents, to provide incorrect reasons for the absences, and not accept any present wherever it may come from, for any reason whatsoever (CE 246, 240).

The remedy suggested by La Salle is "to talk to the parents" (CE 186) and to convince them not only of the obligation they are under to have their children instructed, but also of the damage they are doing them, for without education" they will not find a job" (CE 186). Taking social conditions into account, it is possible to grant children permission to absent themselves in certain cases or on particular days, but only after the parents have asked for permission (CE 181, 189). Leave may be granted "on market days if the children work there" (CE 180), when they accompany their par-

ents "on pilgrimages away from the town... and after ascertaining that the trip is motivated by devotion" (CE 182), "on the feast of the Patron Saint of the Trade" (CE 182) or if a better day is not found, when the parents must buy their children "clothes, shoes, or mend their clothes" (CE 182). These permissions, however, should be rare and be granted only after the reasons given have been found to be "very good and necessary" (CE 190). In fact, the pupils who are often absent set a bad example for others: "many others would like to do likewise" (CE 180).

It would be better to have fifty pupils who attend regularly, rather than "one hundred who are absent most of the time" (CE 190). Whoever checks the motives why pupils absent themselves "must oblige the parents to bring back their children to school (CE 189). If the child was absent through his parents' fault, these parents must be talked to privately and be "informed of their mistake and the harm they do their children when they facilitate or allow their absence" (CE 193). And if they do not commit themselves to improve on this point, it were better to invite them to withdraw their child from school, for, without an assiduous presence, it is impossible for him to learn anything, since he will forget in a day what he learnt in several" (CE 191).

5.3. Early withdrawal from school

Children usually attended the lasallian school for two or three years. A relatively short period if one keeps in mind that at that time the teachers had to teach them the basic elements of learning. There was therefore no time to waste at school. The inspector has to make sure that school begins on time, "without a single moment's delay" (CE 251 and L. 56.5). But sometimes, parents wanted to withdraw their children from school before they had completed the course. The *Conduct of Schools* enumerates two motives why this used to happen and the remedies to be applied to prevent its recurrence.

5.3.1. Parents withdraw their children, though insufficiently instructed, because they need help. The arguments put forward by La Salle to con-

ren who play truant, he must insist that "the parents correct them at home, before sending them back to school" (CE 189). An analogous case is that of those parents who "in a fit of anger" ask the teacher to punish their children when they misbehave. "Children should not then be punished for that reason" and parents should be told that they ought to correct them themselves" (CE 168). In the *Catalogue des bonnes et des mauvaises qualités*, the teacher must, among other things, point out if the child "is excessively loved by his parents, if they object to his being corrected, if they do not complain of that sometimes" (CE 236). Among the examples given in the *Conduite des Ecoles*, we come across two types of parents. Francois de Terieux: "He is loved by his parents who are not happy to see him corrected" whilst Lambert du Long's parents "are not dissatisfied when he is reprimanded" (CE 237).

5.4. Gratuity

In the Commun Rules, the Brothers are told "that they will keep gratuitous schools everywhere and that that is essential to their Institute" (RC 7.1). Gratuity reflects the altruistic, generous, detached and disinterested attitude of the teacher. It is justified by the following theological reasoning: the Brothers are announcers of the Gospel and consequently, like St. Paul, they must "glory in being able to preach the Gospel gratuitously" (MR 194.12). In the meditation for December 31, La Salle invites the Brothers to re-examine their conduct on this point as well". "Have you received anything from your pupils? You know that this is by no means allowed" (MF 92.3). And in the Meditation for the feast of St. Cajetan, he says: "You know moreover that you are vowed to teach gratuitously, and to live on bread alone rather than receive any retribution. Be on your guard, therefore, never to accept anything either from the pupils or from their parents" (MF 153.3).

It is therefore for reasons of a psychopedagogical nature such as these that we can understand why the saint insists so much on the absolute prohibition the Brothers are under to receive money or gifts, for in so doing they restrict their freedom and may prevent themselves from acting fairly and equitably towards most of their

students. To accept gifts or money is to compromise one's reputation as a person of integrity. One must keep in mind as well that those who make these gifts often consider themselves implicitly authorised to take liberties which the Brothers, through complacency, will pretend not to notice. That is why, in a laconic and almost monotonous language, but one which leaves no doubt as to his intentions, he tells the Brothers: "They shall not receive, either from the pupils or from their parents, any money or presents, however small, on any day or occasion whatever" (RC 7.11); they shall receive nothing either from their pupils, or from their parents, for any reason or in any way whatever" (CE 254); "you must not receive anything from the parents of the pupils or from the pupils themselves" (L. 56.12).

5.5. Meetings with parents

The working-class people and the poor were taken up fully throughout the day by their work and, therefore, could not be expected to participate assiduously in the life of the school. However, contacts between the Teacher and the Inspector did exist. Parents could call at the school to speak, to ask information, to complain about the mediocre results of their son or the harm — real or fictitious — which had been done to him. At other times, it was the master who sent for them, when they had to account for their children's absences or when some school problem cropped up" (CE 189). In this case, the Inspector "will do well to point out to the parents these defects and how they may be corrected" (CE 261).

6. TODAY AS IN THE PAST...

On several occasions, we have underscored St. La Salle's realistic attitude. He does not try to do everything, but to do well what he is able to do. "The difficulties he meets with do not nevertheless render him pessimistic. Between the best he dreams of and the little on which he can count, he tackles problems in a positive and constructive manner. His intention is to "associate the family... with the upbringing of the child in the school" in order to create around the child educative rela-

tions that are simple, sincere, profound and in conformity with man's aspirations. To make a success of this enterprise, is to build up "a healthy environment" which can provide not only a peaceful stability in the school, but also a positive insertion in life.

In the school of St. John Baptist de La Salle, the Brother has a pivotal role to play. He must serve as an example for the pupil and his family. His love for children provides him with the possibility of touching the hearts of his pupils and holding formative meetings with the parents.

La Salle still speaks to the parents of today, especially to those who put their trust in the Christian school. Social conditions are no doubt much better now when compared with those of the 17th century, however other reasons continue to isolate the parents and to render their faith hesit-

ant. Society no longer offers the same supporting structures and the same consistency in human behaviour, or reliable ethical references. On the contrary, rapid cultural change tends to make the adult feel more insecure with regard to life's values and renders the synthesis between life and faith more difficult.

It is an educational challenge offered by the young, the families and society to the school and to educators, in particular to the Catholic school. All that requires level headedness, realism and the skill to make courageous choices.

If the school offers all that, it will be able to communicate culture in "a systematic and critical manner in the light of faith and to build in children the dynamism of the Christian virtues, promoting in this manner the dual synthesis between culture and faith, between faith and life".

Complementary themes:

Artisans; Child-Pupil-Disciple; Christian; Christian Teacher; Correction; Duties of a Christian; Education-to bring up; Goodness-Tenderness; Heart-To touch hearts; Poor; Reflection; Spirit of Christianity; Teacher-Pupil Relationship; Vigilance.

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48. PENITENT

(Penance)

Summary:

1. Definition of the term. - 2. Penance as a virtue. 2.1. Necessity of penance. 2.2. Definition of penance. 2.3. The three acts of penance. 2.4. Limits and dangers of penance. 2.5. Penance in conformity with Jesus Christ. 2.6. Profession of a Penitent. 2.7. Prayers inspired by the spirit of penitence. - 3. Conclusion.

1. DEFINITION OF THE TERM

In this article the term, penance, is restricted to the idea of a virtue, or a spirit. The article does not deal with the sacrament of penance, or penance in the sense of punishment or correction as used in school (See **Correction**), though it will deal with penance in relation to the exercise of the accusation of faults, the advertisement of defects, and for occasions when a Brother falls into a fault and accepts a penance as satisfaction or as a means of preventing further falls (See **Exercises**).

2. PENANCE AS A VIRTUE

2.1. The necessity of penance

The teaching of La Salle on the virtue of penance takes up an entire chapter in his treatise, *Devoirs d'un chrétien envers Dieu*, (The Duties of a Christian Towards God), under the title of "Penance as a Virtue and its Necessity" (Da 274-279). In developing his thought he relies especially on the statement of the Council of Trent: "Penance has always been necessary for all those who have committed mortal sin, in order to obtain grace and justification" (Da 274).¹ La Salle applies to the virtue what the Council says in this quotation about the sacrament; in this he keeps the sub-

stance of the teaching of Trent, which he cites with great exactness, as in Da 282a.

Throughout this chapter La Salle returns to the teachings of Trent concerning penance as a virtue, or as a complement to the sacrament.² Trent states, "Penance was not a sacrament before the coming of Jesus Christ, nor has it been since then for a person who has not been baptized".³ From this statement La Salle concludes, "It is necessary, then, that there be penance other than the sacrament, otherwise no one in the state of mortal sin would have been, or is now, able to be saved" (Da 275).

2.2. Definition of penance

La Salle defines penance as a virtue by which we conceive sorrow for our sins, with a resolution not to commit them again and to make satisfaction for them (Da 275).

2.3. The three acts of penance

The virtue of penance includes three acts: (1) horror and aversion not only for sin but also for everything that could lead to sin, or be an occasion to commit sin; (2) great sorrow for having offended God, because God is loved above all things, and a firm resolve not to offend God again; (3) zeal for the justice of God, ardent desire

to make satisfaction to God for sins. This zeal requires that we spend our whole life in profound humility and confusion because of our sins, and that we separate ourselves from everything that could lead us to offend God (Da 275).

In accord with the tradition of spiritual writers of the time La Salle affirms that "we ought to do penance all our lives", as the Council of Trent states, "the life of a Christian is one of continual penance".⁴

Penance is a form of satisfaction to God for the temporal punishment due to sin and a participation in the Passion of Christ.⁵ It is also a preventative, "A person separates himself from sin only insofar as he deprives himself of everything that could lead him to it" (Da 278). It is, then, the role of penance to keep us far away from sin.

2.4. Limits and dangers of penance

La Salle shows the limits of a penance which is not inspired by good motivation. He says, "There are those who perform exterior acts of penance that are painful and by which they would ordinarily make satisfaction for their sins, but they only do this out of human respect and to appear penitent and mortified before others; such penance is false". La Salle concludes, "In order to be valid, penance must come from the bottom of the heart and be present there before it appears exteriorly, otherwise a person ought not, and cannot, be assured of its sincerity".⁶

2.5. Penance in conformity with Jesus Christ

According to La Salle penance is necessary for all Christians; for the Brothers he insists that it is necessary in order that they conform to Jesus Christ. In the *Recueil* La Salle devotes one of the treatises to the "Principal Virtues that the Brothers Ought to Practice" (R 154). The fourth virtue is mortification of the spirit, the fifth is mortification of the senses, the sixth is penance, to which he adds a "Profession of a Penitent" (which will be treated in the next article) (R 169).

The doctrine of penance that La Salle explains in this treatise is taken directly from the teaching of Olier.⁷ He does not mention Olier as his source, and he leaves aside Olier's profound theoretical

considerations in order to focus on the practical aspects of penance. "Let your principal concern be to **clothe yourself with him [Jesus Christ] and this spirit of penance**; ask him often for the heart and **the dispositions** of a true penitent; **enter into the energy and the virtue of these practices**".

First, just as Jesus Christ becoming man "was made sin" and did penance for us, a penitent⁸ must always keep his sin before him; this must be the foundation of all the other duties that he is required to render to God in view⁹ of his sins.

Since La Salle relies so much on Olier, it seems appropriate at this point to cite Olier's text itself, so that it will be easier to compare it with what La Salle has kept almost to the letter in his *Recueil* (R 170).

"The sinner, because of his sins, ought with Our Lord to show a perpetual confusion on his face" (Ps 37: 18). He ought to have this confusion first of all before God, just as Jesus Christ bore the shame of our offenses before his Father, according to these words, "confusion has covered my face" (Ps 68: 8).

Secondly, he ought to show confusion before the whole world, as the Son of God did, who says in the Prophet, "I am separated and withdrawn from the world, to live in solitude: I have become a stranger and a pilgrim to my brothers" (Ps 54: 8; 68: 9), that is, among the holy children of the Church. I was ashamed to be seen in their midst, charged with the crimes of everyone, carrying upon myself the horrible and shameful burden of the sins of the whole world. I was hidden in solitude for a period of time, and I have remained there always in spirit, as one unworthy to appear before the world and be with people.

Thirdly, this confusion ought to be in regard to ourselves also; we cannot put up, or bear with, ourselves on account of our shame and our pain. This is how the Son of God speaks of himself in the Prophet, "I was a burden to myself (Job 7:20); the embarrassment I suffer because of these horrible and hateful sins has caused me great suffering".¹⁰

For the third point of Olier, La Salle makes a slight adaptation in the text; Olier writes, "3. Because of the confusion that a sinner ought to bear because of his sins, he ought also to have the sorrow and the detestation for them that Our Lord had who lived in the perpetual sacrifice and agony

of a contrite heart for the sins of the world".

Further on La Salle borrows some lines from Olier, "The penitent because of such great crimes ought, following his confusion and his condemnation, submit himself to remain subject every moment of his life to the eternal, infinite, and all powerful justice of God, in order to bear whatever it pleases God's vengeance and punishment to impose on him".¹¹

2.6. Profession of a Penitent

Olier's Profession of Penitence¹² is closely linked to the virtue of penance, and La Salle encourages the Brothers to make it "from time to time," urging them "to take every day as a practice of penance whatever in your state and work gives you the most pain" (Recueil, 169, line 13). This confirms the fact that La Salle did not prescribe extraordinary penances, but the penance of the duties of everyday life in the Brothers' vocation.

This "Profession", as understood in the context of the 17th Century, is a public avowal, an open proclamation. Just as today there is the idea of a "Profession of Faith", So the Profession of a Penitent is a declaration that a person intends to live in the spirit of all that has been stated about penance.

La Salle borrowed a good part of the text from Olier,¹³ but gave it special form by addressing his Profession directly to God: "In honor of Jesus Christ, YOUR SON, and in union with him, I make profession, O MY GOD, as a penitent before JYQLL, for my sins and for the sins of the whole world, to do penance every day of my life, and to look upon myself in all circumstances as a poor, miserable sinner, and a very unworthy penitent". Olier, in his formula limits himself to a personal profession which is not addressed directly to God.

La Salle then arranges his prayer in five separate commitments:

First, to fulfill this obligation, I take the resolution to carry with me at all times an image of Jesus Christ, the sovereign penitent, TO LOOK AT IT AND TO KISS IT OFTEN, SO THAT BY HIS LOVING INTERIOR LOOK¹⁴ the remembrance of my obligation to do penance will be renewed in me.

Second, I offer my most humble apologies to the justice and the holiness of God which I have offended by my sins.

Third,¹⁶ I wish to enter today into all the interior dispositions of Jesus Christ penitent, in order to do penance with him as one of his members, one of his children.

Fourth, I offer all my actions to you, O MY GOD, and I ask you to receive them in satisfaction for my sins.

Fifth,¹⁷ TODAY, with the help of your grace, I will do such and such actions, ..., in a spirit of penance; I will suffer today such and such things, ..., and I will mortify myself on such and such occasions, ..., in order that God (who is just and ought not lose any right over his creatures may not exact from me in the next world an entire revenge and very rigorous punishment).

The Profession ends with a prayer which seems clearly to be that of La Salle: "Animate me, MY GOD, with the spirit of penance, and renew in me the gift I received from you at baptism; grant that I express these sentiments and these dispositions in all the conduct of my life. This, O MY GOD, is what I promise you I will do, and it is the grace that I ask of you through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen" (R 171).

Penance is, then, regarded especially, as satisfaction for sin and not simply as a certain level of mortification, even though it may be near to it and may become such in the concrete, as is clear from the Profession of a Penitent.

2.7. Prayers inspired by the spirit of penance

According to the three acts included in the virtue of penance, the penitent ought to live in horror and regret for the sins that he has committed. This is what La Salle expresses in a prayer "to ask God for the grace to do penance according to the number and the greatness of one's sins". He ends the prayer saying, "... as I have been a miserable sinner by my malice, I will also be a true penitent by your goodness" (I 207).

In the study he devotes to Confession (I 173-233) there are other admirable prayers¹⁷ that are doctrinally sound and which develop the attitude of penance and reparation that La Salle desires to inculcate in a Christian. For example, there is an

"Act to ask God for the grace to do penance during all our lives, in order to make satisfaction to God for our sins:

Since a person can persevere in doing what is good only insofar as he loves and practices penance, I ask of you the grace, O my God, to pass no day without doing some penance for my sins. No matter how innocent your only Son, Jesus Christ, was, he passed no single moment during his whole life without suffering and practicing penance. You know, O my God, that my sins are considerable, and that I am unable to make satisfaction for a single one of them in strict justice, though I were to suffer all my life; give me at least the love of suffering; help me to unite myself to the suffering of your dear Son sacrificed for me on Calvary; give me a share in his penitent spirit and help me be like him in the practice of penance. Since it was on the Cross that he made himself our model and was a perfect penitent, grant that I may often remember him in that state in order that I may never forget what he has suffered for me, so that his example may encourage and move me never to cease to do penance as long as I shall live. Since it is you, O my God, who give me this desire, give me also the strength and the courage to put it into practice" (I 217).

Other prayers that could be cited are "the prayer to ask God for the grace of a true spirit of penance, (I 179) and the act of contrition that La Salle drew in large part from the seven penitential Psalms.¹⁸

3. CONCLUSION

For La Salle, as for the French School generally, conformity to Christ becomes participation in his state of suffering¹⁹ and it is in this same spirit that La Salle invites the Christian "to make himself be a victim, living and pleasing to God".²⁰ by the spirit and practice of penance.

¹ CHANUT, *Le saint Concile de Trente*, Latin-French edition, Lyon, 1692, session XIX, p. 186.

² Cf. Anselmo A. BALOCCO, "Il 'Tridentino' nei 'Devoirs' del De La Salle," in *Rivista lasalliana*, 1966, no. 1, p. 7.

³ CHANUT, *op. cit.*, session XIV, p. 186-187.

⁴ CHANUT, *op. cit.*, session XIV, p. 209.

⁵ Cf. Col. 1:24. La Salle comments, "This is the application which you ought to make by your sharing in his sufferings" *CL*, p. 86, MD 25:3.

⁶ Da 278. La Salle prays, "Inspire in me, O my God, a horror for this kind of penances, which are only exterior, and which do not prevent me from going to hell" (I 179).

⁷ OLIER, *Introduction à la Vie et aux Venus chrétiennes*, revised text of François Amiot, Le Rameau, Paris, 1954, p. 74ff.

⁸ Olier writes, "a sinner," *loc. cit.*

⁹ The phrase "in view of (*en vue de*) does not express well the words of Olier, "as a consequence of (*en suite de*) — which gives better the basic thought of La Salle; was this a lapse, or a mistake of the copyist?"

¹⁰ OLIER, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

¹¹ *Ib.*, p. 76.

¹² Whereas Olier's title is "Profession of Penance," La Salle's title is "Profession of a Penitent" (R 169). La Salle's title fits the thought of the Profession more accurately.

¹³ OLIER, *op. cit.*, p. 73, fourth section, motives and profession of penance.

⁴ The words in capital letters are La Salle's own words. They are capitalized to emphasize the religious motivation of the saint, which has not always been adequately pointed out.

¹⁵ La Salle introduces here some lines that are altogether his own and owe nothing to Olier. It is only at the end of the fifth point that he takes up again the thought of his spiritual teacher; which is put in parenthesis to make clear that they are Olier's ideas. Compared with Olier, La Salle's expression of them is less detailed.

¹⁶ This paragraph makes the commitment concrete according to La Salle's idea that resolutions should be present, particular, and efficacious.

¹⁷ A. Rayez has remarked that this text is "entirely French school". La Salle's prayer is made in simple acts that are clear and thoughtful. (*Etudes lasalliennes*, in *RAM*, no. 109, January-March, 1952, p. 48.

¹⁸ CL 50, p. 68. (*Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer*).

¹⁹ In *Announcing the Gospel to the poor Sauvage* and Campos make the same statement: "When La Salle speaks of 'conformity' with Jesus Christ, most of the time it is with Jesus Christ suffering" (*AEP* p. 194 of the French edition).

²⁰ Rom. 12:1. Cf. MD 66.3 and MF 102: 3: "Consider that you only become true disciples of Jesus Christ when you love him and bring yourself to suffer for his holy love" (See **Disciples**).

Complementary themes:

Correction; Exterior Mortification, Interior Mortification; Renouncement; Sacrament.

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49. POOR

Summary:

1. Introduction. - 2. How can the dictionaries of the 17th C. help us? - 3. Who were the children of the artisans and the poor? - 4. The Testimony of Social Historians: 4.1. The situation in the 16th and 17th centuries. 4.2. Comparative Meanings. 4.3. Further Distinctions in Meaning. - 5. The Testimony of Blain. - 6. Blain, Bernard, Maillefer and the Language of the 17th C. - 7. The Distinction between "Pauvres" and "Misérables". - 8. The Option of the *Hôpital Général*. - 9. The Most Abandoned. - 10. Identification of the Poor-A Progressive Problem. - 11. The Word Poor in the Meditations For Sundays and Feasts. -12. The Chapter of Renewal 1966-67 and the Word Poor. - 13. Some Remarks Towards a Conclusion: 13.1. The Contemporary Emphasis of the Church on the Service of the Poor as Fundamental Option. 13.2. La Salle's Inclusive Option. 13.3. Use of Scientific and Historical Methods. - 14. Conclusion.

1. INTRODUCTION

"The Definition of the poor, such as it was understood under the *Ancien Régime*, is very wide. The poor person is he who suffers, who is humble, afflicted, who has fallen into misfortune. In a more restricted view, he is a person who finds himself in 'need', who has only his work to provide him with a livelihood, who for want of savings, has preoccupation with his daily needs. The poor man is not entirely without resources; he may have his work tools, even a little put aside" (*Lexique Historique de la France de l'Ancien Régime*, p. 248).

Within the school, the principal ministry of this Institute from its very beginning, there has always been a special concern for the poorest among its pupils. However, the earliest formulas of consecration and the primitive Rules spoke not of vowed "service of the poor" but of "*conducting schools gratuitously*" (RC 1705). Similarly, the first chapter of the Rules of 1705 which all the biographers attribute to John Baptist de La Salle describes the end of the Institute as being to give "a Christian education to children" (RC chp. 1 art 4). In this initial use in the Rules the word children is

not modified in any way. The same can be said of the Bull of 1725 whose wording was presumably very much influenced by Brother Timothy, the Second Superior General, and the other principal Brothers of the period who had been close to La Salle. It is only by way of modification that the Bull employs the word "poor".

In 1727 Canon J.B. Blain was commissioned by Brother Timothy to write the life of the Founder and to sketch the providential history of the Institute as it emerged under his guidance. It is clear that the major theme that the author is attempting to emphasize in chronicling these events is that La Salle, under God's inspiration, was seeking through gratuitous schools to break the vicious cycle of poverty, abandon and ignorance that vitiated the society of his day. A consequence of this situation was that children, particularly those of artisans and the poor "were unable to live well and hence were far from salvation" (Bull. *In Apostolicae Dignitatis Solio*). In establishing the Christian Schools "he did not wish to exclude the families of any of the categories of the poor that others might devise nor indeed the children of

those who might be defined as rich or in easy circumstances" (CL 8 34ff). As Blain further says, "For De La Salle the danger was too great of taking on the role of a judge, something he believed he had no right to do and which he could not indeed do fairly" (CL 8 36). Hence the importance for La Salle and his Brothers of the principle of gratuity for it enabled them to maintain schools open to all children and so to convert into a reality the expressed objective of their Institute: "The end of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children and it is for this purpose that they keep schools so that children being under the care of the masters from morning till evening, these masters may teach them to live well by instructing them in the mysteries of our religion while inspiring them with Christian maxims and so giving them an education which is suited to them" (RC 1705 chp. 1 art. 4). Brother Yves Poutet would seem to be strongly supporting this interpretation of La Salle's intention when he writes in *Lasalliana*: "La Salle absolutely refused to follow the demands of custom which would have made his schools into ghettos reserved for the poor. This was a radical innovation because it made the least cultivated pupils come into frequent contact with the more favoured orders of pupils who had come to profit by the exemplary value of his schools" (*Lasalliana* 09-A-44. 1.6.86).

2. WHO WERE THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR?

Brother Maurice Hermans in a brief study (1971) entitled THE POOR TO WHOM SAINT JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE AND THE FIRST BROTHERS DEDICATED THEMSELVES has this to say: "It goes without saying that one must remember certain associations or contents. Thus it is, for example, that art. 3 of the 1st Chapter of the Rules where it is a question of the CHILDREN, is not to be put in opposition to arts. 4, 5 and 6 of the same chapter which speak explicitly of ARTISANS AND THE POOR, and even CHILDREN OF ARTISANS AND THE POOR (Hermans p. 6). It will appear all the same significant that the first word to which the author of Rules has recourse is a term of general impor-

tance or bearing: "The end of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children..." It is also very instructive to observe, as Hermans notes: "that the Rules which use the expression CHILDREN OF ARTISANS AND THE POOR so little, use about ten other times the word CHILDREN and sixty one times the word "ecolier" (schoolboy, pupil, student). (Hermans op. cit. p. 6).

Brother Hermans also remarks that it is probably not without significance that the Meditations for the Times of Retreat give their preference to the terms, child, children, (more than eighty times) and DISCIPLES (between twenty five and thirty times), the related term PUPIL being used four times. The word POOR (singular or plural), whether used substantively or qualitatively, occurs rather rarely (Hermans op. cit. p. 6).

The simplest explanation for this varying terminology is that La Salle and the early Brothers used these terms interchangeably because all the children who came to them, with few exceptions, could be classed as poor. Thus whether they were thinking of the children of labourers, of workers in the simplest mechanical arts (artisans) or of shopkeepers; they saw them all as belonging to the world of the poor. In fact as will be evidenced from testimony from the late 17th and early 18th centuries, the majority of the French population could be appropriately described as poor and its lower echelons as indigent (*miserable*). As is also noted elsewhere, for the common people, this poverty was more or less intermittent and for many the economic situation was one of insecurity rather than of permanent poverty or destitution. (POUIET- PUNGIER, *Un éducateur aux prises avec la société de son temps*, p. 29). This distinction is also made clear by Blain when he analyses the categories of poor in the Brothers' Schools in Paris in the first decade of the 18th C. (CL 8, 9).

3. HOW CAN THE DICTIONARIES OF THE 17th CENTURY HELP US?

What reality, indeed, did these words express in the last years of the 17th C. when La Salle was reluctantly becoming involved in the business of the schools?

Furetière's *Dictionnaire Universel* (2nd. ed.) published in 1701 begins its definition of the word poor, as the person "Who has no resources; who is in distress; who does not have the necessities to sustain life or maintain his status". He goes on to say that there is a Poor Board in Paris; a tax is levied on the bourgeois for the poor; collections are made in parishes for the poor; that there are Commissioners for the Poor; that *Hôpitaux Généraux* have been established to incarcerate the poor who were previously a threat to life as they begged alms. He also refers to the PAUVRES HONTEUX, a category mentioned by Blain as identifying the parents of some poor, people of respectable family who suffer greatly without daring to make their situation known" (CL 8, 9).

Furetière's dictionary makes no distinction between the French words ATSE and RICHE defined as: "He who has plenty of resources, who has an abundance of all things; who is rich in money, in rents, in lands, and honours".

Poutet and Pungier, referring to Richelet's dictionary of 1680 indicate that there was effectively little difference in economic status between artisans and the poor (Poutet-Pungier op. cit. 9.29). We may therefore, for our purposes here, virtually consider the terms to be synonymous. At least it may be said that many artisans lived in a near permanent state of insecurity and were in regular need of assistance. They were among La Salle's poor (See Theme: Artisans; Bedel ED 275/8; Hermans DC 401/ 17 D3).

4. THE TESTIMONY OF SOCIAL HISTORIANS

4.1. The situation in the 16th and 17th centuries

Who then belonged to the world of the poor in La Salle's time. Paul Christophe in his study *LES PAUVRES ET LA PAUVRETE* quoting Jean-Pierre Gutton offers an answer: "For the 16th and 17th centuries, those who were prone to become poor could be considered as poor, that is to say, labourers who had nothing but their strength of limb to support themselves and who had no reserves, a situation which pretty well characterised the common people in general (P. Christophe p. 7).

Further, he comments, that in the towns many craftsmen in a small way lived on the verge of destitution. These included: shoemakers, door-men, innkeepers, launderers, water-carriers, etc. What is really difficult to do, he adds is to separate difficulty from poverty, and poverty from indigence, beggary and vagabondage. He again quotes Jean-Pierre Gutton's view: "From poverty to beggary is a difference only of degree and not of nature" (J.P. GUTTON, *La Société et les Pauvres*. Quoted Christophe op. cit. p. 9).

4.2. Comparative Meanings

Poutet-Pungier help us to make a comparison with our own day: "According to present day criteria, people would be authentically poor who could not afford the minimum requirements of workers who have to be satisfied with SMIG (Subsistence wage). But in the 17th C. lack of basics was general. The great majority of the French population would have to be classed as poor; from beggars to craftsmen, to small shopkeepers and even to some degree rural nobility. However, the standard usage of the period does not see the matter in these terms. It distinguishes the poor from those in distress. It is not lack of basics which characterises the poor but the insecurity of tomorrow (Poutet-Pungier op. cit. p. 29).

Was the question of insecurity uppermost in the mind of the concerned Bourgeois, La Salle, when in his *Meditations of the Times of Retreat* he comments: "Consider that it is only too common for the artisans and the poor to allow their children to live on their own, roaming all over as if they had no home, until they are able to be put to some work. Their parents have no concern to send their children to school because they are too poor to pay teachers, or else they have to go out to look for work and leave their children to fend for themselves" (MR 194.1). Here La Salle speaking for himself identifies two categories of poor. Those whose money is so limited that they have none to pay teachers, and those who have the money but do not have the time or energy to see to their children's schooling because they have to give their attention to finding jobs that will keep the money coming into the home. La Salle outlines

further his perception of the poor whose children he was called to serve in a similar passage in another of these meditations: "One of the main duties of fathers and mothers is to bring up their children in a Christian manner and to teach them their religion. But most parents are not sufficiently enlightened in these matters (poverty of knowledge); some are taken up with their material needs and the support of their family; others, under constant concern of earning the necessities of life for themselves and their children, cannot take the time to teach their children their duties as Christians" (MR 193.2).

We need to take this question of constant concern and insecurity further in order to clarify our understanding of the word poor in the world today in comparison with its meaning for La Salle. It must not be assumed that the two are identical.

4.3. Further Distinctions in Meaning

In order to attempt this identification, a further initial clarification must be made. Even from an objective point of view the word POOR does not have the same referent throughout the world today. Starting from the widest perspective a distinction must be made between what the word means in a developed or First World country, and what it means in developing or Third World society. In the typical First World society the population generally falls into three categories: A relatively very small affluent group, a relatively large middle income group, and a relatively small deprived group. Within each of these three categories there is a corresponding economic range.

So, for instance, for the typical North American, French, Australian, Dutch, Spanish or English Brother or his colleague, the poor are a relatively small portion of the population. In economic terms one speaks of the poverty line and of those who live below the poverty line. In addition, in the typical developed country, there are those people who for a variety of reasons such as chronic illness, alcoholism or drug addiction are at the very bottom of the economic scale and may be classed as indigent. To these today must be added the street-kids (Cf. Poutet-Pungier op. cit, p. 29).

The indigent (miserables) of today may be entirely dependent on social welfare or charity. They are sometimes, in more emotive terms, referred to as THE POOREST OF THE POOR. This group of people is still to be found in societies where there is a comprehensive system of social welfare. For various reasons they are not able to avail themselves effectively of even the readily available welfare and charity resources.

On the other hand in the typical developing or Third World country the situation is quite different. There may be a relatively small affluent class, a similarly small though more numerous comfortable middle group and finally a very large group living at subsistence level. Such societies normally lack an official social welfare system. Maternity allowances, sickness and disability benefits and age pensions are non-existent. Lack of basic education and hygiene, recurrent famine and internecine conflict assure that a large proportion of the population lives in abject poverty. Such are the poor for many Brothers in parts of Africa, Asia and South America. It would seem that the majority of those who would be classed as POOR in those societies would have to be considered as INDIGENT in the terminology of developed countries. Considering what has already been said of the conditions of France in the 17th C. it would appear that we are closer here to a helpful contrast of relative economic conditions. We are also less likely to arrive at the naive conclusion that our use of the word POOR and theirs was identical.

Would La Salle have recognized the categories of Paul Christophe, of Jean-Pierre Gutton, of Jean Pungier and Yves Poutet? Since we cannot arrive at the answer from La Salle himself, we need to look elsewhere. His first biographers, among them men who were close to him and knew his mind, do have something specific to say on this matter. One of these is Canon Jean Baptiste Blain, his close friend and ecclesiastic superior of the Brothers at St. Yon, who outlived him by thirty years and wrote while many of the Founder's contemporaries were still living. These Brothers were quite ready to challenge perceived distortions in Blain's work which they certainly did on several issues (CL 8. Appendix Letter to Superior General).

5. THE TESTIMONY OF BLAIN

To seek some answers to this question let us plunge into a situation of conflict for the embryonic Institute in the Paris of the years 1704-1706 and join Blain as he writes: "So that in future the Writing Masters might not cause any more troubles in the schools, De La Chetardye sent Abbe Gergy, his Vicar at this time and today his successor as Parish Priest of Saint Sulpice, to investigate the financial standing of pupils' families. The pious priest spent several weeks doing so and drew up a list of the student's ages, names and addresses. The Brothers were told to admit only those who presented a note signed by a priest from the Community of Saint Sulpice designated by the Pastor to verify the financial status of the childrens' parents" (CL 8, 7).

It is important for us to remember that La Salle was adamantly opposed, according to Blain, to this prying into the private affairs of the families of the pupils flocking to the schools. Blain's claim is confirmed by the continuing troubles La Salle had with the Writing Masters. However, at this time, the alternative was the closure of the schools and so he reluctantly agreed to the issuing of certificates of poverty: "Fathers and mothers were thus obliged to come from all over the parish to secure a ticket, which was like a key which opened the doors of the gratuitous schools for their children. The procedure disarmed the Writing Masters completely and deprived them of any pretext for further harassment. It protected the Brothers and their schools and brought peace and quiet back to them. Yet they did not lose a single student. The classes were-filled as usual, and no child who asked for admission was turned away. The great number of pupils was a fresh source of displeasure for the Parisian schoolmasters, but it would no longer excuse them for causing further trouble. The issuing of tickets which protected the schools from any invidious visitations was, when all was said and done, nothing but a pure formality; for the same students whose supposedly easy circumstances had provided a pretext for the lawsuits filed by the Writing Masters came back to the Brothers with their tickets duly signed, since the Priest in charge felt that in conscience he could not refuse them. Better informed than the Writing

Masters' imagination, he did not feel justified in classifying as RICH those who had a little money but also had large families, who owned well-stocked stores but owed more than they owned" (CL 8, 43).

A surface reading of these passages would lead to the conclusion that there was a considerable portion of students of families IN EASY CIRCUMSTANCES in the gratuitous schools of the parish of Saint Sulpice. This conclusion, however, would not accord with the remark Blain makes in an earlier chapter regarding similar problems in the Faubourg Saint Antoine: That in a hundred poor children who frequented the Christian Schools three or four might belong to families in easy circumstances (CL 8, 7). The key to this problem is, perhaps, to be found in determining the distinction Blain is making between families in POOR and families in EASY circumstances.

6. BLAIN AND THE LANGUAGE OF THE 17th CENTURY

There are numerous passages that could be cited to indicate that there is considerable difficulty in interpreting just what is meant in Blain, in Bernard, and indeed in the texts of La Salle, when the terms POOR, IN EASY CIRCUMSTANCES and THE RICH, are used. Light, however, is thrown on the problem when we look at the evidence as to the meaning of the words at the turn of the 17th C. as indicated above from Furetiere's *Dictionnaire Universel* of 1690. It would seem that in Blain also the two later expressions are used interchangeably and, further, that he employs no intermediate terms between RICH and POOR. In other words RICH as used by Blain and also possibly by La Salle embraces those described as IN EASY CIRCUMSTANCES: "They shall show equal affection for all their pupils but more so for those who are poor than for those who are rich because they are more entrusted by their Institute with the care of the former than of the latter" (RC 1705 3.13). Yet these would come from families little removed from those described as POOR. This word in turn, as has been indicated above, covers a wide spectrum from MISERABLE to those embraced by the word INSECURE. In fact,

it seems not unreasonable to conclude that those pupils described by Blain and La Salle as RICHE or AISE were only so, by contrast, and were, economically, from families, as is said above not far from those described as POOR.

In their study *Les Français et L'Ancien Règime*, Goubert and Roche identify an intermediate group LES MÉDIOCRES (the in-betweens). "Aux confins de l'indépendance économique se trouvaient *les médiocres*. *Médiocres* au sens classique, c'est-à-dire moyens, ainsi appelait-on avant 1750 les gens qui n'étaient ni "AISÉS" ni "PAUVRES" (Roche op. cit. p. 167). The term *mediocre* does not appear to be used by Blain. This perhaps is understandable when we consider the order of society from which both Blain and La Salle came. The interchangeable use of the terms RICH and THOSE IN EASY CIRCUMSTANCES thus becomes clearer when the terminology is clearly situated in the period and the context to which it belongs. The period was one in which society was divided virtually into three categories: a very small category of very wealthy people: some noble, some bourgeois; a second and still proportionally small group of moderately well-to-do-people: some noble, some bourgeois; and finally the vast majority of the people, POOR in a sense that is somewhat different from the poor in our day (see Pungier-Poutet comment above) but again composed of all ORDERS of society.

Blain himself offers us some help in situating the social and economic status of the families to whom he is referring.

He is commenting on the conflict between La Salle and the Writing Masters in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine in 1704 and suggests several factors La Salle could have pointed out to defend himself against the accusations of the Writings Masters that he was receiving into the gratuitous schools children of parents who were RICH or Well-OFF:

"How often do the walls of a house disguise seriously straightened circumstances which remain unknown to the public? How many indigent people suffer in secret the hardships of poverty while having a reputation of being well-off?"

That the fact that some people are called surgeons, masons, butchers, locksmiths, wine merchants and so on does not imply that all of them are in fact in easy circumstances (d'être a leur

aise); many poor people exercise these roles.

That some of those (listed as wealthy) might have large families to provide for, something that soon exhausts the resources of those who live by a trade or have only limited income.

That everyday illness, business reverses and other misfortunes bring to the poorhouse (l'Hopital) people who belong to all these professions, and who moreover are both skilled and diligent workers" (CD 9, 9).

Blain then poses a very practical question and in doing so he claims that he is faithfully recording the Founder's own dilemma: "Who has the right to inventory the possessions of a child's parents to prove whether they are in poverty or in easy circumstances... Was it his business to decide on the poverty or wealth of their parents? ... must the child who seems wealthy and who often enough is not at all so... choose an ignorant teacher (or have none at all) because his parents are not on the list of paupers duly recognised by the State?" (CD 8, 4)

As a closer examination is made of the meaning of these words we can better appreciate the dilemma of the Brothers in Paris of 1704-1706 and the frustration of parents at the behaviour of the Writing Masters who could not or would not understand the insecurity of their lot. Their great desire was to have their children's future bettered by an education that had been denied them by the social circumstances of the past and by the absence of schools such as La Salle was pioneering. These schools established an indispensable link between instruction in the faith and the teaching of basics. In due course the "Conduct of Schools" was to suggest that parents torn between the desire for their children's betterment and the urge to have them contribute to the family income should be put under pressure to leave them in school. The means proposed was that they should be deprived of parish assistance if they contributed to the absence of their children from school.

Blain, and perhaps it is not rash to accept that he was reflecting the mind of his friend, La Salle as he claims, expresses very sensitively an understanding of the world of the poor in the above quoted passages. Blain is certainly speaking out of a rather wide interpretation of the meaning of the word POOR and it would seem reasonable to conclude both from his actual comments and the theoretical

definitions of the word that La Salle in using it is thinking of a quite wide range of people as had been remarked above. Caboudin and Viard would seem to corroborate this interpretation in their comment on the word POVERTY in the *Lexique Historique de la France de L'Ancien Régime*: "The definition of the poor, such as it was understood under the *Ancien Régime*, is very wide. The poor person is he who suffers, who is humble, who has fallen into misfortune. In a restricted view, he is a person who finds himself in "need", who has only his work to provide him with a livelihood, who for want of savings, has preoccupation with his daily needs. The poor man is not entirely without put aside" (Op. cit. p. 248).

7. A DISTINCTION BETWEEN PAUVRES AND MISÉRABLES

In seeking to identify the POOR as La Salle knew them a closer look needs to be taken at the group known as the MISÉRABLES (the indigent).

The truly MISÉRABLES among the population of Paris, Reims, Rouen were to be found in the *Hôpitaux Généraux*. These people could no longer cope with life at all and the were forceably incarcerated in these centres. Adrien Nyel had devoted his life to teaching these people in the children's section of the *Hôpital* at Rouen. Why did not La Salle devote his life to founding a group of dedicated school masters to work in these centres? Consider the temporary residence of one group of Brothers in the *Hôpital* at Rouen (CL 8, p. 21). If his call had been to work with the most indigent among the poor then it would seem, perhaps, logical that the *Hôpital* would have been the place to direct his zeal. Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that his work was not to be concentrated on alleviating the situation of those who had failed totally to cope with the situation of the day. His aim was perhaps rather to establish an association of men whose task it would be to break the vicious cycle of poverty, vice and ignorance which resulted in the peopling of the *Hôpitaux généraux* of Paris and the other cities of France. His work was to be, in the first place, remedial not palliative. It was also to be universal.

In this regard it is perhaps significant to note the Memoir that the Brothers of Rouen wrote to La Salle when exhausted by attempting to combine the work of the four city POOR SCHOOLS with the demanding tasks of the Hôpital. They remarked in the Memoir that the good of the POOR required that they withdraw from the Hôpital. The quote is again from Blain: "In this document the Brothers brought out clearly how necessary it was to get them out of the *Hôpital*, where the spirit of their Institute ran as much risk as did their health. The advantage of the poor as well as their own required it" (CL 8, 24).

Blain concludes his discussion of this crisis with the remark that the conditions imposed on the Brothers working in the four city Charity Schools were such that the Board seemed to consider that "the Brothers should have been happy to pay for the privilege of serving the poor" (CL 8, 29). Is Blain perhaps making a distinction between the MISÉRABLES in the *Hôpital* and the POOR in the four city schools? Even though we may not presume so, the comparison cannot be without significance.

Brother Maurice Hermans has a number of reflections on the options that appeared open to La Salle in his efforts to establish the Christian Schools. In regard to the episode in the *Hôpital General* of Rouen he concludes rather tentatively: "A second option: the Charity schools and not the *Hôpitaux*. In Rouen, the Brothers' responsibility, from 1705-1707 was for the poor children in the *Hôpital General*. Then they withdrew to conduct the Charity schools of the four parishes of the city. If the *Hôpital General* was abandoned, it was above all, it seems, because of the very multiplicity and difficulty of the services that were demanded from the Brothers outside of the school and education properly speaking" (Hermans op. cit., p. 12).

8. THE OPTION OF THE HOPITAL GENERAL

As has been commented elsewhere La Salle gave no indication of perceiving his ministry as being one directed towards the schools of the *Hôpitaux Généraux*, the schools of the miserables (the indigent, the marginalised). Rather, in Rouen as

has been noted, he directed his hopes towards the schools that had been under Nyel's care within the town. Interestingly, Blain reflecting perhaps La Salle's language as he does elsewhere, refers to the children of the four town schools as the POOR. In fact the whole incident of the arrival of La Salle and the Brothers in Rouen in May 1705 as recorded in Blain is very enlightening in this regard (CL -, 24ff). The willingness of La Salle to accept responsibilities for the Brothers at the *Hôpital* seems to have been motivated by the desire to have the Brothers in charge of the Charity schools of the city which had been under Nyel's direction: "He had always wanted to have the schools which had been Nyel's and had thought that heaven intended him to have them" (CL 8, 24).

9. THE MOST ABANDONED

In attempting to arrive at the meaning of the word POOR as La Salle used it one must question references in some Institute literature to his ministry as having been addressed to the "most abandoned". Such a contention is exposed in the light of the historical facts as provided by the first Biographers. Further, it must be noted that the expression "most abandoned" in La Salle's very limited use of that term always means abandoned in so far as knowledge and practice of the faith is concerned:

"You should look upon the children whom you are called upon to instruct as poor, abandoned orphans, for although most of them have a father alive, they are as if they had not, being abandoned to themselves as far as the salvation of their souls is concerned" (MD 37.3). Such a passage taken in conjunction with many other instances pointed out in this analysis must suggest, at least caution, in any tendency to interpret narrowly "the scope of La Salle's Charity" and to confine it to a particular group (CD 8, 36).

10. IDENTIFICATION OF THE POOR A PROGRESSIVE PROBLEM

Between 1680 and 1685 the infant Society was confined to Reims and its immediate environs.

When La Salle, born into affluence, and still enjoying the security of a rich inheritance dialogues with the masters and identifies the beneficiaries of their ministry as the POOR there is no ambiguity for us as to whom he is referring. We know without doubt that he as a man of status, wealth and influence was speaking of the majority of the citizens of his native town.

Between 1685 and 1688, the Society of Brothers was still limited to its place of origin, and the families using the schools were still drawn from the same clearly identifiable parochial groups. During that period La Salle had distributed the bulk of his patrimony to the starving population of Reims. At this stage of his life, although he was now speaking, in a certain sense in solidarity with the majority of his fellow citizens, we could not claim as Blain does, that he was now completely divested of human resources (CD 7, 214ff). He was still assured of a roof over his head. He has, as Brother Bernard records retained sufficient patrimony to produce the annual equivalent of a master's stipend. His situation was not then and was never to be that of the insecurity of the masses. This may be confidently stated regardless of what enthusiastic hagiographers assert. All through his life he controlled funds and property as the multiplicity of documentation unearthed by Brother Aroz attests and one of the concerns of his brother, Canon Louis de La Salle was that he should not die without assuring that these funds be properly distributed and these properties retained by the Brothers. L. 133A)

After 1688, when the Society expanded to Paris and then to Rouen and beyond, the economic status of those flocking to the schools became more diverse as Blain attests. This question has been addressed at length above. Yet it is safe to conclude, if only on the limited evidence that has been gathered, that from the viewpoint of solid bourgeois such as Blain and La Salle himself, it was perfectly logical and accurate to refer to the clientele of the schools as children of ARTISANS AND THE POOR even though the economic status of many was quite removed from those at the bottom of the continuum of poverty, the miserables. Thus Brother Maurice Hermans, although in accord with the general term POOR to describe the clientele of the schools, can legitimately con-

elude "A lire la Conduite, il semble qu'on puisse dire, qu'à côté des pauvres dont la présence est certaine, il y a place à l'école des Frères de 1705 pour des enfants de familles qui n'étaient pas dans l'indigence. L'écolier dont il est si souvent question semble appartenir, le plus ordinairement, à une famille en état d'acheter les livres classiques et quelques autres fournitures; à une famille qui n'a pas à mendier son pain, et peut l'assurer quotidiennement; à une famille qui serait peut-être même tentée de mettre quelque argent à la disposition des siens" (Hermans op. cit. p. 10). Once again, however, it needs to be stressed that the vast majority of the population of the towns of France, as also of the rural areas which concerned La Salle less, could rightly be described as POOR according to usage and the dictionary definitions of the time.

It follows that when Saint John Baptist de La Salle is quoted in contemporary contexts today, the greatest care must be taken not to presume, or not by default of explanation, to give the impression that the word the POOR, among other key Lasallian words, embraces today the same group of people as it did in La Salle's time and context. Even more importantly it must be made clear that a text addressed to groups of people scattered throughout the world and living in diverse cultures and various economic conditions, must be understood in its historic context.

11. THE WORD POOR IN THE MEDITATIONS FOR SUNDAYS AND FEASTS

It does not need to be stressed that the word POOR is frequently used in the meditations for Sundays and Feasts. Most often the references concern the love which Jesus Christ and the Saints had for the poor. In the meditation for the feast of St. Nicholas, La Salle reminds the Brothers: "Vous êtes dans l'obligation d'instruire les enfants des pauvres;... les regardant comme les membres de Jesus Christ et comme ses bien-aimés. La foi dont vous devez être animés, vous doit faire honorer Jésus-Christ en leurs personnes, et vous doit les faire préférer aux plus riches de la terre" (MF 80.3).

This and multiple similar references are inten-

ded to motivate and confirm the Brothers in their mission. In so far as the meaning of the word POOR is concerned there is no reason why it should be interpreted otherwise than has been the case in this analysis. However, it needs to be remembered that words have their own weighting from one literary genre to another. Here, La Salle's intention is spiritual and exhortative. Hence the usage can be expected to be less precise and more emotive. Consider for example the often quoted passage from the meditation for Christmas. "Nous sommes de pauvres frères, oubliés et peu considérés des gens du monde; il n'y a que les pauvres qui nous viennent chercher" (MF 86.2). What is La Salle saying? Apart from the fact that the position of the adjective *pauvre* in French leaves the passage open to several interpretations, a simple examination of the context would caution against a too literal interpretation.

La Salle, who always made the opening of a school conditional on an assured though modest stipend; who according to the testimony of Brother Bernard had made provision for his own support through retaining sufficient personal property to produce the annual equivalent of a master's stipend, as mentioned above; and who, on his death bed, at the request of his brother signed legal documents to hand over properties which he had gradually acquired to give some security to the Institute; would surely not, in the context of this meditation have been claiming identity with the most needy. La Salle had good reason to be aware that in the eyes of "worldlings" the Brothers who had embraced the cause of the masses (the artisans and the poor), were *pauvres frères*, that is "Brothers of no account", just as those they served in the schools were "*pauvres enfants*", that is, children of no account. La Salle is perhaps simply telling the community at St. Yon, in the emotive context of the celebration of the birth of Christ, that as they are in the eyes of worldlings "Brothers of no account" who have devoted their lives to "children of no account" then they can have no better model than the infant lying in the manger who in the eyes of the census crowd at Bethlehem is a "child of no account" the first-born of a "simple artisan's wife" also a "-person of no account".

12. THE CHAPTER OF RENEWAL 1966-67 AND THE WORD POOR

The Chapter of Renewal 1966-67 considered it appropriate to modify the text of the vow formula which until then had been in essence identical with the formulae of 1694 and 1726. Prior to presenting the modified text to the capitulants and moving to definitive adoption, its formulators presented a long and closely argued paper aimed at assuring the capitulants that the phrase "the service of the poor through education" was a faithful representation of the intention of the Founder and the first Brothers as expressed in the former wording "to keep schools gratuitously"; noting, of course, that due allowance had to be made for changed circumstances and due consideration given to the action of successive Popes in granting indulgences to the Institute in this regard.

In the light of our present study the key point to underline would seem to be that this consonance hinges on the interpretation of the word POOR. As has been stated and hopefully illustrated La Salle's aim was to open the world of education to the POOR rather than exclude any group from his schools. Hence the emphasis on gratuity. Once again what must be avoided is giving too restricted an interpretation to the word POOR. As has been stated in so many different contexts, La Salle and the first Brothers understood it to refer to the vast majority of the common people and to include, but not to be limited to, those at the bottom of the economic scale. We must note too that its exact referent will vary in different countries depending on the economic structures of national populations. It would seem to some Brothers that the present formulation requires so much explanation that it does not represent a satisfactory final solution to the problem.

13. SOME REMARKS TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

13.1. The Contemporary Emphasis of the Church on the Service of the Poor as "Fundamental Option"

It seems clear that especially since 1966 the In-

stitute has been placing a great deal of emphasis on the "Service of the Poor" and stating that this "preferential option" is "in fidelity to the express intention of the Founder" (Declaration chp. 6. art. 1). There is a danger that this "preferential option" may move de facto towards an "exclusive option". Clearly this emphasis has been a genuine response to the Church's own "fundamental option for the poor" as articulated in so many contemporary papal statements.

In his study *Les Pauvres et la Pauvreté* Paul Christophe refers to the "priority option of the Church for the Poor" taken by the Bishops of Latin America at the conferences of Medellin and Puebla. This clear option was a response to the allocutions of Pope John Paul II during his South American visit:

"The choice for the poor is preferential not exclusive. The Gospel is proclaimed from a stance of solidarity with the poor. This point of departure allows the Gospel to be announced to all. In solidarity with the poor, the Church can evangelise the rich whose hearts are attached to riches by converting them and liberating them from this slavery and from self-centeredness" (Paul Christophe op. cit. p. 178).

13.2. La Salle's Inclusive Vision

As has been stated La Salle's vision was an inclusive one. His plan was to open, especially to the children of the poor, access to the knowledge of God and to a dignified life through instruction and education. The means he chose to attain this objective was the Christian School. An "essential" element of this school was its "gratuity" which was to assure that access to it was possible for all, but in particular for the children of the poor (RC 1.1). The Founder aimed at opening the school to this order of children rather than closing it off to the children of the "aises" or the "riches". As Yves Poutet states, it would be a complete misinterpretation of his intention to say that La Salle established schools reserved for the POOR (*Lasalliana* 09-A-44 1.6.86). He is speaking here of the word POOR in both its historical meaning and its contemporary meanings.

13.3. Use of Scientific and historical methods

The above comments are not intended in any way to deny that La Salle brought together the teachers and subsequently founded the Christian Schools with the specific intention of making instruction and education available, especially to the poor as the Bull states.

But to understand what the word POOR meant to La Salle and the first Brothers we must use historical methods; it is totally misleading to simply presume that when today (three hundred years removed from La Salle and in an economically diverse world) we use the word POOR, that the word designates the same groups of people as it did for him and the first Brothers in the limited confines of Reims, Paris, Rouen and eventually twenty-two cities of France. This is particularly true when there is a tendency in the Institute to omit all reference to ARTISANS. It seems necessary to ask whether it is not a distortion to imply by omission or otherwise, that La Salle's vision was limited to the service of one particular group. Priority certainly he and the first Brothers gave to the service of the POOR but his option, to use a contemporary insight, was "fundamental but not exclusive". Fidelity to the initial intention of the Founder as, step by step, he co-operated in the establishment of God's work (*Opus Tuum*) as he conceived it, demands a serious effort to relate an historical context to our more complex and diverse social and economic situation. Words are a key to understanding. They must not be used loosely.

14. CONCLUSION

Let us conclude by allowing Blain to speak once more on behalf of La Salle:

"People thought that in founding the Christian Schools de La Salle had in view the instruction of the children of the poor exclusively, since the children of the affluent could afford to pay for their education. But that notion, apparently so equitable, was at bottom pernicious, because it provided those with selfish motives a specious pretext to interfere constantly and to cause trouble in the gratuitous schools..., de La Salle discerned the trap that they were setting for him in advancing a principle apparently so reasonable. He had never agreed to it and rightly so, for it would have set limits to his charity... Are not all children within their rights when they request gratuitous instruction in schools open to the public... must the child who seems wealthy... and often enough is not so at all... choose an ignorant teacher just because his parents are not on the list of paupers duly recognised by the state?" (CL 8, 36)

Finally, let us remind ourselves, as we come to the end of our attempt to answer our initial question, of the caution Brother Hermans makes at the end of his analysis. "If the poor were not the only ones to benefit from the Christian School it was they who in the first place justified, and therefore continue to justify, its existence" (Hermans op. cit. p. 14). As an ultimate caution it must be stated again that it would be rash, in the light of this analysis, not to give the term POOR, as La Salle understood it, a wider rather than a narrower span of reference as he himself so clearly appears to have done.

Complementary themes:

Artisans; Child; Christian; Church; Conduct; Education; Faith; Gratuity; Instruction; Ministry; Mission; Parents; Rule; Salvation; Vows; Zeal.

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50. REFLECTION

Summary:

1. General presentation of the reflection (in French: *la réflexion*). 1.1. The Five Reflections. - 2. In the *Catéchisme de Montpellier*. - 3. Other references in the writings of the Founder. 3.1. *La Conduite des Écoles*. 3.2. The Rule of 1718. - 4. The word *réflexion* itself. - 5. *Réflexion* and *examen*. - 6. Relationship to other emphases of De La Salle's writings and practices. 6.1. Content. 6.2. The maxims of the Gospel. - 7. Touching hearts. - 8. Development of the tradition in the Institute. 8.1. The *Conduite des Écoles* for 1838. 8.2. The Reflection in General Chapters and Circulars. 8.3. The development of Collections of Reflections. -9. Some concluding remarks.

Bro. Gerard RUMMERY

1. The Reflection, in French = la Réflexion, is an integral part of the daily programme of the Christian schools founded by John Baptist de La Salle. The earliest reference is to be found in the text of the *Exercises of Piety carried out every day in the Christian School*, Cahier Lasallien No. 19, p8-9:

*"He who begins the prayers, reads every day the five points of the following **reflections (sic)**, and after reading them, repeats the points to be explained by the Teacher for this day. When there are five school days in the week, he repeats the first point on the first day, the second point on the second day and so on for the others. When there are only four school days, he begins by repeating the second point, and when there are only three school days in the week, he does not repeat the first two points but begins with the third"* (ibid, p 8).

1.1. The five reflections themselves are preceded by the following remark.

"In order to put oneself into a disposition of not falling into sin today, it is necessary to make a number of reflections and good resolutions".

The text of the **five reflections** follows immediately.

1.1.1. *We should consider that this day has been given to us only in order for us to work for our salvation.*

1.1.2. *We should be attentive to the possibility that this will be the last day of our lives.*

1.1.3. *We should take a firm resolution to pass this whole day in serving God fervently so as to win eternal life.*

1.1.4. *We should prefer to die rather than offend God today through sin.*

1.1.5. *We should reflect on the faults which we ordinarily commit, foresee the occasions which cause us to fall, and take the means to avoid them.*

2. The text and the general orientation of these five reflections bears a strong resemblance to a passage to be found in the **Catéchisme de Montpellier (1702)** attributed to Charles-Joachim Colbert (Vol. 2, page 225 Prayers), which reads as follows:

Let us consider that this day has been given for us to work for our salvation; that this day will be, perhaps, the last day of our lives; that death will surprise

us when we are not thinking about it. Let us take care not to fall into the faults we committed yesterday. Let us concern ourselves with God often during the day. Let us not pass a single day without some pious reading which instructs us appropriately in our duties, or edifies us. Let us raise our hearts to God from time to time by short but fervent aspirations. Let us flee from idleness and every other sin. Finally, let us live a full and regulated life which conforms us to that of Jesus Christ, our Head and Model, so that we come in this way to eternal life, (page cxtii).

The original language of this text, when compared with that given in CL 18 pp 8-9, leaves little doubt that they are variations of the same text, or that both are drawn from a common original source.

In the resolutions of the General Chapter of 1745, there are two which affirm the Brothers' intention to avoid any Jansenist contamination. As one general precaution, the Chapter prescribes that each house should obtain the two-volume listing of all Jansenist literature. As a second, more specific direction, the Chapter prescribes:

"No further use will be made in our houses of the Catechism of Montpellier by Colbert, since it contains Jansenist propositions".

How curious then that the **five original reflections** (dating from 1702 in the earliest Archive edition) should have escaped this censure. They are certainly tinged with a strong moral pessimism, tending towards Jansenism. Was this an oversight, or does it suggest that the **Exercices de Piété** and the Montpellier Catechism were drawn from another, common source, as already suggested? Frere Gilles Beudet (Sources FEC Vol. 4 No. 4, p 5 1981) suggests that the texts are practically identical in content when they are set out and compared (op. cit).

3. OTHER REFERENCES IN THE WRITINGS OF THE FOUNDER

There are explicit references to the practice of the reflection in other writings which we can attribute to John Baptist de La Salle, viz. the **Conduite des Écoles** and the **Rule of 1718**.

3.1. Conduite des Écoles (CL 24)

There are three references in Chapter VII Art II

page 77, where the practice is explained in terms similar to the already quoted reference to the **Exercices de Piété**.

*"1. There are five reflections in the morning prayer, for the five days of the week. They will be read every day, making a slight pause between each one. The pupil who recites the prayer, after reading them all, repeats the one to which particular attention is to be given on that day. Then there will be a pause for about the space of a **Miserere**, during which the teacher will offer a short reflection to the pupils on the topic, adapted to their understanding.*

2. The five reflections are thus repeated in order and each one serves as a subject for exhortation, one following the other, on each of the five days on which school is held.

3. If there is a feast in the week on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, on the two days on which school is held, the teacher will speak on the subject of the first two reflections and on the Thursday, the third topic. If the feast is on Friday or Saturday, the teacher will speak on the subject of the fourth reflection on Thursday, and, on whatever day there is no feast, on the fifth topic. If there are two feasts in the week, he will for that reason not make the first reflection, and if there are three feasts, he will omit the first two reflections".

On Page 123, in words which echo directly the 1718 Rule in a reference to the **silence of the teacher**, we read:

" The teacher will speak aloud only on three occasions: first, when he has to correct a pupil because none of the pupils can do so; second, when he teaches catechism; third, during the reflections and examinations of conscience".

3.2. The Rule of 1718

This text, which does not appear in the Rule of 1705, seems to find its place in the Rule of 1718 along with other aspects transposed from the **Conduite**.

"This is why they will speak only on three occasions... 3) in the reflections which every Brother should make during the prayers, morning and evening, and then they will speak only in a moderate tone" (CL 25, p43).

4. THE WORD "REFLEXION" ITSELF

According to the Dictionary of 1772 (Le Grand Vocabulaire François, Paris, M.DCC. LXII pp. 338-40) the word is related to the Latin word *meditatio*:

"The action of the spirit which reflects, serious meditation, deep reflection about something".

The noun and the verb *réfléchir* were in common usage at the time of the Founder who uses both expressions with their present sense.

5. REFLEXION AND EXAMEN

It is clear in the Founder's mind that there is an important link between the reflections which follow the morning prayer and the examination of conscience which was an integral part of the afternoon prayers, before the dismissal of the classes. Writing of this *examen*, De La Salle says:

"This examination of conscience is divided into four parts, and each part or article into 5 points" (CL 24, 77).

There is, however, meant to be an integral link with the same points as those for the reflections which follow the morning prayer, as the text clearly indicates:

"As regards the five points of the article to be read during the week, the same order and the same practices as indicated with regard to the five reflections for morning prayer, are to be kept" (CL 24, 77).

It is not easy to make a close connection between the articles of the afternoon examen and the five reflections of the morning, except in the most general terms. The afternoon examen concentrates on the kind of faults into which children are most likely to fall by neglect of their ordinary duties to parents, teachers or to one another, and differs substantially with the preparation for the Sacrament of Penance (CL 17). Perhaps the general relationship is that the experienced teacher could bring the general points of the original reflections to bear upon a particular, practical focus in the life of the child at school, as for example a vice to be avoided, a virtue to be practised. Another possibility is that the teacher, who had spent the whole day with the same children, could remind his

pupils during the afternoon prayers of the particular point of reflection which he had given them in the morning.

6. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER EMPHASES OF DE LA SALLE'S WRITINGS AND PRACTICES

Although there seems to be only one explicit reference to the reflection as such in the Meditations of the Founder, there is a strong inner coherence between the **content** and **daily frequency** of the reflection and other emphases to be found in De La Salle's writings and school practices.

6.1. **The content** of the original five reflections is a reminder of his concern for children whom he saw as "far from salvation". Prolonged reflections on the need to work for salvation, on the shortness of life and the unexpectedness of death, the importance of serving God and not offending him, the cultivation of greater awareness of the common ways of offending against God's law, are all reminders of De La Salle's insistence in the Rule of 1705 of how difficult it is to repair the habitual faults of the young at a later age. Among the many references which could be cited in this regard, the most appropriate would be articles 3, 4 and 6 of the Rule of 1705 as given in CL 25 pp. 16-17:

"The end of this institute is to give a Christian education to children and it is for this purpose that schools are maintained where teachers, having these children under their care from morning until evening, can teach them to lead good lives by instructing them in the mysteries of our holy religion, by inspiring them with Christian maxims, and so offer them a suitable education" (3).

"... It is necessary that there be persons who substitute for the fathers and mothers in order to instruct these children as they need to be in the mysteries of religion and in the principles of a Christian life" (4).

"...As the principal fruit to be expected from the institution of the Christian schools is to forestall these disorders and prevent their evil consequences, it is easy to judge their importance and their necessity" (6).

6.2. De La Salle's insistence on the importance of teaching children the *maxims of the Gospel* can be found in many of his writings. The third point of the Meditation 91, for the end of the year, for example, raises a number of points with regard to the duty of the teacher towards his pupils, which remind us of aspects of the reflection, to which he explicitly refers:

*"Do (your pupils) know their religion? If they are ignorant of it, or know it only imperfectly, is not this your fault? Have you been careful to teach them the maxims and practices of the holy Gospel and have them practise them? Have you suggested to them some practices suitable to their state and age? AH these ways of instructing them should of ten have been the subject of your **reflections** and you should have studied to succeed in doing this".*

7. There is also an important connection between the subject matter of the reflection and De La Salle's insistence on "touching hearts". If the teacher is to be restrained in his speaking with his pupils it is so that when he does speak, he will be listened to more attentively. The emphasis on careful preparation of the reflection suggests that it was to be one of the important moments of the day when heart spoke to hearts (cf. "touching hearts", especially the following references from the Meditations for Sundays and Feasts: 33:2; 43:3; 44:2; 65:2; 79:2; 81:2; 144:1).

This sensitivity to the quality of what we would call today the **relationship** with the pupils is found in a reference to a special feature of the catechism lessons for Sundays and feasts (Conduite Ch. 16 Art. iii, in CL 24, 102):

"On Sundays and holy days, when the Catechism lasts three times as long as on the other days, he will always choose some story that the pupils will enjoy and tell it to them in a way that will please them and renew their attention. He will tell it with details that will prevent them from being bored".

Was this a natural corollary from that special relationship of speaking in faith which marked the reflection?

8. DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRADITION IN THE INSTITUTE

The reflection is one of those foundational Lasallian practices which was expanded from its original form during the development of the Institute. Some of the main lines of this development can be suggested, even though there are significant gaps in the documentation available to follow its development in every detail.

The original form and content of the five reflections must have become irksome as the schools kept children for a much longer period of time. While it is true that the truths contained in the original reflections are in themselves perennial, nevertheless the coming of the boarding schools in the 18th century and the development of many secondary schools in the nineteenth century must have pushed the Brothers to allow their tradition to evolve beyond the original limits of content.

There is already some hint of this when the Chapter of 1787, for example, recognises that the Brothers are bound to teach the catechism of the diocese in which they are working and follow the prayers prescribed by this catechism, but at the same time insists on maintaining the reflection:

"The prayers of the diocese where the Brothers are established will be recited instead of those ordinarily recited in the schools, but without cutting out the morning reflections and the evening examination of conscience" (Chapter of 1787, Art. 38, page 107).

8.1. The first reference to an enlarged sequence of reflections appears to be in the revised edition of the **Conduite des Écoles** for 1838 (Ch. XIX art. ii) which states:

"The book of the Exercises of Piety in use in the Christian Schools contains a sequence of reflections (sic) on the principal duties of a Christian. They are divided into five articles which serve as the topic for exhortations for a month. Each article contains five reflections, one for each school day of the week".

Frère Gilles Beaudet (Sources F.E.C. Vol. 4

No. 3 p. 2) notes however that the **Exercices de Piété** printed in Rouen as a supplement to the Duties of a Christian in 1845, does not contain the newer form found in the edition cited above. Unfortunately, since the Rome Archives does not contain any copy of the **Exercices de Piété** printed between 1762 and 1885, we cannot be any clearer on this point. But from the text which follows, it seems likely that an enlarged series was already in general usage by 1838. Here follows the full text of the relevant section.

ARTICLE II.

Concerning the Reflections in the morning prayer & the examens of the evening

*The book of the Exercises of Piety in use in the Christian Schools contains a sequence of reflections on the principal duties of a Christian. They are divided into five articles so as to serve as topics for exhortations for a month. Each article contains five reflections, one for each school day of the week. Every day at the morning prayer, the reflection corresponding to the day will be read, and the teacher will explain it during the time needed for a good **Miserere**, making the children aware of their obligations in this matter and suggesting the means and resolutions which they should take to carry out these duties faithfully.*

There are also for the evening an equal number of articles and reflections which should be read in the same manner. They have a certain resemblance to the corresponding ones of the morning, so that they can serve as a subject of examination on the way the day has been spent, and the accomplishment of the resolutions taken in this regard during the morning. In this way, during each month the children will have their principal duties presented to them, as well as the most usual faults common to their age-group. This can be of great benefit to them, especially if it leads them to develop the good habit of foreseeing each morning the faults they are most likely to commit during the day, and to examine themselves in the evening on the resolutions they had taken. It is in these short exhortations that a teacher, who appreciates the incalculable value of a soul, should show his zeal for winning to God

those who are confided to him. He will, then, be careful always to prepare what he has to say, so that, being convinced of it himself, he can state it with more conviction and in a more persuasive manner.

The evolution, not only in the number of topics for consideration, but in the broader view of the Christian life is quite striking. This would appear to be a development, very much in harmony with the continual updating of the **Conduite des Ecoles** as the Brothers saw the need for new or changed emphases (The series for the five weeks is in annex without further comment).

Note that there are only three topics assigned for this 5th week, giving some 23 topics for each month.

8.2. The reflection in General Chapters and Circulars

Besides the General Chapter referred to earlier, other General Chapters have referred to the practice of the Reflection and encouraged the Brothers to maintain it. Thus, the General Chapter of 1853 (Resolution XII), specifies that "*school will end in the morning at 10.50 with the recitation of a decade of the Rosary. This decade will be followed by the Reflection, after which a Pater and Ave will be said*".

The General Chapter of 1884, reflecting the growing lack of uniformity possible in the Institute, makes the following remark:

"Reflections vary according to circumstances. When feast-days are approaching, the teacher will speak of the aspects relating to the feast, such as the ceremonies to take place, attendance, processions and any special matters relating to the feast. On Confession days, there will be consideration of the dispositions necessary for the sacrament of penance. On Communion days, the teacher will give a reminder about acts of faith, humility, adoration and thanksgiving, which will serve equally well for preparation as for thanksgiving" (Circular 33, pp. 30-31).

In Circular 197 (6th January 1915), Brother Imier de Jesus reminds the Institute of the three forms of religious teaching carried out by the Brothers viz. the catechism lesson, the exhortation or reflection, and the explanation of the Gospel. Speaking of the reflection, he remarks:

"The ideal of the daily exhortation or reflection is

to enlighten the conscience about moral principles, move the will to carry out firm resolutions, and, if possible, satisfy the taste of the listeners with well-balanced and serious words. The reflection is a powerful means of formation" (Circ. 197, pp. 35-36). Other references to the reflection can be found in Circulars 107 pp. 120, 127, and in no. 346, page 18).

8.3. The development of Collections of Reflections

It seems natural that this enlarged number of topics for reflections led to the collection and subsequent publication of **Collections of Reflections**. By the late 1870's, there are already examples in France and Canada (and only a few years later in the U.S.A. in an English adaptation), printed copies of collections of reflections to respond to the five weeks programme.

In the 20th century, there appears to develop a much greater freedom in the choice of the topics for reflection. There are many different examples of collections made by individual Brothers or published for general use.

After a period of relative eclipse in many countries after the Second World War, interest in the Lasallian tradition has once again seen the recovery of the tradition in France. Copies of reflections are prepared for each school month and circulated to Lasallian schools and communities from a central point.

9. SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

There are strong reasons of a pastoral nature for the recovery of this tradition of the reflection, spoken from the heart of the teacher to the hearts of the pupils. It represents a particular aspect of that "touching hearts" which has characterised the work of John Baptist de La Salle and his Brothers. The development of the tradition by successive generations of Brothers is one of the best indices of the value of the initial perception of **De La Salle** and his first followers.

The reflection is consistent with so many emphases in Lasallian writings, especially the concern frequently expressed by De La Salle that the Brother's work needs a deep spirit of faith, of zeal, of prayer, and a willingness to speak in faith dur-

ing the privileged moments of the reflection. This was one of the consistent perceptions of the Brothers from the District of Torino, who replied to a questionnaire on the Reflection, in the pages of *Rivista Lasalliana* in 1934. For many, the reflection was linked necessarily with the meditation made by the Brother himself. The reflection was his moment to share with his pupils the fruit of his own contemplation.

Allow Brother Imier de Jesus to have the last word:

"This short exhortation requires a meditated preparation as well as prayer. ...The reflection is certainly not a dissertation on a religious topic: it is a cordial and intimate chat by a 'man of God' on a question of piety. You could say that it is a way of taking the spiritual temperature of the one who gives it" (Circular 197, page 36).

ANNEX

CONSIDERATIONS FOR EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK

Let us make some reflections and resolutions in order to pass this day without sin

FIRST WEEK

1st day. Let us consider that God has created us to know, love, and serve him.

2nd day. Let us consider that God is everywhere present, that he sees all things, and that he knows even our most secret thoughts.

3rd day. Let us consider that Jesus Christ is not only our Redeemer, but also our Model in the practice of virtue.

4th day. Let us consider that our hearts should be the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost, whom we have received in baptism.

5th day. Let us consider that by baptism we became children of God the Father, members of Jesus Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost.

SECOND WEEK

1st day. Let us consider that we are obliged to observe faithfully the commandments of God, and that we should be resolved to die rather than to transgress them.

2nd day. Let us consider that we are bound to obey the Church, and to observe her commandments, because she speaks to us on the part of God.

3rd day. Let us consider that we should have great respect for religion and its practices, for holy things, and for persons consecrated to God.

4th day. Let us consider that, God having revealed the truths of religion, we ought therefore to believe them, and live according to them.

5th day. Let us consider that a great means of sanctification is to have a sincere devotion towards the Most Blessed Virgin, our guardian angels, and our holy patrons.

THIRD WEEK

1st day. Let us consider how important it is to accustom ourselves to live holily from our earliest years.

2nd day. Let us consider what are the defects into which we usually fall, and let us take efficacious means to avoid them.

3rd day. Let us consider how great is the goodness of God, who, notwithstanding our sins, loves us, does good to us, and wishes to save us.

4th day. Let us consider that whatever is temporal will soon pass away, and that the real goods are virtue and grace, which alone can procure for us the happiness of heaven.

5th day. Let us consider that scandal is a dangerous

sin, and that we ought to avoid it, and edify one another.

FOURTH WEEK

1st day. Let us consider that we can do nothing without grace; we ought, therefore, often to pray to obtain it.

2nd day. Let us consider that we ought always to watch, that we may not be surprised by the enemies of our salvation.

3rd day. Let us reflect that nothing is more deplorable than the condition of those who live in the state of mortal sin.

4th day. Let us resolve to serve God well, and to fulfil our duties faithfully.

5th day. Let us dispose ourselves too die rather than offend God.

FIFTH WEEK

1st day. Let us ask the advantages of a death in the state of grace.

2nd day. Let us reflect on the misfortunes that follow a death in mortal sin.

3rd day. Let us consider that, with the grace of God, which need never be wanting to us, we may live like saints, and die happily, if we take the necessary means.

Bro. Gerard RUMMERY

51. RENUNCIATION / DETACHMENT

Summary:

Introduction. -1. What the Founder's life teaches us. 1.1. He leaves his family. 1.2. He gives up his canonry and his property. 1.3. Suffering and abandonment to God. 1.4. Self-renunciation to make place for God. -2. His writings. 2.1. He gives up worldly pleasures. 2.2. He renounces the devil and sin. 2.3. Self-abnegation which renders possible...: 2.3.1. prayer. 2.3.2. the practice of obedience. 2.3.3. the pursuit of perfection. 2.3.4. a life of faith. 2.4. He renounces everything. 2.5. in order to think only of God and his duties of state. 2.6. The bond of fraternal communion. - 3. Conclusion: To prepare for death; the evangelical paradox: to die in order to live.

INTRODUCTION

The words "abnegation" or "renunciation" and "detachment" bring to mind automatically the words of Jesus in the Gospel: "If anyone wants to come after me, let him renounce himself, take up his cross and follow me" (Mt 16,14; Mk 8,34); "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will attach himself to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Money". (Mt 6,24; Lk 16,13) abnegation and detachment are conditions without which following and serving the Lord are out of the question. In the Gospel, people follow Jesus and attach themselves to him because they love him with all their heart, with all their soul and with all their energies; this presupposes the renunciation of all that is not him and does not lead to him, all that may constitute an obstacle to the flourishing in one's person and in the world of the values of the Kingdom which he preaches. The life of the saints is in one way or another, an illustration of this Gospel truth: in order to draw close to the Lord, it is necessary for him to take over the

whole of one's life. Through his writings and life, John Baptist de La Salle reminds us in his own way, as a spiritual director, of this same truth.

1. WHAT HIS LIFE TEACHES US

Let us start by listening to him:

"If I only had believed that the care I was taking of the schoolteachers out of pure charity would eventually have forced me to live with them, I would have given it up; for as I naturally considered inferior to my valet those who especially at the beginning I was obliged to employ in the school, the very thought that I would have to live with them, would have seemed unbearable to me" (BLAIN 1, 169).

This is the confession which he makes in the *Memoire des Commencements* such as Blain wrote it down in his biography.¹ It makes one imagine the renunciations John Baptist de La Salle had to endure to place himself in the service of this "work of God" which was the foundation of the Institute. Between the young canon aged 28 who met

Nyel in the community of the Sisters of the Child Jesus in 1679 and the person whom the Brothers loved to call "Monsieur notre très cher Père", 40 years later, a long path of renunciation had been trodden; there was the slow work of the Holy Spirit leading the Founder from commitment to commitment, from renunciation to renunciation, from voluntary deprivation to voluntary deprivation, to make him adhere more fully to His will and thus participate in his plan of salvation.

1.1. "If anyone comes to me without preferring me to his father, or mother... brothers and sisters... he cannot be my disciple" (Lk 14,26). John Baptist de La Salle had to leave his family. That, as one may imagine, was not an easy job. The events that took place and their sequence are well known: we are in Rheims: from 1680 to 1681, JBS invites to his home, for meals, the newly recruited teachers, in order to be able to follow them up; on June 24, 1681, he welcomes them and lodges them in his own family house; on June 24, 1682, he leaves his father's house and starts living with them in a house rented for that purpose.

The reactions of the family and the family circle are also well known: as a result of this initiative of the young canon, his family will deprive him of the guardianship of his younger brothers and sisters (guardianship which he exercised since the death of his father in 1672, which was interrupted for a short time and then resumed), two of his brothers left him in 1681. His family's complaint: "They blamed him for having blemished the family's reputation, for having stained his own blood, and for having degraded himself by admitting strangers to his table; for rendering himself ridiculous by not making any distinction between them and his own brothers... and finally they said that he shunned the company of educated people and that hence it was no longer considered proper to be seen in his company" (BLAIN 1, 176).

In this way, JBS was giving up a world to allow another to take possession of him; he leaves a world, his own, to become embodied in another, that of the masters; he dissociates himself in a certain way from his social environment, that of the middle-class of Rheims, to associate himself with the world of the working-class, the poor and people of no consequence.

1.2. "Whoever does not give up all his possessions cannot be my disciple..." (Lk 14.33).

The eldest son of a well-to-do-family — his father was a magistrate of noble lineage — John Baptist de La Salle owned a patrimony which guaranteed his future. As a Canon of the Cathedral of Rheims, he possessed a prebendal benefice and, above all, he enjoyed a very high status in the Church.

The canon and the son of a rich family introduces himself to the teachers to exhort them to practise the spirit of complete trust in Providence through the renunciation of earthly goods and a filial confidence in their Father in Heaven (CL 7, 187). According to Father P. Rayez, (p. 7), John Baptist de La Salle is incontestably "one of the best representatives of the doctrine of self-abnegation in the 17th and 18th centuries". It is the spirit he wishes to inculcate in the teachers, who are now his disciples. He thinks he would do well to exhort them by words quoted from the Gospel (cf Mt 6,25-34). He will learn at his own expense, that only the authentic witness — whose words correspond to a lived experience — can touch hearts: "It is easy to speak of the spirit of self-abnegation when one lacks nothing, as is your case!", retorted the teachers.

Uttered to dispute a point or by way of provocation, these words urge JBS to examine how far he can practise self-abnegation if he wishes to share the life and destiny of the teachers to implement the mission God asked them to do together.

And, what happened to his canonry? He renounces it on August 16th 1683, in favour of a poor unknown priest instead of a member of his family — his brother for example — as it could have been expected.

His patrimony? He sells it to obtain enough bread for the unfortunate victims of the winter famine of 1683-1684, and not to found his budding Institute as the teachers hoped he would. He will never go against the principle imparted to him by Father Barré; the schools you founded would melt away (a pun between FONDER: to found and FONDRE: to melt) if they were not founded solely on Providence".

All that was not easy, of course. De La Salle needed to reflect considerably, to pray and to seek help from spiritual advisors in order to discern

which decision to take. That is the price a Founder has to pay to obtain the grace of founding an Institute. He says that much himself:

"God who does everything wisely and gently, and who is not accustomed to force the will of men, desiring to make me commit myself to take over completely the management of the schools, did it in an imperceptible manner and over a long period of time; so that, one commitment led to another, without my having been aware of it from the start" (BLAIN 1, 169).

1.3. "If anyone comes to me without preferring me... to his own life, he cannot be my disciple. He who does not carry his cross and walk after me cannot be my disciple" (LK 14, 26-27).

God's conduct towards JBS was aimed precisely at leading him from one commitment to another, from one renunciation to another, as far as he could go: when he left his home, he had also to give up his property and his canonry.

If God required of him all that, it was to invite him to a more radical and more drastic renunciation: self-renunciation. The rest of his life proves it. In fact, the life of the Founder has been a kenosis itinerary; at very precise times, God will require of him new ways of surpassing himself, in moments of "perplexity".

This happened for example in 1691. His work seemed to have taken off beautifully, then...: many Brothers left the Institute, the seminary for country schoolteachers created in Rheims several years previously disappeared; the Paris seminary for the little Brothers as well ceased to exist; court cases were started against him by the Master-Writers of Paris (cf. BLAIN 1, 292-302); Brother Henri L'Heureux whom he was training for the priesthood died unexpectedly (id. 397-311); the untimely meddling of the parish priest of St. Sulpice threatened seriously the identity of the new Institute: at the end of 1690, JBS succumbs to an illness, like so many Brothers suffering from overwork.

As one may see, the cascade of misfortunes is very impressive and liable to wear out the dynamism of JBS who is now 40 years old.

"That is the sad situation in which the pious founder finds himself at the end of 1690, after so many sacrifices, so many troubles and so much hard work, so many crosses and persecutions, so many

semblances of success, he finds himself in about the same situation that prevailed ten years ago, with few Brothers, having made hardly any progress and afraid lest he sees it perish" (BLAIN 1, 312).

Under these circumstances in which God seems to abandon his own handiwork, JBS, full of faith and hope, abandons himself totally to Him, through a perpetual vow of association and union with two other Brothers, Gabriel Drolin and Nicolas Vuyart, "to procure with all their power and all their dedication the establishment of the society of the Christian Schools, in the manner which will seem most agreeable and advantageous to the said society... without any human consideration whatsoever". This is the heroic vow of November 21, 1691.

And that is not the end of the tunnel yet! In Paris, the masters of the little schools and the master-writers do not cool down, they start one court case after another against JBS and the Brothers, from 1702 onwards. The schools are closed in 1706 because of the harshness of their attacks. In this crisis, De La Salle loses the support of the parish priest of St. Sulpice; his "enemies" attack on all sides. He must in the end look for solitude in the Monastery of the Carmelites, in Paris, to pray and reflect; he begins to experience "doubts". In 1711, according to Maillefer, his reputation is put in jeopardy ("Clement affair" cf. CL 6, 201); he is condemned without the service of a lawyer.

It may be said that at that moment, JBS does not enjoy any longer the trust and esteem of the public authority (because of the court cases) nor of the Church authorities (he is accused before the Archbishop of Paris of being unable to govern the Institute), nor of some of his own Brothers (some of whom would like to impose another type of government of the Institute).

To that must be added the doctrinal quarrels of the period: some wished to get JBS compromised with the Jansenists, others with the Quietists. His inflexibility and firmness to hold on to the Roman Faith cost him the loss of his protectors' backing in these difficult times.

Hence, the "doubts" referred to by his biographers:

"These doubts are not the pure product of a subjective illusion. They are embedded in a historical pro-

cess in which he notes that his efforts at strengthening the Brothers, by educating them in order to hold together the gratuitous schools, constitutes at present an obstacle for the Society of the Christian schools. He therefore wonders whether his presence is not hindering the development and the growth of God's work. He also asks himself how consistent is his role, we could perhaps say, his personal charism within the community" (M. Campos, *Itinéraire évangélique de S. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle et le recours à l'Écriture dans ses "Méditations pour le temps de la Retraite"*. - *Contribution à l'étude sur les fondements évangéliques de la vie religieuse*, CL 45, p. 296).

This is the situation of JBS at 61 years of age, 33 of which were consecrated to this undertaking of the schools which today seems to rob him of everything, including his reputation. He then left Paris, went to Provence and disappeared in this way from the company of the Brothers. "Events seem to tell him that God no longer wants him among the Brothers" (M. Campos op. cit. p. 299). He feels strongly that he has been forsaken by his friends, his Brothers and by God himself. He had known other difficult situations in the past, but this time his interior confusion was without compare. Let us listen to Blain:

"We have already said many times how attractive was for him the intimate commerce with God... In his sufferings and work, it is there that he looked for solace and rest. But at that time this holy exercise was transformed into a dry and arid land... His soul no longer tasted the divine sweetness... God spoke no longer to him and left him in total darkness" (BLAIN 2. CL 8. p. 96).

All these trials were for JBS a source of spiritual enrichment. From his sufferings, his dereliction and deprivation, he learnt the meaning of obedience. Through the interior darkness and exterior contradiction, he learnt the meaning of the Gospel message: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Lk 9,23-23).

He has now experienced the fragility of man. He can convince himself that the setting up of the Society is not HIS doing, but GOD's who alone is able to bring it to fruition. The undertaking is not human, it is divine. In the foundation of the Institute, it is God who is at work, he "who desires that all men be saved" (I Tm 2.4) and who has re-

solved to give them the means to do so. However, he acts in a disconcerting manner sometimes when he upsets men's plans and projects. JBS acknowledges this:

"It is God's normal procedure to upset the designs of men and to allow that the opposite of what they planned, occurs, so that they may learn to trust in him, to abandon themselves entirely to his Providence, and not undertake anything by themselves, because they must plan to do only what he wants" (BLAIN 2, p. 266).

Finally, a single desire guides, directs and determines JBS in all these self-renunciations and deprivations which God imposes on him, the desire to correspond, through faith, to the will of God which is directing him. If he has given up his canonry and his patrimony, if he accepts without an interior rebellion the sacrifice of this satisfaction and of the legitimate joy of seeing his undertaking prosper, it is because he is intimately convinced that he must go through it all, if he is to carry out his God-given task; he will only become a Founder if he does God's will. Like all the Founders, he is "favoured by grace and by tribulations" (A. RAYEZ, *La spiritualité d'abandon chez Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*. Rivista lasalliana, Torino, No. 1. mars 1958, p. 15. Extrait de la Revue d'Ascétique et de mystique, No. 21, janvier-mars 1955). The spirit of faith — for that is what it is all about — was in JBS born like "a flower and a fruit, the way to and end product of renunciation. Having triumphed over his repugnances, deprived of all, he was free henceforth to carry out the divine pleasure. Nothing would stop him now: no external consideration, no personal consideration. Only God would matter" (id. p. 14).

It is in this perspective that No. 8 of the "*Règles que je me suis imposées*" is to be understood (cf. CL 45, 250-287, specially 255-257):

"I will always consider the task of my salvation and the setting up and management of our community as God's handiwork That is why I will entrust the care of it to him in order to do all that will concern me therein only on his orders, and I will ask much advice regarding all that I will have to do, either for the one, or for the other; and I will often say to him these words of the prophet Habakkuk: Domine, opus tuum" (RI No. 8 in BLAIN 2, 318).

1.4. To empty oneself completely in order to make room for God

Jean Tauler, the Rhine mystic of the 14th century, used to say that there were five sorts of slaveries from which men must free themselves in this world. These are: 1. The love of creatures (living or dead); 2. love for oneself. 3. pride in one's own intellect. 4. the search for spiritual consolations. 5. The slavery of one's own will.² He observed: "Man must reach the age of fifty in order to be given the Holy Spirit who will teach him all the Truth". "If you get out of yourself entirely, God will enter into your soul fully. He will fill the vacuum you will leave, no more, no less" (op. cit., p. 15).

Through successive renunciations, JBS has been led, under God's guidance, to free himself from these "slaveries". Entire trust into God's hands is within his reach, this "presupposes in the soul which possesses this gift, death to self, the extinction of passions, the renunciation to any human interest, indifference to all the events of life and perfect resignation to God's good pleasure". (BLAIN 2, p. 257). Resignation, indifference, trust in providence are like the fruits of renunciation. We can easily recognize here JBS' spiritual kinship with Ignatius of Loyola, Francis de Sales, Jeanne de Chantal, Barre. The Saint's last words sum up perfectly his life and spirituality: "I adore in all things the will of God in my regard".

These words are uttered at the end of a 40 year itinerary fraught, as we have seen, with trials of all sorts. They sound true in the mouth of him who utters them, so much so that...

"Any suffering is good so long as it is seen as a gift from God. Our memories have been told poetically about the benefit of suffering, the grace it conceals: Man is an apprentice, suffering is his master, and no one knows himself so long as he has not suffered. Blessed are you, o Lord, who send us suffering as a divine remedy for our impurities. I know that pain is a unique nobility which earth and hell will never be able to destroy". Suffering is an initiation, it is purifying and formative ("Suffering passes, past suffering does not"), revealing, (Graham Green after Leon Bloy: "There are places in our poor heart where pain must enter if they are to exist"), useful and fruitful like childbirth, medicinal as a step towards a recovery. Whoever has experienced with Kierkegaard a bout of suffering which has led him to examine himself, whoever

has made his apprenticeship under the guidance of this tough and just master, is not willing to curse the day when he was born" (X. TILLIETTE, *Sens et non-sens de la douleur*, in *Communio*, XIII, 6 Nov.-Die. 1988, p. 17).

JBS is an educated, chastened, mature man, whom the experience of pain has cured, who receives the letter of the principal Brothers of Paris, Versailles and Saint-Denis drafted on April 1, 1714, ordering him to "take up once more without any delay the general management of the Society". As soon as he sees in this unforeseen event, a sure manifestation of the will of God expressed through that of the Brothers, he journeys back to Paris and makes himself available to the Brothers on August 10, 1714: "Here I am, what is it that you want me to do?".

Can one imagine a greater example of self-abnegation?

2. WHAT WE LEARN FROM HIS TEACHINGS

Abnegation presupposes a certain spiritual climate. This climate results from the high standard of one's relationship with God. In *Da* (CL 20, p. 422), JBS says that prayer "makes one give up worldly pleasures". Everything depends therefore on one's relationship with God. That is why the Desert Fathers liked to repeat: "Mysticism comes before asceticism".

But, on a practical level, what is the Brother invited to give up? He must give up: the world, the devil and sin, himself, everything. And what for? In order to have only in mind God and the duties of his employment and to live in brotherly communion.

2.1. To renounce the world

"You do not belong to the world" (Jn 15,19).

The teaching of the Founder on giving up the world is to be found principally in his Meditations, especially in those for Feast Days. The examples of abnegation which he finds in the life of the saints provide him with opportunities to draw spiritual lessons for the Brothers.

"Have you given up the world?" It is the question that JBS asks his Brothers incessantly (cf. MF

123,2; 143,1; 174,2 ...). He certainly means to tell them that to be authentically "BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS", a name which they adopted in 1684-1686, and to be able to live up to the ministry which is theirs, the Brothers must "relinquish" the world, that is, become true disciples of Jesus Christ.

In the writings of the Founder, to renounce the world, is a synonym of "to live the spirit of one's own state" "to work with God's will in view" (MD 75.1), "to practise and teach the Gospel maxims, which are diametrically contrary to those of the world. The mission of the Christian educator is that of the guardian angel (cf. MR 197 and 198), and consists in getting children to renounce their past life (lived in the bondage of a worldly spirit) to embrace a new way of life (the freedom of the Gospel), committing themselves to stay on the right path (MR 194-195).

When he addresses himself directly to the Brothers, the Founder shows them that the spirit of the world and "the spirit of their state" are two antinomical spirits; and that makes renunciation to the spirit of the world all the more imperative. This is the message he passed on to them in his last exhortations:

"If you wish to persevere and die in your vocation, never have any intercourse with people of the world; for, little by little, you will acquire a taste for their habits and be drawn into conversation with them to such an extent, that you will no longer be able, through policy, to refrain from applauding their language, however, pernicious it may be; this will lead you into unfaithfulness; and being no longer faithful in observing your Rules, you will grow disgusted with your vocation, and finally you will abandon it" (MARC CL 6, 9.257).

2.2. To renounce the devil and sin

In Db and DC, JBS exhorts the Brothers to renounce the devil and sin. "To renounce the devil and sin" is the same as to renounce "the pleasures of the senses and of the flesh", according to St. John's own words: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world" (I Jn2,16). These pleasures are at times called "the pleasures of the world" (Da 422; DC p. 97), at others "the movements of greed and sen-

suality", "the pleasures of life" (MF 166.1) or "the comforts of life" (MF 186.1)

These pleasures are also "earthly possessions", perishable possessions", earthly things, "worldly things" "wealth and all the things of this world", "satisfactions" or simply "creatures" The soul filling itself with God detaches itself from creatures". To relish God and be loved by the poor, it is necessary to renounce the world" (Cf. MF 86,3).

2.3. To renounce self

Abnegation consists in a permanent battle to detach oneself from the world and its frivolities, the devil and sin, in order not to love the world and all that is contrary to the maxims of the Gospel. Thus the soul becomes receptive to the Spirit. But this receptivity will not be real and complete until the self-renunciation takes place. Self-renunciation renders possible genuine prayer, authentic obedience, the assiduous pursuit of perfection, a more intense life of faith.

2.3.1. Prayer (*Mental Prayer*)

Self-renunciation and prayer are closely linked. In the first part of the *Explication de la méthode d'oraison*, besides other ways in which we can place ourselves in the presence of God, there is the invocation of the spirit of Our Lord, "so that we can make our meditation under his guidance, renouncing for this reason our own mind and our own thoughts" (R II). This same idea is to be found further on in the chapter which deals with living in the presence of God through simple attention:

"It sometimes happens to souls which are interiorly disengaged, or even free from any affection for created things, that God grants them the grace to lose, very rarely, or not to lose at all, the presence of God, which is for them an anticipated happiness and a foretaste of heavenly bliss.

But a soul does not ordinarily enjoy this advantage, To do so it must have kept its innocence throughout its lifetime, or have been for a long time faithful to God; if it has been purified, not only of sin and any affection to the least sins, but has stripped itself of its own inclination and any human pursuit, and has *entirely detached itself from that which pleases the senses and the spirit*; if it has become almost insensitive to all these things, and finally if it has no longer

its own will, but that of God, acting in it as the principle of all its actions; this causes it to have as the sole or almost sole object of its application the presence and action of God" (EM 30-31).

2.3.2. *Obedience*

One of the qualities of obedience is simplicity. It can only be acquired if we renounce "all the thoughts which may invade our mind" to question the reasons for an order we have received or how we are going to carry it out (R 29; MD 13,3). There is no real obedience without self-renunciation.

2.3.3. *The search for perfection*

To search for perfection is to live according to the truths, the precepts and the counsels of the Gospels. For this purpose, it is necessary to "renounce self, that is to renounce "one's spirit and one's will and to carry one's daily cross" (MD 5,3). For perfection demands more than renunciation of exterior things "it is necessary to search for perfection interiorly renouncing our passions and personal inclinations" that is what, for example Saint Anthony did in the wilderness after he had given up everything he possessed (cf. MF 97,2). That is also what a religious who has left the world must do. Self-renunciation (renunciation of one's own will, one's own judgement falsified by sin, one's own inclinations) constitutes the means and the way to become interior.

2.3.4. *The faith*

This renunciation must lead to "a love of sensible privations during spiritual exercises". Note carefully: it does not suffice to accept them, one has to "love them". It is necessary to look for God and to go to him essentially through faith and therefore to be able to forgo what appeals to the senses. The Founder explains why:

1. As sensible consolations are given by God merely as an aid to our weakness, He is at liberty to withdraw them at pleasure and assist us in other ways;
2. Because sensible consolations do not surely lead us to God: faith alone does so without danger of deception.
3. Because, when we become attached to sensible consolations, it is our own satisfaction, and not God's that we seek (R. 61).

JBS is in perfect harmony with tradition. It is as if we heard St. John of the Cross saying that visions and ecstasies are not only secondary but potential obstacles to the spiritual life; or the Jesuit Alphonsus Rodriguez (1533-1617) stating that: "These things (visions and other extraordinary phenomena) pose a threat to humility and are not essential to virtue. They should be dreaded and avoided as much as possible"³ or Theresa of Avila who warned against temptation, in the spiritual life, to attach oneself to consolations of God rather than to look for and desire the God of consolations. Spiritual transports and ecstasies are signs of weakness in the soul.

JBS repeats here, with all the masters of the spiritual life, that the «dark night» of the senses and of the mind which leads to a faith that is pure and unadorned requires self-renunciation; whoever wants to be filled with God and by God, must create a vacuum in himself.

2.4. **To renounce all things**

Through renunciation we aim to give up the world, sin, and ourselves. The Founder adds to this list relatives and persons dearest to us (Cf. DC 202) as well as honours (cf. Da 175). It has to be pointed out however that on various occasions the Founder does not mention what the precise object of the renunciation or detachment in question is. He uses a radical, an absolute language: it is necessary to give up "all", "everything"; to detach oneself from "everything". That is the type of language one comes across especially in the MF.

Union with God can only be achieved at this price: total renunciation. "God willingly communicates with men when he finds them free from any attachment" writes JBS in Meditation 171.1 for the feast of St. Bartholomew. On the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, he warns: "The more you detach yourself from creatures, the more you will possess God and his holy love. "It is precisely this desire to possess God which urges a soul to detach itself from everything (cf. 200 supra; MD 35.1; MF 125,3).

God finds his delight solely in a poor heart, "detached from anything profane and earthly" (MF 85,3). Poverty, which is unthinkable without detachment, is the foundation of evangelical per-

fection (c. MF 142,1); it is to be found at the origin of the vocation to the religious life (cf. MF 97,1 on St. Anthony; 180.2 on St. Hilarion; 139 on St. Peter, etc)

To give up all, is not only to renounce everything one has, but even the desire to possess anything (cf. MF 139,1). It is faith that renders such a detachment possible, for it is through faith that we can place ourselves under God's sole protection and abandon oneself entirely to Providence through total renunciation: "Detachment from earthly good betokens a lively faith... This detachment of St. Barnabas obtained for him an abundance of faith" (MF 132,2). Faith leads to renunciation, renunciation nourishes and strengthens faith.

2.5. The teacher thinks only of God and of the duties of his employment

Renunciation leads to union with God, a more lively and active faith, a more perfect practice of obedience, a more filial prayer under the influence of the Spirit, a freer pursuit of perfection. It also procures a much more fruitful apostolate.

References to this here would be far too numerous. The content of MF 134 on St. Barnabas and of MF 86 on the Nativity of Our Lord, set the tone.

"We cannot conceive the good that may be realized in the Church by one who is truly detached. This is because detachment from earthly goods betokens a lively faith, for it means that one abandons oneself to God's Providence unreservedly, like a man who would put to sea without sail or oars. Ask God through the intercession of St. Barnabas, for the spirit of disinterestedness which is so necessary in your profession, and have the proper dispositions to obtain it (MF 134,1).

Here again, we come across the teaching of JBS on poverty. In the beautiful meditation on the Birth of Our Lord, he addresses the Brothers in these vigorous and admirable words:

"Rest assured that so long as you have a sincere love of poverty and for all that is humiliating, you will produce fruit in souls; that the angels of God will make you known and will inspire parents to send you their children to teach; by your instructions you will touch the hearts of these poor boys, and that the majority of them will become good

Christians. But, if, on the contrary, you do not resemble Christ at his birth by these two outstanding virtues, you will be little known and little employed; you will be neither loved nor appreciated by the poor, and you will never be for them a saviour, as your profession requires, for you can attract them to God only in so far as you resemble Jesus at his birth" (MF 86,3).

Poverty is therefore not only an ascetic practice, it is also the necessary means which leads to a resemblance with Jesus and with the poor to whom the Brother is sent:

"Total detachment from earthly goods and from the commodities of life is one of the first requisites if we wish to belong wholly to God and to work for the salvation of souls. It was the first thing Jesus demanded of his Apostles, and they, in their turn, inspired the first Christians with it. If then you wish to be worthy to help in the work of saving souls, disentangle yourself from all earthly things, and the grace of God will be poured down upon you in abundance both for yourself and for others. Say with the author of Genesis: 'Give me these living souls; all the rest you may take for yourself, that is to say, do with the rest as you choose (Gn 14,21). Except for your holy love, everything is indifferent to me" (MF 187.1).

Poverty is therefore, as the Founder says in his meditation for the feast of St. Charles Borromeo, a condition and a guarantee of apostolic fecundity. To be "worthy of working for the salvation of souls», it is necessary to be detached from everything.

2.6. The bond of Brotherly Communion

In his *Memoire des Commencements*, JBS makes an observation: "Since I have left everything, I have not come across anyone who was tempted to leave the Institute because it did not have a solid foundation". His conviction will not change: "Our Brothers will survive so long as they are poor. They will lose the spirit of their state when they strive to provide themselves with the comforts of life" (MAR p. 69). It is the answer he used to give to people in "high places" who offered him important sums of money to open new schools.

JBS got into the habit of "building" the Institute in one block, striving to give it its own peculiar physiognomy, organising it into a living fra-

ternity thanks to the cohesion of its members and the efforts made by all to live in conformity with the aim of their Society.

Community spirit, indispensable in the Institute, is not to be practised only in the local community (the "house" in the language of the Founder), but in the whole Institute as a Body structured in relation to its finality. "To stand by each together" is to work and live to achieve the strongest possible cohesion for this Body. Consequently, what is at stake in renunciation (and in poverty) is nothing more nor less than the very survival of the Institute. Community spirit, vital to the Institute, will be preserved so long as the Brothers are poor:

"Union in a community is a precious gem. For this reason Our Lord recommended it to his Apostles with insistence before his death. When it is lost, all is lost. Hence, if you wish your community to continue to exist, preserve this virtue carefully" (MF 91.2).

3. CONCLUSION

One must be careful to practise "all that leads to detachment from all created things" (R 67). We now understand why, we know why. The detachment we practise must be such that it will pave the way to the ultimate detachment, death; "We should be always ready for death for this is the effect of detachment from earthly things. We find it

hard to die only because it is painful to leave what we love and the things we are attached to. Resolve, therefore, to imitate the Most Blessed Virgin in her total detachment, ask through her intercession for the grace of a happy death" (MF 156.1).

To sum up, renunciation and detachment, words which evoke identical realities, are other names given to asceticism in the Christian life. The Gospel paradox holds that one must die to live, to detach oneself from something or someone, to attach oneself to something or someone, to destroy what one recognizes in oneself as having the power to kill, to free life (it is the meaning of mortification or mortifications). Such is the language which Jesus uses in the Gospel, it is also that of JBS in his life and in his writings, which, as has been seen, are the faithful echo of his own spiritual experience.

¹ BLAIN I, read the whole of Chapter IX: "In spite of the extreme repugnance which M. de La Salle felt in the depth of his being at the thought of having to live in common with people as uncouth as the schoolmasters over whom he had a certain responsibility, charity persuaded him to draw them closer to him, to watch over them and in the end to admit them into his home".

² Cf. J. TAULER, *Aux amis de Dieu*, Cerf, coll. Foi vivante, 1979, p. 64-66,

³ In Hilda GRAEP, *Histoire de la mystique*, Seuil, 1972, p. 236.

Complementary themes:

Abandonment; Consolations; Conversion; Faith; Fidelity; God's work; Mental prayer; Mortification; Poverty; Prayer; Spirit of the world; Spirit of Christianity; Suffering; Union with God; Union with one's Brothers.

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52. RENEWAL: "RENOVATION"

Summary:

1. The repetition of acts. - 2. "Interior renewal": attitudes and spirit. - 3. From "the old man" to "the new man" in the image of Christ.

From the evidence of contemporary dictionaries, the use of the word "renovation" was not common in the Founder's time.¹ In its place the word "renouvellement" was used along with the corresponding verbs — "renouveler" and "se renouveler" - but, in fact, neither of these nouns features often in the writings of the Founder, each appearing only three times even if the verbs are more frequently used. However, the concept of renewal is broader than that indicated by the two nouns — "renovation" and "renouvellement" and, consequently, to have a proper appreciation of De La Salle's concept of renewal it is necessary to consider other complementary ideas such as, for example, "conversion", "the imitation of Christ", "inspiration", "the movement of the Spirit", "evangelical perfection", or "retreat". In order to avoid repetition we will indicate here the meaning which was usually given to these two nouns more directly related to the idea of renewal, presenting three levels which progressively deepen in meaning.

1. THE REPETITION OF ACTS

The first level, which is the most superficial in that it simply expresses a mechanical action, refers to the *repetition of acts*. The multiplication of acts

of piety was a characteristic which was to continue until Vatican II. Clear indications of this can be seen in the "Rules which I have imposed on myself in, for example, numbers 5, 17, 18 and 19. However, it needs to be emphasized that this practice of the repetition of acts was not pursued as an end in itself but rather as a means of focusing attention on God. In other words, its value was in the fact that it was a "means" and nothing more. Thus, for example, in the case of pupils, the frequent remembrance of the presence of God had, as its objective, "to create in them the habit of thinking about God... and disposing them to offer all their actions to him so that these would be blessed by him" (CE 76). In the case of the Brothers, the renewal of the presence of God, as indicated in the Rule, was justified by the fact that they were "to think only of Him and of what He commands..." (RC II, 7) and that it would help them to "acquire the spirit of faith and be directed by it" (R 83) as well as "to perform their actions with God in mind" (R 93).

2. INTERIOR RENEWAL: ATTITUDES

The second level of "renewal" refers to the attitudes or to the "spirit" which moves us interio-

rly. the justification of this second level is given by De La Salle in the "Collection of Short Treatises" where he speaks of "renewal" as one of the "Means which the Brothers of the Christian Schools should adopt in order to perform their actions well": "...The practice of interior renewal is all the more necessary given that, in itself, our nature tends towards carelessness, and that we easily break the best resolutions which we have taken, those which we committed ourselves to on entering God's service..." (R 152). Perhaps in order to understand the insistence of the Founder on the necessity of "interior renewal", proposed in this second level, allusion has to be made to the mentality of the French School with regard to its belief in the radical weakness of human nature² which was strongly influenced by St Augustine but which also had deep Pauline and Johannine roots.

Bearing in mind this tendency of "human nature towards carelessness", De La Salle proposed, for example, the "renewal of the resolutions which we have taken" (Da 301, 325; EM 123; R 230), the "renewal of fervour and of piety" (Dc 67, 104, 111), "our renewal of the grace of Confirmation" (Dc 182) and "the promises of our Baptism" (Dc 200) as well as "the daily renewal of the offering (of ourselves) to God and the consecration of all our actions to him..." (MF 104,2). Moreover, the frequent "examens" and "collections" which he proposed were also directed towards this renewal, as was the annual retreat (R 145-146, 151) and the practice of frequent ejaculatory prayer which "enkindles and sustains the fire of God's love in the *soul* which, from time to time, weakens given the vulnerability of our mind and heart..." (R. 121).

3. FROM "THE OLD MAN" TO "THE NEW MAN" IN THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

This third level touches the most radical meaning of "renewal" which is "to reestablish something to its original state, to revive it, to resurrect it, to make it new", according to the dictionaries previously quoted. This "renewal", given that it refers to new life, involves a death, that of the "old" or the "exterior man": "... As St Paul says, it is necessary that the outer human nature be destroyed in

you so that the inner nature be renewed day by day..." (MD 2,1). As is frequent in De La Salle, the reference to St Paul provides the doctrinal base for this third level which becomes, for the Brother, the renewal of the spirit of his vocation. In this way, in the meditation for 31st December, which is based on the symbolism of the dying year giving way to the new, he asserts: "... Rid yourselves to-day of the old self and put on the New Man, as St Paul exhorts you, and pray to God, as you are encouraged by the same Apostle, that the spirit of your vocation and of your profession will be renewed tomorrow" (MF 92,3). With regard to this interior renewal, the religious habit acts as a sign: "... Search your hearts to see if... in taking on a new habit your heart has been renewed..." (MD 60,1). De La Salle does not suggest the "renewal" of the interior man in the sense of something final but rather as a response to a permanent process since "a heart which is not inspired by a renewed life and by a life of grace" is cut off from "all interior movements of the spirit of God" (MD 32,1).

But man is not the source of interior renewal - it is the Holy Spirit, given as a gift from God and from whom it must be asked. Such a prayer is frequently used by De La Salle as, for example, when he invites the Brothers to "... Frequently repeat these sacred words with the Church: Send forth your Holy Spirit to give new life and to renew the face of the earth..." (MD 42,3; cf. EM 52; E 21: I 180, 183, 203). And in what does interior renewal consist? It consists in nothing more or less than in the following of Jesus. It is the Spirit who produces in us the identification with Christ (cf. MD 22,2) who has "come into this world to renew all things and to change all flesh into spirit" (Da 443). With regard to being "ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ", his "representatives" in our ministry, De La Salle exhorts us to; "... Give yourselves frequently to the Spirit of Our Lord so that what you do is done for Him — absolutely renouncing your own will..." (MR 195,2). This, without doubt, is the corner stone of the spirituality of the French School: "the objective is total communion with Jesus"³ which De La Salle invites the Brothers to express in that proclamation of permanent renewal which is the signal of the Lasallian community: "... Live Jesus in our hearts" (RC XXVII, 1).

This ideal of Christocentric renewal is abundantly clear in De La Salle's work as much with regard to pupils – "Ensure that they often think of Jesus... so that their every breath is in him..." (MF 103,2) – as with the Brothers – "How happy you should be living in a vocation in which, through frequent communion, you can always be with Jesus Christ, united with Him, possessing his spirit and acting only for Him!" (MD 54,3).⁴

¹ Cf. FURETIÈRE, A., *Dictionnaire Universel*, p. 1701. RICHELET, P., *Nouveau Dictionnaire François*, Amsterdam 1709, p. 61. *Dictionnaire Universel François et Latin*, Paris 1721, p. 1175.

² Cf. DEVILLE, R., *L'Ecole française de Spiritualité*, Annexe 2.

³ ID. See BÉRULLE, *Letters*, vol. III, p. 551: *Give your selves totally to the Spirit of Jesus...*, quoted by CAMPOS-SAUVAGE, *AEP.*, p. 209, note 229.

⁴ See the two meditations for Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday where De La Salle encourages us to conform to Christ beginning with his death and resurrection (MD 28 and 29).

Complementary themes:

Action of God; Brother's Dress; Conversion; Disciples; Imitation of Christ; Inspiration (Movements of the Holy Spirit); Jesus Christ; Ministry; Retreat.

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53. RETREAT

Summary:

1. Some preliminary ideas. - 2. Retreat understood as "spiritual exercises". 2.1. In the experience of the Founder. 2.2. Retreats with teachers and "ecclesiastics". 2.3. The objective of a retreat. - 3. Retreat as "withdrawal from the world". 3.1. Retreat and separation from the world. 3.2. Recollection and the experience of God. 3.3. Exterior and interior recollection. 3.4. Recollection and Ministry. 3.5. Dialectic - yes: dichotomy - no. 3.6. Recollection, prayer and mortification. -4. Recollection in the context of community. 4.1. Recollection and community. 4.2. Recollection and community recreation. - 5. Recollection: an element in the spirituality of the whole Lasallian Family.

1. SOME PRELIMINARY IDEAS

In the life and writings of St John Baptist de La Salle we find two complementary ways of understanding and experiencing "retreat" which were consistent with the religious context of his time.¹ *In the first place* it was understood in a limited time context of a few days which broke the routine of daily life. In the history of spirituality this first meaning was given the classical name of the "spiritual exercises". *Its second meaning* was in the context of the permanent withdrawal from the world and was used almost always with reference to Religious and consecrated life. It is necessary to keep in mind *a third meaning* that we find in De La Salle's writings which, in reality, is an aspect of the second referring, as it does, to the context in which this withdrawal occurs and which makes it possible - i.e. the Community. Perhaps it is this third meaning which gives "retreat" its distinctive shade of meaning in Lasallian spirituality.*

2. "RETREAT" UNDERSTOOD AS THE "SPIRITUAL EXERCISES"

2.1. In The experience of the Founder

The making of a retreat, in the sense of the "spiritual exercises",² was a constant practice in the life of John Baptist de La Salle and was, perhaps, inherited from his stay in the seminary of St Suplice.³ The first retreat to which the biographers refer⁴ occurred at the end of his time in that seminary, from the 10th to the 19th of April, 1672, following the death of his father and in the context of his doubts surrounding his priestly vocation. The retreat of 1682 had special importance as, "in a certain way", being "the choice of a state" (CL 480; cf. IB 182), after which he decided to live with, and be like, the teachers. The retreat which took place in Rheims, from the 23rd of May to the 9th of June, 1686, with the "principal Brothers", culminated in the first profession of vows in the

Institute in the form of the vow of obedience which was made for three years.⁵ In August of the same year De La Salle went on retreat to the Carmelite monastery of La Garde-Chatel which served to further clarify the identity of the fledgling community and, in all probability, provided the opportunity for him to draw up his life project in the form of the *Rules which I have imposed on myself which* Blain has passed down to us in their entirety.⁶ In this project De La Salle refers three times to the habitual practice of retreat as a means of regulating and directing his life (n° 10), as a preparation for any important event such as, for example, when he had to travel (n° 11) or with regard to interior renewal (n° 13),

The year 1691 was to be crucial for the Institute and once again a retreat was to be the ideal setting for the making of decisions De La Salle went alone on retreat, probably around Holy Week and Easter, and finalized important specific options with regard to the Brothers. These included the absolute lay-character of their vocation, the development of the interior life of the Brother with the establishment of a Novitiate and the annual retreat during holiday time as means of providing for this, as well as making use of the monthly letter as a means of rendering an account of conduct.⁷ In September of the same year he gathered all the Brothers in Vaugirard when it is probable that the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* (cf. GALLEGRO, S., vol. II, p. 633) had their origin and it was also to mark the institution of the annual retreat for the Brothers. In the following months, until Christmas, those Brothers who had joined within the previous three or four years continued on retreat in what was, in effect, the first attempt to create a Lasallian Novitiate.⁸ In the meantime De La Salle took the decision to commit himself totally to the work that God had confided to him and did so by means of the perpetual profession (or the "Heroic Vow") which he made with Brothers Gabriel Drolin and Nicolas Vuyart on the 21st of Nov., 1691.

The first Assembly, or General Chapter, in 1694 also had its setting in the context of a retreat. The Founder asked each of the Brothers whom he had designated as capitulants to prepare themselves for the event by a personal retreat during the preceding four months.⁹ On Pentecost Sunday, 30th of May, they began together what was a re-

treating and, at the same time, the first General Chapter in which the central theme for study was the official approbation of the Rule.¹⁰ The retreat finished with the first perpetual profession of association, stability and obedience which De La Salle and 12 Brothers made on June 6th 1694.

The critical period between 1712-1714 is sprinkled with long and demanding retreats in his search for light. In April, 1713, De La Salle went on retreat to La Sainte Baume, near Marseille, where he spent Holy Week. From there he went immediately to St Maximin for 40 days of Easter retreat.¹¹ Still in the same year, during this experience of the "dark night", he spent three days on retreat in the month of September in the Carthusian Monastery near Grenoble.¹² At Easter 1714 De La Salle went to the hill of Parmenie¹³ which has become a symbol of the spiritual retreat experience for the Lasallian Institute. At Parmenie De La Salle shared his doubts and experiences with Sister Louise who encouraged him to remain firm in the path which had united him to the Brothers. The biographers highlight the importance of this meeting and the impact it had on De La Salle. Perhaps it was here, or on his return to Grenoble, that he received the letter from the Brothers of Paris requesting him to return and take charge of the Institute.

De La Salle's final long retreat took place after he had been freed from the direction of the Institute when, from October, 1717, he spent five months on retreat in the Parisian seminary of St Nicolas du Chardonnet. What he did on this occasion, rather than the "classical spiritual exercises", was to give free reign to the contemplative life which had always been manifest in him.¹⁴ It was only on the insistence of Brother Barthelemy, Superior General, that he returned to St Yon (2B 155-161; MAR 285-286 - Translation p. 67).

2.2. Retreats with teachers and "ecclesiastics"

The importance of this type of retreat — in the context of a specific spiritual activity — would not be properly appreciated in the Lasallian experience if reference was not made to two other aspects which receive little attention:

(a) The first is mentioned in the *Memoir on the Habit* (1690) and it is De La Salle himself who

tells us that the teachers who had been formed in the "Training College for rural teachers", "... once they had been placed, no longer had any relation with the community other than that demanded by courtesy. However they were received in the community whenever they came to make a retreat" (MH n° 6).

(b) The second aspect complements the above and highlights the quality of De La Salle as a retreat director for others besides the Brothers. It was there in Vaugirard, in the same setting of the Novitiate and the annual retreat of the Brothers, that "various ecclesiastics of exemplary life came to make retreats under the direction of De La Salle. He received everybody who came without distinction" (MAC 70 - translation p. 67).

2.3. The objective of a retreat

From this brief historical review we have been able to discover, through De La Salle's own experience, what was the meaning or objective of this type of retreat. He summarized this in an appreciation made in a letter to Brother Gabriel Drolin: "... It is good to know that you have been on retreat with the aim of rediscovering and increasing the spirit of your vocation and of prayer. I will pray to God that he will grant this to you" (L 27,8). There is, therefore, a double objective:

(a) interior renewal which occurs only in an intense experience of God through prayer;

(b) to discern the will of God in order to carry out the mission which he has entrusted to us; or, along similar lines, to deepen the sense of this mission, "to grow in the spirit of your state".

To facilitate both of these objectives, De La Salle provided the Brothers, in addition to the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* previously quoted, with a series of "Reflections which the Brothers must occasionally make especially during their Retreat" (R 183-231) which takes up the last part of the "Collection of short treatises" and where every aspect of the Brother's life — religious, ministerial, community — is reviewed.

3. "RETREAT" AS "WITHDRAWAL FROM THE WORLD"

De La Salle's concept of "retreat", in the sense of a "permanent form or style of life", is similar to that which existed in ecclesiastical circles of the time and is revealed in the religious literature of the French golden age. There is a general — and, for us today, a striking — insistence on withdrawal from the world which is seen as an essential means of remaining faithful to the Gospel. However, it is not the physical or bodily separation which is indicated as evangelical but rather spiritual detachment. The necessity for this separation is motivated by the fact that the world deprives one of the times which could be better employed in prayer. Further, it dissipates the spirit and prevents one from applying oneself to the duties proper to one's state as well as impeding silence without which it is impossible to listen to God. One finds a biblical image underlying this concept of "retreat" - i.e. the desert. Blain makes use of this term on various occasions to indicate the places of retreat undertaken by De La Salle while the Founder himself uses it repeatedly in his writings. He does not use it in an antisocial sense - i.e. in the sense of a flight from people — but rather in the sense of a religious desert which both leads one to God and then directs one towards people with the aim of converting them. "In the 17th century people saw the three fruits of this form of "retreat" as getting in touch once again with nature, with oneself and with God. It was similarly understood by the spiritual masters but they reversed the order: thus, for them, it was to lose oneself in God so as to know oneself better and to admire how nature conforms itself to Him who is the only Creator".¹⁵

"The teaching of the Founder with regard to "withdrawal" or "recollection", in this sense, is utterly "polarized", if the expression be permitted, by an apostolic concern and could be summarized as follows: to work effectively for the salvation of souls one must remain united to God during apos-

toxic work. In order to do this it is essential to devote certain times exclusively to putting oneself in the presence of God. Recollection has, as its objective, the provision of these appropriate opportunities so that God can really impregnate the solitude. But when the Lord calls to action — in the sense of one "being sent" or "missioned" - one has to leave this retirement out of fidelity to the divine call" (CAL p. 735).

What follows is an outline of the main components of the Lasallian conception of this type of "Recollection":

3.1. "Retreat" and separation from the world

"The withdrawal from the world, even to the extent of contempt for it, which is necessary to apply oneself to God, or to the results of this application, are constant themes in Lasallian teaching" (AEP 166 - French edition). According to the Founder, this is the first condition for giving oneself to God: "... the first step of one who wishes to consecrate himself to God has to be to leave the world with the aim of disposing oneself to battle with it and with all the other enemies of our salvation" (MD 17,1). It is also the condition by which one can know oneself and in that way be able to improve oneself: "... In order to give oneself to God it is also necessary to work to perfect oneself interiorly and to root out passions and evil inclinations. It is through recollection that this good is achieved. In truth, it is not possible to overcome oneself without self-knowledge and it is extremely difficult to come to know oneself in the midst of the world" (MF 97,2). Further, it is also the condition by which one acquires the spirit of our state: "... Given that you have necessity for both of these (i.e. the spirit of God and of zeal) you, too, should seek withdrawal from the world..." (MF 198.2).

In the "Collection" he gives three reasons why it "is necessary to maintain exterior recollection" and shades them with this opposition to the world:

1. Because it removes worldly ideas and ideas about worldly things.
2. Because it removes our liking of creatures, detaches us from them and, in this way, gives us the facility to love God alone.
3. Because he who practices this recollection reaches such a state that he grows weary of the world and of created things..." (R 123).

He is categorical in warning of the dangerous consequences of the deterioration of recollection: "... What ordinarily weakens religious is frequent contact with the world which keeps them apart from the contact that they must have with God. God and the world, the spirit of God and the spirit of the world, are incompatible..." (MF 174,3). He is so sure of this that he does not hesitate to reprimand Brother Gabriel Drolin thus: "...it grieves me that you have found it necessary to mix so much with the world and it doesn't take much for me to see that, because of this, you have become tepid in your piety. Give yourself resolutely once again, I beseech you, to prayer" (L 28,18). Also, in the topics of conversation during recreation, he presents the "world-recollection" in opposition: "maxims... which may inspire an aversion of the world and a love for recollection, for prayer and for the renunciation of all things" (R. 65, VIII). (A fuller explanation of this theme can be found in "The World and relations with the World").

3.2. "Recollection" and the experience of God

The negative aspect of recollection – withdrawal, renunciation – should not lead one to forget its real objective which is eminently positive – i.e. the experience of God: "... Renunciation, detachment, recollection from the world are the necessary responses to an awareness of the significance of his free love and of the exclusive bond which is demanded of the person who experiences his intimacy" (AEP 181 - French edition). "Everything that we do has to be directed to his glory. This has been the sole motive why you left the world since God must be both the inspiration and the end of your actions" (MF 90,3; cf. MD 42,2). For De La Salle this is a necessary step, along with prayer, to achieve this objective: "... Only through recollection and prayer does the soul come to a true transfiguration or, better, to a true transformation of itself and is enlightened by God" (MF 152,3).

It is a necessary step but also an effective step. De La Salle justifies it in the following way: "... Interior recollection in itself, while it is difficult, puts one in the disposition to think of God and of the things of God" (R 124). "... One learns to find God in recollection and to relish his presence by the

facility that one experiences in prayer and for depriving oneself of all contact with the world" (MF 189,2). In explaining the different types of "spiritual deafness" - with reference to Mk 7: 32-37 — he refers to those who "cannot hear God spoken of nor relish his word" and, once again, insists on the solution: "... It is necessary that they withdraw from worldly hustle and bustle since it is only in this type of retirement that they will be able to listen to the voice of God..." (MD 64,1). This experience of God in recollection tends to communicate itself and this is the fruit necessary for the ministry of the Brother: "...When a person has been filled with God in solitude he can then speak boldly and profitably of God..." (MF 100,2).

3.3. Interior and exterior recollection

It would be a great error if one confused the recollection of which De La Salle speaks with simple exterior separation: as he says, "... exterior recollection is of little use if it is not accompanied by interior recollection..." (R 123). The recollection of which he speaks has to be effective — thus, along with the "structure" which constitutes exterior recollection must go detachment, the affective separation from the world: "... Since you have withdrawn from the world you must live absolutely detached of all human inclinations..." (MD 40,1). "... Have you so renounced it (i.e. the world) that you absolutely refrain from thinking of it..." (MF 144,1).

3.4. Recollection and ministry

De La Salle traces an unquestionable link between recollection and ministry in such a way that the latter can only be adequately undertaken if accompanied by recollection as a necessary means. Following the example of the Apostles we make ourselves worthy of our ministry "by recollection and by application to prayer" (MF 102,1). Recollection provides the adequate means of "frequently reading and hearing the Sacred Scriptures" and "to learn the science of salvation from them as well as the holy maxims which, through your profession, you are obliged to practice and to teach to others..." (MF 100,1). "... It is in solitude and silence where one learns to speak well of God

— the greater the desire you have for them the easier it will be for you to fulfil your ministry with your neighbor" (MF 135,1).

Thanks to the fact that, through recollection, the Brother is led to personal conversion, becoming "a new man and a man of God", he can then work for the conversion of others (cf. MF 161,1): "...When a person called to work for the salvation of souls has succeeded, like St. Remigius in solitude, in filling himself with God and his spirit, he brings to a happy conclusion all that he undertakes" (MF 171,3). In this way De La Salle insists, time and again, on this "recollection-ministerial" link focusing our attention on the example of the saints; hence, for example, "... (St Anthony) succeeded so completely in this holy ministry because he had prepared himself for it by prayer and recollection..." (MF 135,3).¹⁶

3.5. Dialectic - Yes: Dichotomy - No

The insistence of De La Salle on the recollected life and on what accompanies it — prayer, intimacy with God, personal formation — does not imply any dichotomy between "recollection" and "activity", between "the interior life" and the "apostolate" or between "union with God" and "service of people". On the contrary, "this insistence draws attention to two facts: firstly, that true intimacy with the God who saves the world and calls the Brother to be his collaborator directs the Brother back towards this world with renewed enthusiasm and, secondly, that as a *minister of God*, the Brother discovers at the hearts of his call, of his mission, and of his very existence, a personal love which establishes him *in God*, in a gratuitous relationship which transcends all his activities and, in itself, demands to be celebrated in thanksgiving" (AEP 188 - French edition).

In an attempt to analyze the Founder's thought simply we could outline it as follows:

- The recollected life and the spirit of zeal are two inseparable components of the "state" to which we have been called: "... In your state it is your duty to combine zeal for the salvation of your neighbor with a recollected life and mortification..." (MF 150,2).
- There is no reason for opposition between these two components: "...The occupation to which you

dedicate yourself during the day does not prevent you from living a recollected life" (MF 126,3).

- Both form part of the same objective — or the same purpose — of our vocation: "...You who left the world to live a life beyond the natural and above human inclinations, and in order to work for the salvation of your neighbor, must apply yourself to God and to the ministry to which he has honored you..." (MD 58,3).
- Not only is there no opposition but the normal fruit of recollection is apostolic zeal: "...This is the normal result which comes from a recollected life: the more one has been filled with divine love through such a life the more one is obliged by God, for the good of the Church, to deal with the world in seeking ways to communicate this love to others" (MF 171,2).
- Both components are energized by the dialectic tension which is created between them: "...You must love recollection in order to work effectively for your perfection; but you must leave it when God calls you to dedicate yourselves to save the souls of those confided to your care; and as soon as God no longer demands this of you — when your work has been accomplished — return again to your solitude..." (MF 97,3).¹⁷

3.6. Recollection, prayer and mortification

This trilogy frequently appears in the writings of the Founder in the same way that we have seen it expressed many times in his life. They are three "absolutely sure ways of leading one to God" (MF 174,3)¹⁸ and he would usually add the reading of the Sacred Scriptures to these.¹⁹ However, it is necessary to note the interrelationship between recollection and prayer which the Founder repeatedly underlines in such a way that it is difficult to refer to the first without inviting or extolling the merits of the second, so convinced is he that "in recollection one finds God" (MF 189,2): "... Rest assured that you will only obtain it (the fullness of the spirit of God) in recollection and in prayer; consequently, you must love the first and apply yourself with much fervor to the second" (MF 171,1).²⁰

4. RECOLLECTION: COMMUNITY CONTEXT

4.1. Recollection and community

If we had to indicate a particular — not to say

an exclusive — characteristic of "Lasallian recollection", understood as a way or state of life, there would be little doubt in proposing its community dimension in the association which De La Salle makes between "recollection" and "community", between the "recollected life" and "community life".

In many contexts where the Founder speaks of "retreat" he had no qualms in substituting the expression "community life" for it, in keeping with his belief. In other contexts he refers simultaneously to both aspects or else expressly indicates a facet of community life such as regularity.²¹ In commenting on the cure of the paralytic, in Mt 9,1-8, he stressed this equivalence: "... Get up, pick up your bed and go off home —; in other words, live in retirement, recollection and silence and apply yourself assiduously to prayer and to the other exercises of piety in exact compliance with Rule of the community" (MD 71,3).

In the last meditations for the Sundays of the liturgical year which have, as their central theme, the community of the Brothers, we frequently find expressions referring to community life which are identical to those used in his meditations on the saints with reference to recollection, and on which we have commented in an earlier section: "One can also say of many who have left the world to live in community that they are not dead but rather sleeping... These, however, have only embraced community life to die to the world and to renounce all that those in the world practice" (MD 76, 1.3).

According to the Founder, the community is the "holy place" which one enters in order to sanctify oneself and dedicate oneself to prayer... (MD 77,1.). As we saw earlier, he said exactly the same with regard to recollection. One can see the equivalence he establishes in commenting on the Holy Family's stay in Egypt: "... God has brought you to a holy and recollected place, to his own house, in which he has gathered together those whom he has chosen for himself...". "The withdrawal in which you have to live with respect to all those who are strangers for you must inspire you to fear leaving this retreat and the company of the Brothers..." (MD 6,1).

Thus, the Community is the context in which the Brother has to find God and to fill himself with his Spirit. It is the "setting" for recollection;

"... In leaving the world you have consecrated yourselves to God with the aim of establishing your home by living in this community completely detached from what is proper to pleasing the senses in the world" (MF 191,1).

This "community" perspective provides a clearer understanding for De La Salle's preoccupation with recollection. It has to be situated in the context of his concern for making the community the guarantor of the mission — it is the community which educates the Brother, prepares him for his ministry and welcomes him on his return from it. Hence this dynamic tension of which we have previously spoken. Understood in this way, Lasallian recollection is not comparable to a solitude which is individualistic but rather is shared with others who are called and who are seeking God. De La Salle indicates this to us through the saints, especially Founders or Foundresses: thus, for example, "... St. Martin... Built a monastery close to that city where he retired with many religious. There, with them, he led a very austere life..." (MF 189,2).

4.2. Recollection and community recreation

In the same way, the silence to which De La Salle invites with regard to recollection is not the absence of words but rather is equivalent to "interiorization", to a personal and shared reflection on God and on everything related to ministry; "...Things of his nature are what must ordinarily provide subjects for conversation among religious and among those who live in community. Since they have withdrawn from the world their conversation must also be totally different to that which those in the world are accustomed to..." (MD 30,2).

De La Salle wanted the Community to be a pole of attraction in opposition to the world in which one would feel at home and where one would find all that was necessary to dedicate oneself to God and to his service. He was convinced that one of the reasons why communities fail was through the contact of their members with the world, the breaking of community "recollection", living dependent on events outside the community. Conversation with those outside the community is only sought, he affirms, "because one is not content with that which one has with one's Broth-

ers" while concern for what is happening in the world only arises because "the heart is not sufficiently occupied with the things of God". In the same way, one opts to speak of worldly "because one is not in the habit of speaking of God" (R 58). In consequence of this, and as a means of strengthening the "recollected life" of the Brother, De La Salle created "the manner of spending recreation well" (R 6; RC XVI, 8) making it one of the "external supports of the Institute", or one of the pillars, which supported community. In contrast to his contemporary Rane (1626-1700), founder of the Trappists, who, in order to strengthen his reform, suppressed the recreation of the monks, De La Salle not only maintained it but, in fact, gave it great importance in the rule of the community,²² dedicating chapter 6 of the Rule to it, as well as drawing up a "collection of topics of conversation for the Brothers in their recreation" with the aim of helping them to "preserve the spirit of their Institute" (R 57-70). One can therefore say that, according to the Founder, "community recreation" of the Brothers is one of the key elements in the "recollection" which they have to maintain in their life with the aim of effectively carrying out their ministry.²³

5. RECOLLECTION: AN ELEMENT IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE WHOLE LASALLIAN FAMILY

At first sight all of the above reflection could lead us to the conclusion that "recollection", as understood by De La Salle, is something specific to the spirituality of religious — to those who live "apart from the world" - for example, to Brothers and Sisters. The cultural influences which impinged on the spirituality of the Founder, a son of the French Golden age, accentuated the sombre shades²⁴ of his perspective with regard to the world and to human nature leading to an apparent radical separation of religious from lay people. However, in De La Salle's work, there are sufficient indications to enable us to broaden this perspective thus recovering this important Lasallian experience for all who feel drawn by his charisma and spirituality. For example;

(a) **In works dedicated to pupils** we find clear

indications that De La Salle did not consider recollection — understood as a style or attitude of life — as something exclusive to religious, such as the Brothers, but rather as something which was applicable to all Christians. Thus, in the 3rd part of *Les Devoirs d'un Chretien, Du Culte exterieur et public*, we find the following two observations:

- "We must ask God for a love of recollection, prayer and conversion of heart" (Dc 157).
- "We must... imitate his virtues (St John the Apostle), particularly his simplicity, his love of recollection and of prayer" (Dc 254). We notice here, again, that De La Salle links recollection and prayer.

(b) In the meditations written for the Brothers De La Salle distinguishes clearly between "exterior withdrawal" from the world and the interior attitude or "spirit of recollection" maintained through relations with people and in the midst of daily occupations proper to one's employment. This spirit is the contrary to the "spirit of the world", that world to which Christians do not belong even though they are in it, as Jesus affirms in the Gospel (Jn 17:16) and which De La Salle repeats (MD 41). We are thus presented with a message which is valid both for Brothers and for seculars. In his meditation on St Peter Celestin, Pope, De La Salle writes: "... He maintained the spirit of recollection after his coronation. This has to be the way of living in the midst of the world if one wants to obtain salvation and preserve piety" (MF 127,2).

On the other hand, De La Salle presented as reference models not only those saints in whom he could find some similarity with the ministry or the life which he desired for the Brothers but also the faithful of the early Christian communities as presented to us in the Acts. The model is the same for religious as for lay people; "...There we also have the model for our perfection. Could we aspire to be less virtuous than the first Christians who lived in the world with much greater detachment and perfection than many religious who live in retirement?..." (MF 116,3).

One can assert, then, that the "abandonment" of the world undertaken by the Brothers in their "recollected life" is a sign of what the Brother, as much as the lay person, has to do — i.e. to renounce

the spirit of the world, its values, its criteria, its style, its maxims, in accordance with the prayer of Jesus to the Father for all his disciples (Jn 17: 15,20). The practice of the presence of God and "interior recollection" contribute to this attitude or "spirit of recollection" while all of these are greatly strengthened by participation in a retreat — understood as "spiritual exercises". This retreat may be periodic or extraordinary and has as its objectives, as previously indicated, renewal and the discernment of the will of God as well as leading to a deeper appreciation of one's life project. Without fear of exaggeration it can be asserted that the practice of retreat and the experience of recollection were catalysts which facilitated the forging of De La Salle's itinerary as we know it. Perhaps it will be necessary to develop new forms of retreat and renew traditional models in order to accommodate the different contexts in which the members of the Lasallian Family find themselves today. However, it is unquestionable that it has an important role in Lasallian spirituality as a means of renewal, of developing the interior person, of confronting "the spirit of the world", of being filled with the spirit of God, "the spirit of faith and zeal which is the spirit of this Institute".

* In the Spanish text the author normally uses the same word, "retire", to denote each of these three meanings of "retreat". In this English translation, the English word "retreat" has been used almost exclusively with regard to the first meaning indicated — i.e. the making of a retreat or, as used in the text, the "spiritual exercises". In deference to common usage and to the apostolic nature of our ministry "recollection" rather than "retirement" has usually been used with regard to the two other meanings indicated here (Translator's note).

¹ In the *Nouveau Dictionnaire François* by RICHELET, "to make a retreat" is defined as follows: «Se retirer du commerce du monde pour quelque temps, ou pour toujours. ... Les dévots font une retraite pour vaquer au jeune et à la prière. Ceux qui entrent en Religion font une retraite". It also indicates that the place in which this takes place also has the meaning of "retreat" (RICHELET, P., *op. cit.*, II Amsterdam, 1709, p. 80).

² "... Un exercice spirituel qui implique une rupture avec le régime de vie ordinaire, un cadre plus ou moins isolé, silencieux et paisible, en vue de faciliter une rencontre avec Dieu au sein d'une expérience spirituelle plus ou moins intense* (DS, XIII, Paris, 1988, 423). "La Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice, dont on sait l'influence sur la formation du clergé, met en bonne place les retraites dans son programme, de même que Saint Jean Eudes" (*Id.* 28).

³ Cfr. POUTET, Y., p. 745. and GALLEGU, S., I, p. 154: "It was his way of asking God to manifest his will and for fidelity in following it..."

⁴ Cf. MAR 5 (MAILLEFER, *The life of John Baptist De La Salle*, translated by Brother Didymus John, 1963, p. 3); POUTET, Y., I, p. 369; GALLEGRO, S., I, P. 84.

⁵ Cf. 2B, p. 360; POUTET, Y., I, p. 734; GALLEGRO, S., I, pp. 184-185.

⁶ 2B 318-319; cf. POUTET, Y., I, p. 745; GALLEGRO, S., II, pp. 713-715.

⁷ Cf. 1B, p. 312; MAURICE-AUGUSTE, CL 11, 61, note 1; GALLEGRO, S., I, pp. 237-239; MAC 55 (MAILLEFER, trans. Bro Didymus John, pp. 53-54).

⁸ Cf. 1B, p. 315; GALLEGRO, S., I, pp. 243-244.

⁹ Cf. 1B pp. 342-343; GALLEGRO, S., I, pp. 272-273.

¹⁰ Cf. MAR 107 (MAILLEFER, English translation, p. 69); 1B p. 340; GALLEGRO, S., I, pp. 273-275.

¹¹ GALLEGRO, S., I, p. 488-489: "Both Blain and Maillefer indicate that in this solitude De La Salle felt the temptation, or the strong desire, to abandon the work and to dedicate his life to priestly work in a parish or, alternatively, to hide himself away there for the rest of his life. But he promptly overcame this acute temptation" (cf. MAC pp. 132-134; 2B p. 97; MAR 232-235 - English translation, pp.132-133).

¹² Cf. GALLEGRO, S., I, pp. 494-495.

¹³ MAR pp. 244-247 (English translation, pp. 138-139); 2B pp. 105, 223, 273-274; GALLEGRO, S., I, pp. 507-508.

¹⁴ CAL 472 (See Note 1).

¹⁵ POUTET, Y., notes in Siel, Rome, 1988.

¹⁶ See also the "recollection-ministry" link in the following meditations: 89,1 (The Holy Innocents), 97,2 (St. Anthony, Abbot), 100,1 (St. John Chrysostom), 105,1 105,1 (St. Romuald), 111,1 (St. Benedict), 126,3 (St. Gregory Nazianzen), 135,1.3 (St. Anthony of Padua), 136,1.2 (St. Basil), 138,2 (St. John the Baptist), 161,1 (St. Augustine), 170,1.3 (St. Jerome), 171,1.2.3 (St. Remigius), 180,2 (S. Hilarion), 189,2 (St. Martin).

¹⁷ Cf. MF 128,3; MR 200,1.

¹⁸ Cf. MD 2,2; MF 89,1; 113,3; 127,1; 138,2; 190,2.

¹⁹ Cf. MF 100,1; 170,2; 192,3.

²⁰ Cfr. 102,1; 135,3; 152,3; 161,1; 170,3; 189,2; 192,2; MR 200,1.

²¹ Cf. MD 42,2; 71,3; MF 98,1; 111,1; 126,3.

²² The "Rule of the Brother Director" indicates that, in the case of necessity, the Brother Director should absent himself from prayer rather than absent himself from recreation (CL 25, p. 155).

²³ Cf. the study by TEMPRADO, A., in his doctoral thesis, *La Palabra según La Salle*, on the theme of recreation, pp.163-184, Col. Símite 13, ed. San Pio X, Salamanca 1977.

²⁴ Cf. DEVILLE, R., *L'École française de Spiritualité*, Annexe 2: *Le pessimisme de l'Ecole française*. VARELA, L., *Biblia y Espiritualidad en San Juan Bautista de La Salle*, pp. 190-191, Col. Símite, 10, ed. San Pio X, Salamanca 1965.

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Bro. Antonio BOTANA

54. RULE AND REGULARITY

Summary:

1. Terminology. 1.1. The term "règle". 1.2. The terms "régulé", "régler" and their opposites "dérégulé", "dérégler". 1.3. The terms "se régler", "être réglé" and their opposites "dérégler", "se déréglé", "être déréglé". 1.4. The terms "Règlement" and "réglément". 1.5. The terms "régulier", "irrégulier", "régularité", "irrégularité". - 2. The teaching of De La Salle on the "Rule" and on "Regularity". 2.1. Chapter XVI of the Rule and the texts from the Collection. 2.1.1. Collection 2.1.2. "On Regularity". 2.1.3. Fidelity to the Rule. 2.1.4. The Guide for reddition. 2.2. References to the Rule and to Regularity in the writings of De La Salle. 2.2.1. The Brothers have a Rule which they have adopted as a community. 2.2.2. The first and principal Rule is the will of God. 2.2.3. The will of God is reflected in his word — in consequence the Gospel must be the fundamental Rule. 2.2.4. The Rule is the expression of the will of God. 2.2.5. Regularity is the exact observance of the Rule of the community. 2.2.6. Each member of the community must esteem the Rule and endeavour to observe it. 2.2.7. Regularity draws down the blessings of God and is the means of advancing in perfection. 2.2.8. The observance of regularity depends in large measure on the Director of the community. - 3. The writings of St John Baptist De La Salle which include the word "Rules" in their title. 3.1. "Les Règles que je me suis imposées". 3.2. Règles communes des Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes. 3.2.1. How the Rule of the Institute emerged. 3.2.2. The oldest extant editions of the Rule. 3.2.3. De La Salle as the author of the Rule. 3.2.4. The contents of the 1718 Rule. 3.3. The Rule of the Brother Director. 3.4. The Rules of Politeness and Christian Civility.

1. TERMINOLOGY

The terms "Règle and "régularité" are very frequent in the writings of St. John Baptist De La Salle. Moreover, there are other related terms which significantly increase the indirect references to "rule" and "regularity". The "Vocabulaire Lasallien" indicates 188 references to "règle" and 46 to "régularité" but one would also have to add other related terms which are indicated in the "Vocabulaire" as follows: "régle" (31); "règlement" (6); "réglément" (adverb) 33; "règles" (46); "se régler" (18); "être réglé" (18); "régulier" (30); "régulièrement" (1). One also needs to refer to

their opposites which are indicated as follows: "dérèglement" (42); "dérégler" (2); "se déréglé" (1); "être déréglé" (48). Along with "régularité" one would have to add the terms "irrégularité" (2) and "irrégulier" (2). Consequently, either directly or indirectly, in total there are 484 references to the idea of "rule" and "regularity". However, in De La Salle's writing, this varied terminology has different meanings and, while the meaning in this study will be confined to "the norms which must be observed" in the community life of the Brother and to the "virtue" which inspires this observance, it is opportune to give a preliminary indication of the different meanings which he employs.

1.1. The term "règle" is used with different shades of meaning as follows:

- as a *methodological or pedagogical "rule or norm"* to teach different aspects in the school. Thus, for example, "on apprendra toutes les règles de la prononciation française";¹ "les règles d'arithmétique".²

- as a *norm of behaviour or conduct*: "une personne qui fait profession de suivre les règles de la tempérance";³ "prenez pour règle de ne jamais parler du boire ni du manger";⁴

- As an *orientation or directive which should be followed*: "la règle la plus sûre et la plus raisonnable touchant les modes...";⁵ "il n'y a personne qui ne doive prendre pour règle de se peigner";⁶

- as a *precept, commandment or practice of the Christian life*: "tout chrétien devant se conduire selon les règles de l'Évangile";⁷ "le vice... est contraire... aux règles de l'Évangile";⁸

- as *rules or principles of politeness*: "l'Écclésiastique... expose, d'une manière admirable ce qui est selon les règles de la bienséance";⁹ "se servir des termes d'honnêteté pour garder les règles de la bienséance";¹⁰

- as a *collection of rules of life for a religious order*: *St Benedict* "a donne une règle très sage" (a un très grand nombre de religieux); "ce que dit Saint Augustin au commencement de sa règle...";¹²

- with *reference to the specific practices or rules adopted in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools both with regard to community life as to the school*: "la volonté de Dieu qui leur est marquée par les règles de leur Institut";¹³ "on lira les règles les dimanches et fêtes";¹⁴ "Règles communes des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes".¹⁵ There is also specific reference to the "rules of the school": "on fera lecture dans les règles d'école".¹⁶

1.2. The terms "régulé", "régler" and their opposites, "dérégulé", "dérégler"

The meanings which De La Salle attributes to these terms can also be grouped according to the different shades of meaning:

- *orderly or good conduct* (or disorderly conduct); *ordered life, conduct or habits* (or disordered): les vertues morales, "servent à régler les moeurs";¹⁷ "il a une conduite extérieure, très sage et très réglée";¹⁸

- *something that is established, commanded or stipulated*; times,¹⁹ lists,²⁰ the hour,²¹ prayers,²² absences²³ etc.

- *at times it is applied to people*: "ne frequenter que des personnes... bien réglées";²⁴ "si on a un confesseur réglé et arrêté" ...;²⁵

- *sometimes it also refers to "virtues" or "interior*

movements" properly or badly "regulated": "... le prétexte d'un zèle... mal réglé...";²⁶ "autre passion moins réglée";²⁷ "la sobriété... nous fait régler l'appétit" ...;²⁸

- on occasions it is used in the sense of *to "govern" or to "dispose"* in accomplishing something: "Dieu conduit et règle tout d'une manière admirable";²⁹ "si on a la capacité de régler... une famille";³⁰ "punir rarement... c'est un des principaux moyens pour bien régler l'école...";³¹

- it is also sometimes used in the sense of *to regulate or to put in order*: ... the affections;³² custody of the eyes;³³ conversation;³⁴ one's interior life.³⁵

1.3. The terms "se régler", "être réglé"; and their opposites "dérégler", "se dérégler", "être déréglé"

The meaning attributed to these terms is some what similar yet distinct. For example:

- "se régler" normally applies to the way in which *one conducts oneself or behaves*: with children;³⁶ with regard to daily actions such as eating and drinking;³⁷ in mortification;³⁸

- "se régler" is also occasionally used in the sense of *to be based on or to be supported by*: politeness must be supported by justice³⁹ and by charity;⁴⁰

- occasionally "se régler" is used in the sense of *accommodating oneself to*: (pour les cérémonies de l'enterrement) "on se réglera en cela sur l'usage des lieux";⁴¹ finally, it is used as a synonym for *allowing oneself to be led or directed* and almost always with reference to the will of God;⁴²

- on the three occasions that the words "dérégler" and "se dérégler", are used they have the meaning of "disorder" be it with regard to communities⁴³ or to children.⁴⁴

The expression "être réglé" has a couple of specific meanings which can be reduced to the following:

- the sense of *something established*: holidays,⁴⁵ school tasks,⁴⁶ the times for doing particular things;⁴⁷

- in the sense of *to be controlled or regulated*, *to have a sense of order*: "to do in an orderly way..."; prayers,⁴⁸ the community,⁴⁹ external actions.⁵⁰

With regard to the expression "être dérégulé", it is used in most cases with the following meaning:

- *disordered, out of order, outside the norm, breaking the rule*: "la gourmandise est un désir dérégulé des plaisirs...";⁵¹ "s'il renonce aux désirs dérégulés de la

chair...";¹² "ne vous point laisser aller à aucun mouvement déréglé".⁵³

1.4. The terms "Règlement" and "réglément"

On the five occasions in which the word "règlement" is used four of them carry the meaning of *normative or a list of rules*. Thus, for example, "règlement des jours de congé";⁵⁴ or "le frère Directeur leur donnera à chacun un règlement".⁵⁵ On the three occasions in which the adverb "réglément" is used it carries the sense of "according to the established rule or regulation".

1.5. The words "régulier", "irrégulier", "régularité", "irrégularité"

The word "régulier" is used 30 times while "irrégulier" is used twice. Both words are used in two senses only:

- on three occasions "régulier" is used to denote a type of religious order such as "Canons regular";⁵⁶
- on every other occasion the words signify people, attitudes or practices which are consistent with the observance of a rule. For example: "les engage a mener une vie régulière";⁵⁷ "soyez très régulier dans toutes les observations de communauté";⁵⁸
- "Régularité" is used 46 times and "irrégularité" only twice and on all occasions it has the meaning of the virtue of observing the rules given by the community. For example: "Vous savez que la régularité dépend de celui qui conduit";⁵⁹ "de se rendre le modèle des autres par la régularité".⁶⁰

2. THE TEACHING OF DE LA SALLE ON THE RULE AND ON REGULARITY

In the writings of St John Baptist De La Salle, the words "Rule", "rules" and "regularity" are used in the sense that was current in the religious life of his time. The Rule is the "form of life" (*formula vitae, forma vivendi*) of particular religious orders, particularly from the 16th century when dependency on the four ancient monastic "Rules" was removed. This form of life quickly expressed itself in "Constitutions" but frequently the two aspects were linked in "rules and constitutions". Through usage the term "Rule" came to signify the collection of practices which gave uniformity to the life of a society or community of consecra-

ted people. The term was also applied to each of the prescriptions or points which made up the Rule. Regularity is the observance of a Rule and is considered a virtue equivalent to fidelity in the observance of the norms of the community (cf. *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*. Règles et constitutions religieuses, pp. 287, 288, 299). The "religious rule" is defined in the *Dictionnaire de Droit Canonique*, (ed. 1965, p. 539) as follows: "On donne le nom de règle à l'ensemble des principes généraux qui réglementent la vie des religieux et tendent à les conduire à la pratique de la perfection chrétienne, en tenant compte du but particulier poursuivi par chaque institut. La règle est souvent complétée par les constitutions, ou ensemble de dispositions particulières par lesquelles la règle est précisée et adaptée aux circonstances". In general one can say that De La Salle's use of terms such as "Règle", "règles", "régularité" etc. is consistent with these descriptions.

De La Salle did not develop a long speculative study on regularity and the rule. He did however summarize his essential thought in two chapters of his writings. One of these is Ch. XVI of the Common Rules⁶¹ and the other is the short treatise "On Regularity" in the Collection.⁶² Both present a synthesis of his thought on regularity and on the rules with the treatment in the Collection being more systematic than the chapter in the Rule since there, as was to be expected, he added some very specific practices for the life of the community which go beyond the doctrinal. Nonetheless, the theological content of the opening paragraphs of Ch. XVI is extremely rich. Moreover, throughout his other writings he insistently repeats some of the key ideas expounded in the two chapters previously quoted with the result that, if one set aside the teaching presented in these chapters, one could equally reconstruct his thought by threading together the references to regularity and to the rule which are scattered throughout his other writings.

2.1. Chapter XVI of the Common Rule and the chapter from the Collection "On Regularity"

2.1.1. Chapter XVI of the Common Rule

This chapter was added to the Rule by De La Salle in the revision which he made after Assembly

of 1717. In the first four articles of the chapter he develops a brief, but solid, teaching on regularity centred on the following points:

- The foundation of regularity is the commandments of God which are summarized in the love of God and of one's neighbour (art. 1).
- If regularity is separated from both of these commandments it is of no use for salvation (art 1).
- Regularity is established in communities to facilitate the observance of the commandments of God by its members; eg. silence, respect for superiors, reserve with regard to the world, modesty and recollection etc. (art. 1).
- The Brothers have great esteem for regularity and consider it as the primary means of their sanctification:
 - * because it enables them to observe the commandments
 - * because it preserves them from temptations
 - * because God channels his grace through it in a special way (art 2).
- Regularity is the first support of the community and irregularity the primary source of its destruction and the loss of its members (art 3).
- Consequently, one must give preference to the Rule of one's own Institute before any other practice unless it be a commandment of God or of the Church (at 3).
- Thus, one must apply oneself to the observance of the Rule (art 4)
- desiring to fulfil the will of God, which is manifested in it, exactly and in everything (art 4).

2.1.2. *The chapter in the Collection "On Regularity"*

The Collection contains a short treatise which outlines the principal virtues which the Brother must practise. One of these virtues is Regularity and, while in his treatment of it here De La Salle changes the order that we have seen above in the Ch. XVI of the Rule, the fundamental ideas are repeated:

- Regularity is the foundation of good order, peace and union in the community
 - * because it unites the affections of its members
 - * because it unifies its conduct
- The more faithful a community is with regard to regularity
 - * the greater is the presence of the spirit of God in it
 - * the more graces God grants it
 - * the more its members live their vocation with satisfaction and with the blessing of God
- Regularity consists in observing the rules and practices of the community in the manner and order indicated and at the times prescribed.

- The Rule must be observed as representing the will of God and thereby safeguarding one's vocation and ensuring fidelity to God's call.
- The model of regularity is Christ who fulfilled the will of the Father in everything.
- Regularity has also to be observed in those things which appear unimportant since the will of God is to be found in all things, great and small.
- In order to acquire the virtue of regularity one must view the practices of the community from the perspective of the will of God.

2.1.3. *Fidelity to the Rule*

Another section of the Collection is devoted to the "Reflections which the Brothers may make on the means of becoming interior". One of these is entitled "Fidelity to the Rule" (R 116) and it gives three reasons for this;

- because it is the primary means of sanctification in a community
- because the graces of God are received in a community in proportion to fidelity in the observance of its rules
- because one advances in perfection more through fidelity in the observance of the Rules than by any other means.

2.1.4. *The Guide for Reddition*

Section 14 of the Guide for Reddition, which was added to the end of the 1711 edition of the Collection, proposes an examen on various aspects of regularity: "... S'il a de l'estime pour les Règles de l'Institut, s'il les a observées exactement, ou s'il a manque a quelques-unes et quelles elles sont, si souvent, si rarement et combien souvent depuis sa dernière Lettre, de quelle manière il les a observées, si ç'a été avec ferveur ou lâcheté, si toujours, si souvent, si rarement et en quelles occasions, l'un ou l'autre, s'il y trouve de la difficulté, si à toutes, si à quelques-unes seulement, quelles elles sont et pour quelles raisons..." (CL 15, p. 125).

2.2. **References to the Rule and to Regularity in the writings of De La Salle**

We have suggested that a synthesis of De La Salle's thought on regularity, similar to that outlined in the Rule and in the Collection, could have been made from the many references in his other writings. Such a synthesis could be summarized in 8 parts.

2.2.1. *The Brothers have a Rule which they have adopted as a community*

De La Salle indicates this in the Memoir on the Habit as follows: "... Cette Communauté se nomme ordinairement la Communauté des Écoles chrétiennes... On y vit avec règles, avec dépendance pour toutes choses, sans aucune propriété et dans une entière uniformité".⁶³ The norms by which they govern themselves are called the "Règles communes des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes".⁶⁴ They were rules which were adopted by the community itself after many discussions and exchanges of ideas, a process which is indicated in the biographies of the Founder. Moreover, he himself alludes to the process in a letter to Brother Gabriel Drolin in Rome when he says: "...The Brothers are preparing to have an Assembly from Ascension until Pentecost in order to organize many things in relation to the Rule and to the government of the Institute".⁶⁵

2.2.2. *The first and principal rule is the will of God*

This is repeated insistently in the writings of De La Salle as a basic principle of conduct. In the "Rule of the Brother Director" he speaks of "l'exécution de la volonté de Dieu comme la règle de toute leur conduite"⁶⁶ while, in speaking of obedience, he says "... car Dieu ne fait cette grâce qu'à ceux qui n'ont plus de propre volonté, et qui regardent la sienne comme la Règle et le principe de toute leur conduite".⁶⁷ In the meditation for the 22nd Sunday after Pentecost he writes: "La Loi et la volonté de Dieu nous doit servir de Règle, et non pas l'exemple des autres, ou la considération naturelle et humaine que vous avez pour eux".⁶⁸

2.2.3. *The will of God is expressed in his word: consequently, the Gospel must be the fundamental rule*

This idea is repeated various times in his writings. Sometimes it is applied to the Christian in general: "L'Evangile... c'est la règle de tous les Chrétiens";⁶⁹ at other times it is applied directly to the Brothers as in, for example, "... que le Nouveau Testament... serve de règle de conduite et à vous et à ceux que vous instruisez".⁷⁰

2.2.4. *The Rule is the expression of the will of God*

This is clearly expressed in Ch XVI of the Rule: "... Chacun des Frères s'appliquera particulièrement a ne rien faire qui soit ou qui puisse être centre la Régularité... voulant faire en tout, et très exactement la volonté de Dieu, qui leur est marquée par les Règles et les Pratiques de leur Institut".⁷¹ The same thought is expressed in the "Rule of the Brother Director" as follows: "... Il fera cas de manquer ou de voir manquer à un petit point de régularité en quelque chose voulant que la volonté de Dieu qui lui est marquée par les règles et par les usages de l'Institut...".⁷²

2.2.5. *Regularity is the exact observance of the rules of the community*

The Collection states that "la régularité consiste à observer les règles et les pratiques de communauté".⁷³

2.2.6. *Each member of the community must esteem the rules and endeavour to observe them*

This is one of the recommendations on which De La Salle is most insistent especially when he is writing to the Brothers or when he proposes the theme to them in his meditations: "Soyez donc fidèle à bien faire vos règles";⁷⁴ "soyez très attentif à observer exactement vos règles";⁷⁵ "... vous devez garder toutes vos règles avec exactitude".⁷⁶ Such quotations could be multiplied.

Among the points for the examination of conscience, in the Collection, section IX indicates: "... Si on a de l'estime pour les Règles, si on les observe exactement; si on a manqué a quelques-unes...", which is very similar to the text quoted in 2.1.3 above on the Guide.⁷⁷

2.2.7. *Regularity draws down the blessings of God and is the means of advancing in perfection*

"... On avance dans la perfection par la fidélité a l'observation de ses règles";⁷⁸ les inspirations de Dieu "portent a observer les règles";⁷⁹ "...vous trouverez qu'il vous aidera (Dieu) tant pour la régularité que pour la soumission";⁸⁰ "...c'est la régularité qui attire la bénédiction de Dieu sur une maison";⁸¹ "... la régularité étant le principal

moyen que Dieu donne pour s'y sauver",⁸² etc. In theme X of the topics of conversation for recreation which are indicated in the Collection the following is stated: "...De l'avantage et de l'assurance probable qu'ont de leur salut ceux qui vivent dans la Société, et qui ont le bonheur d'y être engagés et d'en observer les Règles".⁸³

2.2.8. *The observance of regularity depends in large measure on the director of the community*

... Le Directeur veillera "que tous y gardent les règles qui y sont prescrites" (with reference to recreation)⁸⁴ "... vous savez que la régularité dépend de celui qui conduit" he wrote to a Director;⁸⁵ "... son premier soin à l'égard des frères sera de les établir et maintenir dans un véritable esprit de foi, et de leur faire regarder l'exécution de la volonté de Dieu en toutes choses comme la règle de toute leur conduite".⁸⁶ The Brother Director "ne souffrira dans aucun des frères rien qui soit ou qui puisse être contre la régularité...";⁸⁷ etc.

Apart from this synthesis, based on recurring expressions in the thought of De La Salle, there are also indirect references to the "rule" and to "regularity" in countless community practices or virtues such as, for example, in silence, obedience, mortification, contact with people, the ministry of the school, exercises of piety, etc. According to De La Salle, everything which occurred in the community had a reference to regularity since the Rule "regarded" all the daily exercises and activities of the Brother. Fidelity to the Rule is the road to sanctification and it was this consideration which gave rise to his celebrated statement: "... Ne faites point de différence entre les affaires de votre état et l'affaire de votre salut et de votre perfection. Assurez-vous que vous ne ferez jamais mieux votre salut et n'acquerrez jamais tant de perfection qu'en vous acquittant bien des devoirs de votre état; pourvu que vous le fassiez en vue de l'ordre de Dieu".⁸⁸ It may be that the teaching on regularity expounded in the Collection was taken from other authors, and probably from Canon Roland (Rigault, *Histoire générale de l'Institut*, Vol. 1, p. 474), but the fact is that De La Salle had deeply assimilated it and so repeated it whenever he had the opportunity.

Moreover, he lived it in his own life. Thus, Blain (2, 316-317) speaks of "... la parfaite Régu-

larité de l'instituteur des Frères". He first expresses his concept of regularity in the following terms: "... Je regarde la régularité parfaite, comme une vertu universelle qui influe dans toutes les autres, qui les met en mouvement, qui assigne a chacun son temps, son lieu et sa mesure, qui en règle la durée, la manière, et qui en ordonne l'arrangement, la pratique et toutes les circonstances. En cela elle parait avoir un grand rapport à la justice...". He then moves on to speak of De La Salle: "... Il a été un parfait modèle de Régularité. Ami de l'Ordre et de la Règle, il serait difficile de détailler jusqu'où il a porté cet amour, et avec quelle exactitude il s'est lui-même renfermé dans la discipline et l'observance régulière. Quelques-uns des Frères qui l'ont le plus connu, et qui ont eu le bonheur de vivre plus longtemps avec lui, prétendent que la parfaite régularité a été son caractère distinctif et que rien ne les a plus édifiés en lui, que cette attention continuelle qu'il avait à se renfermer dans les règlements, sans jamais en sortir, comme dans la prison de la propre volonté..." (Blain 2, 317).

3. THE WRITINGS OF DE LA SALLE WHICH CONTAIN THE WORD "RULE" IN THEIR TITLE

3.1. "Les Règles que je me suis imposées"

These rules were handed down to us by Blain who indicated that he had copied from the original with the words: "... Le voici tel qu'il est" (Blain 2, 318-319). Unfortunately, the original copy of the Rules has been lost. Before listing them Blain himself comments; "... C'est une pièce que nous fait regretter toutes les autres que son humilité a eu soin de nous dérober. La divine Providence l'a laissée entre les mains de ses Disciples, pour leur être un éternel monument, un exemple toujours vivant, et un motif toujours nouveau d'imiter la Régularité de leur Père..." (p. 318). The text has been published as an appendix in CL 16, pp. 101-102 while the text is also presented by Y. Poutet who, however, does not follow the order but rather groups the rules according to themes.⁸⁹

There are difficulties in precisely dating the document but there are indications which point to a

particular period. In effect they speak of "the community" and of the renewal of consecration to the Blessed Trinity but do not speak of the vow of obedience etc. They are considered by some people to be resolutions made during a retreat. Thus, for example, Y. Poutet⁹⁰ suggests that this rule of life could have been adopted during the retreat with the Carmelites of Louviers, in Garde-Châtel, in August 1686 which is also suggested by S. Gallego.⁹¹ Poutet, however, also suggest that the document may date back a year earlier to 1685.

What appears beyond doubt is that De La Salle was inspired to adopt these Rules by a work of P. Julien Hayneufve, S.J., entitled "Meditations pour le temps des exercices qui se font dans la retraite des huit jours, sur le sujet de Vingt-quatre Vérités et Maximes fondamentales, qui monstrent le progrès de la Vie spirituelle, et qui en sont le parfait Règlement, selon l'Ordre et la Déclaration qui se verra dans le dessein de cet Ouvrage". (Paris, Sébastien Cramoisy et Gabriel Cramoisy, 1645, 298 p.). Gilles Beudet has produced an interesting study in *Lasalliana* (N° 20, 3-4-5) in which he compared the suggestions offered in Hayneufve's book for the various days of the retreat with the resolutions adopted by De La Salle. He also believes that these resolutions could have been made during a retreat. It should also be noted that, in the Collection, De La Salle took a good part of his "Considérations que les Frères doivent faire de temps en temps, et surtout pendant leur retraite"⁹² from Hayneufve's book.

3.2. The Common Rules of the Brothers of the Christian Schools

3.2.1. *How the Rules evolved*

Studies based on the biographies indicate various stages:

1. **1682: the Exercises.** By this time it was almost three years since De La Salle had made contact with Adrian Nyel (Lent 1679) and the first teachers had been recruited in Rheims. During this time his life had taken an improbable course - he had taken care of the teachers, looked for a house for them, brought them into his own home to feed them, seated them at his own table and then gone to live with them. From the time that he

began to be directly concerned with the teachers he attempted to order their lives with timetables and practices appropriate to the work in which they were daily involved. From the time that they were living together the daily rule was more involved and related to more activities. Maillefer says that De La Salle had drawn up "une règle uniforme pour toutes les heures de la journée" (MC 20; MAR 31). However, the teachers were unable to live in this way and they left but De La Salle quickly saw another group of teachers arriving at the house in the Rue Neuve "qui avaient de la force, de la ferveur et de la piété" (MC 26), "du talent pour l'école... aussi bien que de la disposition pour pouvoir demeurer en communauté" (Bd 47). In his biography, Bernard says "ce fut aussi au commencement de cette année qu'on commença ce qu'on appelait en ce temps-la les exercices qui sont les mêmes qui se pratiquent aujourd'hui dans toutes les maisons de l'Institut".

2. **1684: Règlements.** Seeing that there were various communities located in different places - Rheims, Rehel, Guise, Laon — De La Salle saw the necessity of having a uniform style of life. Initially he proposed a trial period and it was only after a number of years when he was then in Paris that "... il rédigea ses règlements par écrit, après s'être donné tout le temps nécessaire pour peser tout avec maturité" (MR 60-61; MC 40).

3. **1694: Règles.** However, since 1684 the practices of the Brothers and in De La Salle's own life reflected the experiences which they had under gone.

- **1686:** The first Assembly was held in this year and took place before the first profession of vows. In an animated discourse De La Salle proposed to the Brothers that they consider the appropriateness of «s'engager par quelque voeu à vivre en communauté selon les règles qui étaient en usage parmi eux" (MC 41; MAR 62). Blain situates this Assembly in 1684 and says that "qu'on y convint de quelques règlements"; "que le premier article touchant les règles et les constitutions auroit été prématuré s'il avoit été agité des lors" (Blain 1, 233).

- **1691:** That the rules were already in use, even if not yet in written form, is confirmed by an incident related by the biographers with regard to De La Salle. While he was ill in Rheims he would not allow his grand-mother, Mme Moet de Brouillet, to visit

in his room "pour ne pas transgresser les règles de la maison qui interdisaient l'entrée aux personnes de son sexe" (MC 57; MR 85).

In 1691 when he had established Vaugirard in Paris, De La Salle took great care to ensure that the rules were scrupulously observed.

- **1694:** Between 1692 and the first months of 1694 "quand M. de La Salle vit que son noviciat était bien établi sur les règles qu'il y faisait observer, il jugea qu'il était nécessaire de les rédiger par écrit, pour les rendre fixes et les perpétuer parmi les Frères de son Institut. Il s'y prépara par de longues prières, des jeunes fréquents et de rudes pénitences, et plein de l'Esprit de Dieu dont il se sentait animé, il en composa un recueil. Ensuite il assembla les Frères des deux communautés de Paris et de Vaugirard, leur enjoignit d'y faire leurs réflexions et de lui dire ce qu'ils y trouveraient à retrancher ou à ajouter" (MR 105-106).

There were some Brothers who wanted to moderate some practices and De La Salle told them that, while he personally would not change them, he would submit them to the judgment of three experienced superiors in Paris and abide by their decision. "Et c'est sur leur approbation que les règles furent dressées dans l'ordre ou on les voit subsister aujourd'hui..." (MR 106). All agreed to the modifications of those consulted but De La Salle wanted all the Brothers to approve them too so this was the next step. Around the feast of Pentecost, in 1694, he called all the Brothers together for the annual retreat and to renew the vow of obedience. La Salle "à la fin de la retraite leur présenta le recueil de ses Règles qui furent lues et approuvées unanimement" (MR 107). All the commentaries are unanimous in agreeing that this text remained unchanged until 1717. The text is known by the name of the *First Rule*.

4. The Rule of **1718** which is known as the **Second Rule**.

The principal Brothers of the Institute had been called together to an Assembly in St Yon on Pentecost Sunday 1717. The main purpose of the Assembly was to elect a Superior after making their annual retreat. That it was also the intention to revise some of the rules can be seen from De La Salle's letter to Gabriel Drolin in Rome, dated 5th December 1716, in which he wrote: "The Brothers are preparing to have an Assembly from Ascen-

sion until Pentecost in order to organize many things in relation to the Rules and to the government of the Institute" (L, 32, 10).

Brother Barthelemy was elected Superior and Maillefer then adds the following: "Le lendemain (de la Trinite de 1717) on se rassembla pour faire quelques observations sur les règlements, afin d'y ajouter ou retrancher ce qui paraîtrait nécessaire, avec cette restriction néanmoins qu'on n'arrêterait rien qu'auparavant on n'eût pris l'avis de M. de La Salle, aux lumières duquel on se rapporterait de tout ce qui serait statué. Ainsi, quand tout fut examiné et discuté, on le pria d'y mettre la dernière main. Il promit d'y travailler et s'y appliqua effectivement avec beaucoup d'attention, de sorte qu'en peu de jours, la Règle fut rédigée dans l'état où elle est aujourd'hui, et fut envoyée dans toutes les maisons pour y être observée uniformément par tous les Frères de l'Institut" (MR 273).

De La Salle quickly set about a final editing of the newly-corrected texts and had it finished by the end of the year. In 1718 copies were made bearing the signature of Brother Barthelemy on each sheet and these were sent to each house of the Institute.

3.2.2. *The oldest extant copies of the Rule*

- In the Archives of the Mother House (SBf) there is a manuscript entitled "la Pratique du Règlement journalier", comprising of 32 pages, 19.5 by 15.5 cm, one of which carries the title with the text presented on the following 21 pages. The pages are numbered in pencil from 1 to 21. The manuscript bears the date "9th March 1713" and it appears to contain the main aspects of the first rule in detailing the various community exercises.

- With regard to *the First Rule*, there is one manuscript copy which we know of, bearing the date 23rd September 1705 and entitled "Règles Communes de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes". It contains 83 sheets, 17 by 11.5 cm, bound in parchment. The handwriting appears to be that of Brother Antoine, Jean Partois, although this is not altogether certain, who joined the Institute in September 1686. The manuscript is preserved in the Municipal Library in Avignon.

- With regard to the *Second Rule*, we have one extant copy dated 1718 which was sent to the community in Troyes, containing 124 pages, 19 by

14.5 cm. The handwriting corresponds with that of Brother Michel (Vincent Floquet) who joined the Institute in 1705 and who acted as secretary to the Superiors in various capitular assemblies. The initials of the Superior General, JTFB (Joseph Truffet, Frere Barthelemy), are to be found at the bottom of the page on the principal side of each sheet. The manuscript is preserved in the Archives of the Mother House.

- *First printed Rule*: "Règles et Constitutions de l'Institut des Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes, Approuvées par Notre Saint Père le Pape Benoist XIII, A Rouen, de l'Imprimerie d'Antoine Le Prevost, rue Saint Vivien. M.DCC.XXVI. Avec Approbation et Permission des Supérieurs". 21 x 16 cm., 122 p.

3.2.3. *De La Salle as the author of the Rule*

The process of elaboration of the Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools leaves no doubt as to its author bearing in mind that it was the fruit of a permanent process of dialogue and discernment between De La Salle and the Brothers. Léon de Marie Aroz describes this process in the following way: "Il est le fruit d'une concertation permanente entre le Fondateur et ses disciples, d'un partage communautaire en vue d'un plus grand bien personnel et social. Les suggestions parties de la base ou inspirées par M. de La Salle, discutées en des assemblées plénières - 1684-1686, 1694, 1717 — après les avoir soumises à l'épreuve du temps (1682-1694, 1694-1717) ont été assumées par le Fondateur, par lui revues et ensuite codifiées. Sauf les chapitres doctrinaux, — le merveilleux chapitre sur «l'Esprit de l'Institut» et celui non moins remarquable sur la Régularité, entr'autres, qui portent l'estampille de son inspiration théocentrique — les chapitres restants sont l'œuvre du «commun anonyme», chacun apportant ses lumières, son point de vue, module par l'inspiration de l'Esprit, la méditation, l'attrait de la grâce et sa responsabilité vis-à-vis de Dieu et de ses Frères. Rien ne fut retenu qui n'eut été vécu (ms Bernard, p. 76); la pratique devint vie. C'est avec ce matériau humain que M. de La Salle rédigea son code de perfection qu'est la Règle de l'Institut, la loi du religieux" (CL 40¹, 207).

Nevertheless, in the Apostolic process on the "Writings of the Venerable John Baptist de La

Salle", the attribution of the Rule to De La Salle was categorically rejected. Cardinal Goussed, Archbishop of Rheims, who was entrusted with examining the writings of the Founder, concluded: "Je crois que ni les règles d'une sage critique, ni celles de l'équité, ne permettent... que ces écrits puissent être regardés comme étant son ouvrage..." (Letter to Cardinal Lambruschini, Rheims, 27th July, 1851). The Congregation of Rites decreed that none of the works which bore the name of "the servant of God" were attributable to him, not even the Rule, since Cardinal Goussed, interpreting the declaration made by Brother Barthelemy at the end of the 1718 Rule in the strictest fashion, indicated that it could not be attributed to De La Salle as his own work according to the strictest interpretation given to this by the Sacred Congregation.

The rejection of the claim to authorship of his works facilitated the development of the process of the Cause for his beatification but subsequent studies were to prove that such a rejection was a major error. Curiously, with regard to the Rule, it was the discovery of the manuscript of 1705 in the Municipal Library of Avignon, by Brother Saturninus in 1897, which corroborated what the biographies said about the editing of the rules. That the Institute itself was clear about the authorship of the Rule is revealed in the letter of Brother Timothy at the end of the 1726 edition: "Nous déclarons être selon que le Serviteur de Dieu Monsieur Jean-Baptiste de La Salle nôtre Vénéral Instituteur les a composées, et ensuite mis en ordre du consentement des Frères Directeurs de notredite Société..." (cf. CL 40¹, pp. 205-208).

3.2.4. *The Contents of the 1718 Rule (CL 25)*

A glance at the titles of the chapters is sufficient to indicate the aspects of life with which the Rule was concerned:

1. De la fin, et de la nécessité de cet Institut.
2. De l'Esprit de cet Institut.
3. De l'Esprit de Communauté de cet Institut et des Exercices qui s'y feront en commun.
4. Des Exercices de Piété qui se pratiqueront dans cet Institut.
5. Des Exercices d'Humiliation et de Mortification qui se pratiqueront dans cet Institut.
6. De la manière dont les Frères doivent se com-

porter dans les Recréations.

7. De la manière dont les Frères doivent se comporter dans les Ecoles à l'égard de leurs Ecoliers

8. De la manière dont les Frères doivent se comporter dans les Corrections qu'ils pourront faire aux Ecoliers

9. De la manière dont les Frères doivent se comporter dans les Ecoles à l'égard d'eux-mêmes, à l'égard de leurs Frères, et à l'égard des Personnes externes.

10. Des Jours et des Temps que les Frères feront l'Ecole, et des Jours auxquels ils donneront Congé aux Ecoliers.

11. De l'Inspecteur des Ecoles

12. De la manière dont les Frères doivent se comporter à l'égard du Frère Directeur

13. De la manière dont les Frères doivent se comporter envers leurs frères et de l'union qu'ils doivent avoir entre eux.

14. De la manière dont les Frères doivent se comporter avec les Personnes Externes.

15. De la manière dont les Frères doivent se comporter.

16. De la Régularité.

17. Des Voeux.

18. De la Pauvreté.

19. De la Chasteté.

20. De l'Obéissance. Du silence.

21. De la Modestie.

22. Des Malades.

23. Des Prières que l'on doit faire pour les Frères morts.

24. Des Voyages.

25. Des Lettres.

26. De la langue Latine.

27. Exercices Journaliers.

28. Exercices particuliers des Dimanches et Fêtes.

29. Exercices Particuliers des Jours de Congé.

30. Ce qui doit se pratiquer d'extraordinaire dans les Exercices Journaliers certains jours de l'année.

31. Règlement Journalier pour le temps des Vacances.

32. Règle pour le temps de la retraite commune qui se fera pendant les vacances.

Rénovation des voeux (formule)

Accompanying letter

3.3. The "rule of the Brother Director"

De La Salle was very conscious of the fact that the observance of the Rule in a community depended in large measure on the Director. Besides this the Director also had special responsibilities with regard to the Brothers, to people outside the community, to the school, and to community life. Consequently, it is probable that he very quickly considered the drawing up of a series of rules of

conduct for the Directors of the houses. We do not know exactly the specific way he came to draw these up but undoubtedly it will not have been very different from the way he followed in the elaboration of the Common Rules. In other words, the lived experience preceded the editing and this was accompanied by an exchange of opinions by all those concerned before arriving at the definitive form of each prescription. Later, when the Rule was then in written form, certain prescriptions were modified in the light of suggestions made by the Directors themselves. This process is not specifically mentioned in the biographies but it was his characteristic way of working.⁹³

Blain indicates that the writing of this rule took place "vers l'année 1700"⁹⁴ without being more specific. A manuscript copy was sent to each house and the Director had to read it during spiritual reading on Thursdays and Sundays. Moreover, it was to be read publicly in the dining-room on the first Thursday of every month during mealtime. This was not easy since, at times, such a reading indicated certain faults of the Director with the consequent embarrassment. De La Salle received some complaints with regard to this as well as suggestions that it should not be read in public but he did not give way maintaining the practice "avec une fermeté inflexible".⁹⁵

Blain says⁹⁶ that by 1686 the weekly fast by rota had been established in all communities. Each Brother fasted on the day that he went to communion and the objective of this mortification was "pour demander à Dieu de dignes Frères Directeurs".⁹⁷ It was in the assembly of the "Frères anciens" (Blain) in Paris, probably in 1710, that it was agreed that weekly fast for all should be on Friday. The biographers note that De La Salle did not break his own daily fast for this intention and they indicate that he continued this practice for four years including Sundays and feasts irrespective of how solemn they were.⁹⁸

At the Assembly of 1717 — in which Brother Barthelemy was elected Superior and the days following Trinity Sunday were devoted to a revision of the Rule — the theme of the Rule of the Brother Director was also covered. The 16 members of the Assembly were Directors and they resisted the temptation to modify the norms of their own Rule. Throughout 1718 the communities re-

ceived copies of the Common Rules and the Rule of the Brother Director and the latter Rule, like the Common Rule, was authenticated by the initials of Brother Barthelemy on each sheet. Our knowledge of this Rule comes from the copy sent to Saint-Denis where Brother John Francis was Director. At the end of the Rule, in the accompanying letter of Brother Barthelemy, one finds the date 3rd October 1718. There are no extant copies of the original edition with the text of 1700. The copy that we do possess contains 20 pages, 19 x 15.5 cm, of which 14 carry text.

The contents of this Rule is divided into three parts. The first part corresponds to the title — the Rule of the Brother Director — but there are two other parts which are more general: one deals with the clothing of the Brothers and the other deals with food. This copy is preserved in the archives of the Mother House and has been reproduced in CL 25 as a continuation of the Common Rules. S. Gallego suggests that this work should be considered in conjunction with two other writings which the experts attribute to the Founder and whose authorship can be deduced from an examination of the texts. The two works are "Advice of John Baptist De La Salle to Brothers with responsibilities" (9 pages, ACG: BO 776-1) and "The Qualities which the Brother Directors of the houses of the Institute must possess in order to carry out their functions well" (4 pages, ACG: *ibid*).

3.4. "Les Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité Chrétienne"

De La Salle wrote various educational and pedagogical works. Without doubt daily contact with the school and with the Brothers made him aware of the lack of existing provision. He was undoubtedly aware of other books but did not consider them appropriate for school and, faced with this difficulty, his response was to develop the texts himself which he felt necessary for the schools. Blain tells us that it was during a period of enforced rest when he was recovering from "housemaid's knee" that he set about writing some of these works. However, the work required much longer time, as much to develop and structure the texts as to correct and edit them and, undoubtedly, before editing them he gave much con-

sideration to the subject and to the contents.

The fact is that he already had this very important work, containing 264 pages, written in 1702 because on 2nd November of that year he sought permission to publish a number of works which he had written. The permission was sought from Abbot Bignon, who was responsible for the examination of books for publication, and among the texts presented was precisely "Les Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité chrétienne". The printing proofs were prepared by a printer in Troyes which indicates that on a previous journey to this town he had consulted the printer about a possible publication, had left the original with him and that the necessary time for the preparation of a book of 264 pages had now elapsed. However, the type of lettering used in the preparation of this work was not the same as that in the other texts. It was a kind of gothic print which is very difficult to read to-day and was also very difficult to read then. The book was intended to be used in the Christian Schools for reading with the more advanced pupils and consequently it appears that this particular typology was chosen so as to give the pupils practice in it.

As indicated above, the permission, requested by "the superior of the Christian Schools" was sought on November 2nd 1702 after which developments unfolded rapidly. Thus, for example, on December 26th 1703, the Censor, Ellies du Pin, declared that among the works he had read was "Les Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité chrétienne" and that he had found everything in it in conformity with the Catholic faith, piety and good custom. On January 23rd a 5 year permission for publication was granted and on 28th of January the Royal Warrant was granted in Versailles. On February 6th the book was registered with the Guild of Printers and Booksellers in Paris under the signature of one of the trustees, Trabouillet, while on February 15th the book appeared in Troyes with the date on the last page and with the phrase "la première fois" indicating that it was a first edition. The other books for which De La Salle was granted publication permission on the same date were to require more time before being printed. Some, in fact, to be delayed for months.

This book, which was sold in Rheims by François Godard, Bookseller, rue des Tapissiers,

was for school use, as is indicated on the title page with the words "a l'usage des Ecoles chrétiennes». According to the level of the pupils other books were also used in the same way so that the pupils had practice in reading and at the same time learned about politeness or about religion etc. "Les Règles de la Bienséance" was used with those who were proficient in reading and in the penultimate level; "... those who could read French perfectly and were in the third level of Latin..." (Conduct, 39). However, this work was to go beyond the School and very soon more editions were produced with the gothic lettering abandoned while the book itself became known as "Civilité". Thus, through the pupils the book came to be widely known and there was a great demand for it. In De La Salle's own life-time we know of four other editions - 1708 (Paris-Rivière); 1713 (perhaps in Troyes); 1715 (Ruán-Besogney); 1716 - (Troyes-Paris, Widow Oudot). The last two were produced in norm lettering while there is also mention of a 1711 edition of which there are no extant copies (CL 19, p. IV, note 4).

The first edition prepared for girls appeared in 1722 in which what was exclusively male was omitted and additional special sections were added for girls. From 1729 the official edition suppressed the feminine sections and dealt exclusively with males. There have been numerous editions of this work as has been indicated in the "Edition critique des Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité Chrétienne" Paris, Ligel, 552 pages) produced in 1955 by Brother Albert-Valentin, in which he attempted to indicate the known editions numbered at that time as 176. However, this is certainly incomplete since not even the first edition, which was only discovered in 1960, is listed and it could be that there are other editions of which no extant copies remain. Moreover, as Y. Poutet has shown, there have also been forged editions."

Books on courtesy were not uncommon in De La Salle's time but it is obvious that he did not find them suitable for school use perhaps mainly because of their more general orientation. He undoubtedly took aspects from other works as Gallego recognises: "... he made no attempt to hide the fact of taking inspiration from others; however, he selected, adapted, developed, organized didactically and, above all, christianized the norms

of good upbringing. Courtesy appears as the spontaneous expression of charity and not as the veneer of hypocrisy".¹⁰⁰ In speaking of this work, Blain comments: "... On prétend que M. De La Salle est de tous les Auteurs qui ont écrit sur ce sujet, celui qui l'a fait avec plus de succès: Il a su y employer pour preuves des Exemples tirez de la Sainte Ecriture et des Peres de l'Eglise, et faire entrer dans le détail des devoirs de civilité et de bienséance, les pratiques de l'humilité Chrétienne et les maximes de l'Evangile. Aussi faut-il, avouer que de tous les ouvrages du saint Prêtre, celui-ci est le plus travaille».¹⁰¹

- ¹ CE 35 C
- ² CE 74 B.
- ³ RB 103 B.
- ⁴ RB 7 E.
- ⁵ RB 63 B.
- ⁶ RB 7 E.
- ⁷ RB 3 D.
- ⁸ RB 150 B.
- ⁹ RB 192 A.
- ¹⁰ RB 246 E.
- ¹¹ MF 111,1.
- ¹² RC 16.1.
- ¹³ RC 16.4.
- ¹⁴ RC 2,10.
- ¹⁵ RC 1
- ¹⁶ RC27. 11.
- ¹⁷ DA IX B.
- ¹⁸ RB 185 A.
- ¹⁹ CE 53 C.
- ²⁰ CE 133 B.
- ²¹ R210. 18.
- ²² DA 477 D.
- ²³ CE 180 B; 181 C.
- ²⁴ DA 176 C.
- ²⁵ I 115 A.
- ²⁶ EM 118 D.
- ²⁷ RC 21.,3.
- ²⁸ Da 186 E.
- ²⁹ Da 16 D.
- ³⁰ Da 387 D.
- ³¹ RC 8.1.
- ³² Da 147 D.
- ³³ RB 17 A.
- ³⁴ MD 30,1.
- ³⁵ R 187.13.
- ³⁶ CE 166 D.
- ³⁷ Db 138 R.
- ³⁸ R218.II.
- ³⁹ RB 159 E.
- ⁴⁰ RB 160 C.
- ⁴¹ RC23.3.
- ⁴² R 85.21; 87.2; 87.20; RC 4.4.
- ⁴³ MD 60,3; MD 56,3.
- ⁴⁴ R 57.7.

⁴⁵ CE 196 B.
⁴⁶ FD 8 A.
⁴⁷ R 49.4; 49.12.
⁴⁸ Da 442 C.
⁴⁹ L 58.7.
⁵⁰ RB 11 C.
⁵¹ Da 176 B.
⁵² Da 228 B.
⁵³ MF 85.2.
⁵⁴ CE 115.
⁵⁵ RC 15.1.
⁵⁶ Da 316 D; MF 135,1; MF 153,2.
⁵⁷ MD 76,3.
⁵⁸ R 159.19.
⁵⁹ L 35.2.
⁶⁰ MD 75,1.
⁶¹ RC 16.
⁶² CL 15, 159-161.
⁶³ MH 1.2.
⁶⁴ RC 1.
⁶⁵ L 32.10.
⁶⁶ FD 6 B.
⁶⁷ MD 12,2.
⁶⁸ MD 75,2.
⁶⁹ I 77 E.
⁷⁰ MF 170,1.
⁷¹ RC 16.4.
⁷² FD 5 F.
⁷³ R 159. 16.
⁷⁴ L 49. 11.

⁷⁵ MD 42.2.
⁷⁶ MD 69.2.
⁷⁷ R 24. 9.
⁷⁸ R 117.6.
⁷⁹ MD 64,1.
⁸⁰ L 35.9.
⁸¹ L 36.10.
⁸² MD 72,1.
⁸³ R 63.20.
⁸⁴ FD 6 E.
⁸⁵ L 35.2.
⁸⁶ FD 6 B.
⁸⁷ FD 5 E.
⁸⁸ R 184.9.
⁸⁹ POUTET, Y., *"Le XVII^e siècle et les origines lasalliennes, 2,*
p. 745.
⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 745-747.
⁹¹ GALLEGGO, S., *"Vida y pensamiento de S.J.B. De La Salle",*
Vol. 1, p. 189.
⁹² Cf. CL 16.
⁹³ CL 8, 146.
⁹⁴ *Ibid.*
⁹⁵ *Ibid.*
⁹⁶ CL 8, 145.
⁹⁷ *Ibid.*
⁹⁸ CL 8, 146.
⁹⁹ ÉOUTET, Y., *"Les Livres pédagogiques de Jean-Baptiste de*
La Salle". Revue d'histoire du livre, 1980, 36-41.
¹⁰⁰ O.c. 2, 837.
¹⁰¹ CL 8, 457.

Complementary themes:

Community; Decorum and Christian Civility; Director; Exercises; Formation; Modesty; Mortification; Renunciation-Detachment; Silence; World and relations with the world.

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55. SACRAMENTS

Summary:

1. The Sacraments in the apostolic project of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. - 2. The Sacraments in the divine plan. 2.1. Jesus Christ, author of the Sacraments. 2.2. The Sacraments: the Church's means of sanctification. 2.3. The Sacraments, outward signs of grace. -3. Unity and diversity of the Sacraments. 3.1. Baptism - Confirmation. 3.2. Penance - Extreme Unction. 3.3. Eucharist - Holy Orders. 3.4. Marriage. 3.5. Conclusion. - 4. The Sacraments in the spiritual life. 4.1. The Sacraments in general. 4.2. Baptism. 4.3. Confirmation. 4.4. The Sacrament of Penance. 4.5. Extreme Unction. 4.6. The Eucharist.

1. THE SACRAMENTS IN THE APOSTOLIC PLAN OF THE F.S.C.

Already in the first Chapter of the Common Rules, St. John Baptist de La Salle speaks of the Mysteries of our religion and of the Sacraments:

"The end of the Institute is to impart a Christian education to children". This education consists in "teaching them to live well thanks to the instruction given them in the mysteries of our religion and inspiring them with the Christian maxims" (RC 2,3).

Why is this education so important? John Baptist de La Salle draws up a very clear diagnosis:

"All disorders, especially among the working-class and the poor, usually arise from their having been, in childhood, left to themselves and badly brought up. It is almost impossible to repair this evil at a more advanced age, because the bad habits they have acquired are overcome only with great difficulty, and scarcely ever entirely, no matter what care may be taken to destroy them, whether by frequent instructions or the use of the sacraments" (RC 1 6).

John Baptist de La Salle is deeply convinced that doctrine and life are inseparable. One must therefore forestall at all costs an irreparable dam-

age. It is not at all surprising that we find in the MR a complete programme of initiation to the mysteries of the Christian religion:

"The chief care of the apostles, after teaching the first faithful, was to have them receive the sacraments, assemble for prayer together, and live according to the Christian spirit. Above everything else, this is what you are obliged to do in your ministry. In imitation of the apostles, you must be especially careful that those whom you teach receive the SACRAMENTS, that they are made ready to receive CONFIRMATION with the proper dispositions in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit and the graces which this sacrament produces. You must watch that they go to CONFESSION often after learning how to do this well. You must dispose them to receive their first HOLY COMMUNION with holy dispositions and to go to Communion FREQUENTLY thereafter in order to preserve the grace they received the first time they performed this action.

"Oh, if you knew the great good that you procure for them in preserving and increasing grace by their frequent reception of the sacraments, you would never let up teaching them about this!" (MR 200.2).

In the seventh chapter of the Common Rules, John Baptist de La Salle reminds the Brothers that:

"They shall however, make it their first and princi-

pal duty to teach their pupils the morning and evening prayers, the commandments of God and of the Church, the responses at Holy Mass, the Catechism, the duties of a Christian [of which more than a quarter are connected with the sacraments] and the maxims and practices which our Lord left us in the Holy Gospel (RC 7, 5).

And further on: "On school days the Brothers shall take the pupils to the nearest church for HOLY MASS" (RC 7, 7).

To conclude: let us not forget that in his testament, John Baptist de La Salle recommends to his Brothers:

"to have a great devotion to our Lord, a great love for HOLY COMMUNION and mental prayer, and a special devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin and to Saint Joseph, the Patron and Protector of their Society; and to acquit themselves of their work with zeal and disinterestedness, and maintain an intimate union among themselves and blind obedience to their Superiors for this is the foundation and support of all perfection in a community" (CL 10,118).

2. THE SACRAMENTS IN THE DIVINE PLAN

When John Baptist de La Salle speaks of the Sacraments, he is careful to specify that he is referring to MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION which GOD in his goodness places at man's disposal through JESUS CHRIST in the CHURCH.

2.1. Jesus Christ, author of all the Sacraments

"It is Jesus Christ who is the author of all the Sacraments of the New Law; having come on earth to sanctify man and having acquired a very large number of merits and graces by his death; He found a way to apply them to them through the Sacraments which he instituted for that purpose" (Da 204).

2.2. The Sacraments, the Church's means of salvation

John Baptist de La Salle likes to speak of the Sacraments of the Church, received in Church. It is an expression which does not exist in the catechism books of Joly and Le Coreur which he consulted.

"Q. Which are the advantages enjoyed in this world by those who belong to the Church?

"A. There are four main ones, namely:

1. They belong to the Communion of saints, i.e. they have a share in the prayers and merits of the Saints and of all the Christians.
2. They obtain the remission and pardon of their sins.
3. They receive graces from Our Lord.
4. They receive the Sacraments of the Church (Db 64, cf. Db 4).

"Q. Which means did God give us to obtain habitual grace, and to increase and preserve it in us?

"A. The Sacraments of the CHURCH.

"Q. How many Sacraments are there in the Church?

"A. There are seven: ... (Db 143; cfr. Da 202). Information about the Sacraments in Db and GA begins invariably with the question:

"Q. Which is the first (second, etc) Sacrament of the Church?

John Baptist de La Salle does not fail to point out that a sacrament is valid when the person administering it intends to do what the *Church* orders to that end and to do what Christ has instituted (Da 202; Db 153).

This remark too is not included in the works of Joly and Le Coreur.

2.3. The Sacraments, tangible signs of grace

The "Sacraments of the Church" are "outward signs of grace which God has established to sanctify men" (Da 200; cf. Db 144). They therefore occupy a place in the designs of God who conducts and rules everything in an admirable way and with great wisdom. "He is so good that he caters for all his creatures' needs" (Da 16).

Through the Sacraments, man penetrates the realm of mystery. "Baptism makes us Children of God and of the Church, Members of Jesus Christ and Living Temples of the Holy Spirit" (Da 212; cfr. Db 157).

Men's relation with God is made up of intimacy with the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

That is rendered possible because "God to accommodate himself to man's nature (made up of body and soul) thought it fit to grant him his graces only through means that fitted his nature and for that reason these means are tangible" (Da 200).

John Baptist de La Salle goes further:

"Man is so materialistic and unrefined that he is drawn willingly and naturally to exterior things, while he easily neglects the spiritual and interior ones; for this reason, God granted him as of necessity supernatural gifts and especially grace, through tangible things, to help him concentrate more easily on interior things, and take his mind and heart off the penchant he has towards things that are purely exterior.

"If Man, says St. Chrysostom, had been purely spiritual, God would have given him grace and the gifts which concern the soul, without resorting to any exterior or other means, as he did with the angels" (Da 199-200).

3. UNITY AND DIVERSITY OF THE SACRAMENTS

John Baptist de La Salle stresses how the various sacraments are related to each other and which is their place in the New Law: the Law of Grace.

3.1. Baptism Confirmation

"Baptism is the first of all the Sacraments, ... it is the Gateway to the Spiritual Life" (Da 211). ... "It is also the most necessary of all (the Sacraments) because it is not absolutely necessary to receive the other Sacraments but one cannot be saved if one has not been baptized" (Db 157). "Confirmation ... must be the first Sacrament to be received after baptism" (Db 166). "It is the crowning and consummation of Baptism" (Da 232).

3.2. Penance and Extreme Unction

Jesus Christ "instituted the sacrament of Penance as a sovereign remedy for all sins which would be committed after baptism" (Da 280). "The sacrament of Penance has been called by the Doctors of the Church a sort of painful and laborious Baptism" (Da 335).

"Extreme-unction is called by the Council of Trent the consummation of Penance" (Da 356).

Baptism and Confirmation, Penance and Extreme-Unction are therefore intimately related and through them we achieve our salvation.

Baptism gives us Sanctifying grace, Penance helps us to recover it. Confirmation and Extreme-Unction are the consummation of either our spiri-

tual growth or of our life of penance (cfr. Da 205).

3.3. The Eucharist - Holy orders

We have then the EUCHARIST which is both Sacrament and Sacrifice. In our spiritual life, there is first the Sacrifice of the Mass.

"Of all the actions that are ordinarily performed every day, the principal and most excellent is assistance at Holy Mass" (I. 3).

"The Sacrifice of the Mass honours God in the highest way possible, because it is his own Son who renders him homage by annihilating himself and destroying himself as far as possible for the glory of God: and those who assist at Holy Mass and take part in it, honour also God in the highest manner available to them, through their union with Jesus Christ.

"This sacrifice provides us with the means to thank God in the most perfect manner possible, by offering him his own Son in thanksgiving" (I 7).

Union with Jesus Christ is realized through the reception of the Sacrament of the Eucharist "the most august and holy of all; because it contains what is greatest and holiest which is Jesus-Christ as God and as Man" (Da 242).

"It is called the Holy Sacrament par excellence" (Da 206).

"The Fathers of the Church call it "the perfection and consummation of the sacraments and of all the graces" (Da 401).

With regard to the Sacrament of Holy Orders, John Baptist de La Salle will stress its association with the Holy eucharist.

"Holy Orders is the Sacrament which represents for us the Priesthood of Jesus-Christ and his role as Mediator between God and mankind" (Da 366). "It has been found necessary to set up in the Church Officials and Ministers of Jesus-Christ who would offer to God the Sacrifice of the Eucharist and administer the Sacraments to the faithful, and instruct them in their religion and all their duties. Through the Institution of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, Jesus Christ, the sovereign legislator of the Law of Grace, Teacher and Head of the Church, has provided the means to do it" (Da 365). "There are seven grades in this Sacrament: The Priesthood, the Diaconate, the Sub-Diaconate which are called Major Orders and the Porter, the Lector, the Exorcist and the Acolyte which are cal-

led the Minor Orders. All these Orders have been instituted to make known the excellence of our *MYSTERIES* which require the services of so many Officials, some of whom consecrate the Eucharist, others distribute it and others prepare the people to receive it" (Da 367-368).

3.4. Marriage

John Baptist de La Salle will delve deeply into the mystery of the sacrament of Marriage while referring clearly to the effects of Baptism:

"St. Paul says that this Sacrament is a mystery that is great, it applies to Jesus Christ and the Church, and in fact it represents the Indissoluble Marriage of Jesus Christ with the Church and the union of human nature with the Word in the Incarnation, who did not unite himself in it but to give God his Father children who would be worthy of Him and live of his Spirit. It is also the intention of Jesus Christ and of God himself in the institution of Marriage, that the husband be one with his wife, through God's Spirit, with the sole intention of providing *Members to Jesus Christ and Sons to his Church*" (Da 378).

3.5. Conclusion

After this general survey on the Sacraments, we can state that John Baptist de La Salle has a comprehensive idea of the Christian mystery. In his view, there are two sacraments which need to be brought to the fore: Baptism and the Eucharist. All our supernatural life is contained in them. Hence, it is very interesting to see how he made his own a comparison quoted in the Catechism of the Council of Trent.

"Just as there are seven things which are necessary for man to live and preserve the life of his body, publicly as well as privately, the soul also needs many different things, to have and preserve the life of grace".

"Man must be born, must grow, be nourished, be cured when he is sick, grow strong and recover his forces. Concerning his public life, he needs enough OFFICIALS to direct him, to perpetuate himself and to grow in number. Man finds all he needs for his supernatural life in the Sacraments. For it is by Baptism that we are engendered in Christ; through Confirmation, we acquire strength and an increase in grace; it is the Eucharist, as if through a spiritual food, that our soul feeds itself; Penance helps to cure our soul, when it is wounded by sin; through

Extreme Unction, what remains of our sins is forgiven and we receive a special power enabling us to combat and triumph over the enemies of our salvation at the hour of death; Holy Orders empower the Ministers of the Church to guide it and rule over it and Marriage leads to the procreation of children and to bring them up in the fear and service of God" (Da 203).

4. THE SACRAMENTS IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

4.1. The Sacraments in general

In order to understand well the role of the Sacraments in the spiritual life, according to St. John Baptist de La Salle, one must keep in mind that he writes on several occasions "that they consecrate us to God" (cfr. Da 201). De La Salle and his Brothers have "lived" this Consecration in a practical way: by consolidating their vocation as Christians and binding themselves by the vows they made. Thus we see how the sacramental life, the vocation and the mission are linked together.

The sacraments "consecrate us to God by the grace they impart to us" (FDa 201).

This grace makes of us:

"the beloved children of God, the brothers and coheirs of Jesus Christ, and gives us the right to eternal glory. It is also the thing we must consider most precious in this world, since, if we possess it, we possess God himself, enjoy even in this world his holy Love and if we die in a state of grace we shall possess him eternally in heaven" (195).

4.2. Baptism

We shall now see what John Baptist de La Salle teaches us about the effects of the first sacrament on divine adoption and inhabitation.

"Baptism, gateway to the spiritual life, (as we have already pointed out) "is a sacrament which frees us from original sin and all the others we may have committed before receiving it, and makes us children of God and of the Church, Members of Jesus Christ and living Temples of the Holy Spirit" (FDa 211-212).

John Baptist de La Salle develops at length this definition. To begin with, he refers to the re-

mission of sins:

"Baptism is defined by its effects, because we can only realise the greatness and excellence of this Sacrament by its effects on the soul. These are considerable for not only are we freed through baptism from original sin and all actual sins we may have committed if we possessed the use of reason before receiving it, but the punishment which they deserve, according to the teachings of the Council of Trent, is completely remitted and the baptised has no obligation to atone for them" (Da 212).

John Baptist de La Salle likes to stress the full power of baptismal remission, compared with that of the Sacrament of Penance, in which the punishment due for sins is not entirely remitted.

He then goes on with an exposition in which he tries to explain in simple language and by a comparison what is habitual grace:

"This Sacrament gives the soul a very abundant grace which sanctifies it and renders it pleasing to God. That is what Tertullian means when he says "that the body is washed in Baptism so that the soul may be sanctified".

"It is thanks to this grace that we are made CHILDREN OF GOD because this grace makes us share in the holiness which God possesses naturally and it is in giving it to us that he adopts us as his Children and that he assures us that if we preserve this grace we shall inherit his Glory in heaven" (Da 212).

This theme of the divine adoption so rich for the spiritual life is referred to several times in Da and Db and DC. We already came across it when we dealt with Marriage.

But through Grace we are not only adopted by God, we also become Children of the Church. Let us listen to John Baptist de La Salle:

"When we receive this Sacrament, we have the happiness of becoming *Children of the Church* and that is when we acquire the right to participate in all her benefits and particularly in applying to ourselves the merits of Jesus Christ through the reception of the sacraments. We all have a share in them in proportion to the Grace and Love of God which is in us" (Da 213).

In Db, we find more detailed information:

"Q. Why do we become Children of the Church?"

"A. For three reasons. 1. Because when we receive this sacrament we submit to the authority of the

Church and what it commands. 2. Because it nourishes and elevates spiritually those who have received it. 3. Because they are entitled to share in all the spiritual benefits of the Church" (Db 157-158).

The first two reasons are not to be found in Joly. John Baptist de La Salle wishes here to stress the Church's role in our spiritual life.

In the definitions which Joly and Le Coreur give of Baptism, the fact that we become Members of Jesus Christ and Living Temples of the Holy Spirit is not mentioned. The Trinitary perspective is therefore John Baptist de La Salle's own.

"Baptism opens to the soul that receives it the Gate of Heaven which had formerly been closed and expels from it the Devil which possessed it. That is what the Church means by the exorcism that the priest performs on the person to be baptised. At that same time, the devil leaves the soul and the Holy Spirit takes possession of it; for this reason, we are told that through Baptism we become Temples of the Holy Spirit" (Da 213).

This topic recurs in the writings of John Baptist de La Salle.

In the second manner in which we consider God present in ourselves as expounded in "Explication de la Methode d'Oraison", John Baptist de La Salle provides us with a remarkable explanation of it (EM 15-19).

However, there is yet another effect, the last one:

"In this Sacrament, we receive the Spirit of Jesus Christ and are united to him in a manner so particular and intimate that as soon as we receive it, we become MEMBERS OF HIS SON made man" (Da 213).

The Christian will achieve this union with Jesus-Christ in an exemplary manner by atoning for his sins and those of others, by offering with the priest the Sacrifice of the Mass, and receiving Holy Communion.

In their morning and evening community prayers and in the R. and EM. (in the first as well as in the second part), John Baptist de La Salle suggests to his Brothers Acts of Union with Jesus Christ.

Let us now see which are the Effects of Confirmation, Penance, Extreme Unction and Holy

Eucharist. We shall also note the very close connection they have with the qualities of Child of God and of the Church, of Member of Jesus Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit.

4.3. Confirmation

Let us deal first with Confirmation where the connection with Baptism is more explicit:

"The second of the Sacraments is Confirmation which increases in us the grace of Baptism by giving us the fullness of the Holy Spirit. "This sacrament is called Confirmation because of its main effects, which are to strengthen us in the faith and to fortify considerably the grace we receive in Baptism. We also confirm and ratify in this sacrament the promises we made solemnly at Baptism. "It is Jesus Christ who has instituted this Sacrament in order to make us participate in his unction and in the plenitude of his grace and spirit" (Da 231-232). "The advantages this Sacrament procures are so great and so important, that the Holy Fathers comparing Confirmation with Baptism say that it is its completion and crowning. In fact, the Holy Spirit is given in it in abundance and with his gifts, it is the same Spirit that the Apostles received visibly on Pentecost, that we receive invisibly in this sacrament" (Da 232).

John Baptist de La Salle has already put forward this idea in Da 61 and he repeats it three times in Db 53; 168; DC 181. He goes on, seeking inspiration in Le Coreur:

"This Holy Spirit increases in us three sorts of graces in Confirmation:

1. He makes Faith in Jesus Christ so strong in us that he puts us in condition to confess our faith even at the risk of losing our life;
2. He gives us sufficient strength to resist all that opposes our salvation; and
3. Patience to put up with the pains and miseries of this life for the sake of Jesus Christ" (Da 233).

In order to teach Christians the extent of the abnegation required at Baptism and shouldered at Confirmation, John Baptist de La Salle is now about to try to explain the exact nature of our spiritual combat.

"We have three enemies to fight against, all of whom oppose our salvation: the Devil, the World and the Flesh. The Devil is the leader of the angels who were damned; he makes use of all the spirits of

evil, as Scripture calls them, and through them he resorts to all sorts of ways to tempt us and bring about our damnation.

"By the World, we mean those men who live according to the spirit of the world and of that which in creatures may lead us to sin and the passion which may lead us to exhibit ourselves and live in luxury and frivolity.

"The Flesh is the inclination we experience to enjoy sensual pleasures, the weak attraction we feel towards what is good and our tendency towards evil; both of these have become so to say natural since the sin of Adam" (Da 234).

In MD 44 and MD 45 (for Monday and Tuesday of Pentecost), John Baptist de La Salle refers to the effects produced by the Holy Spirit in a soul, thanks to which it considers events through the eyes of faith and lives and acts through grace.

4.4. The Sacrament of Penance

Jon Baptist de La Salle dwells at length on the various parts of this Sacrament in Da. In the section on Contrition, he insists on the two types of love and the two types of fear of God.

"Now there are two types of love of God one of which causes contrition and the other accompanies attrition. The Love of God which brings about Contrition is a love called of FRIENDSHIP or benevolence; it makes us love God out of love for him and that is a perfect type of love. The other is a love prompted by self interest" (Da 292). "The fear of God is to be found in contrition as well as in attrition. However, this difference exists between the two: in the first place, contrition is not motivated by fear but by PURE CHARITY and PERFECT LOVE OF GOD; this fear, being a consequence of the love of God which is the real reason for contrition, is a respectful fear such as that of CHILDREN towards their FATHER. Hence, it is called FILIAL. On the contrary, as it motivates attrition, without being accompanied by any formal act of charity and love of God, it is the same fear as that of the SERVANT towards his MASTER and for that reason is called SERVILE (Da 293).

We may note how John Baptist de La Salle is imbued with the idea of a Perfect LOVE of God, pure POVERTY, how spontaneously he reverts to his intuition of divine adoption: we are Children and Friends of God.

It is therefore not surprising that in I (Prières avant la Confession), he seeks inspiration from all

that which in the Gospel refers to the Conversion of sinners and especially the Parable of the Prodigal SON. Among the famous converted sinners he mentions, let us recall the publican in the Parable, Mary-Magdalen, Zaccheus and Saint Peter.

In a first prayer entitled "The Return of the Sinner", John Baptist de La Salle urges us to share the sentiment of the Prodigal Son:

"How would I dare to appear before you, o my God?... I have in my heart an aversion towards you and I said to myself that I DID NOT WANT YOU TO BE MY GOD ANY LONGER. A deplorable state of a soul which you created exclusively to love you. I therefore desire, o my God, to FREE MYSELF FROM THE BONDAGE OF SIN, with the help of your holy grace. I ask you this insistently and fervently" (I 175-176).

Just like the Prodigal Son, the sinner confesses that he no longer wished to be a Child of God, he no longer cared for God's love. Among the prayers to be said after Confession, we find acts of thanksgiving to the persons of the Holy Trinity. A first act is addressed to the Father to thank him "for having clothed us with the robe of innocence like the Prodigal son":

"Eternal Father, ... you have come to meet me as the Father of the Prodigal Son and you have clothed me once more with this robe of innocence, with which you covered and honoured me in Holy BAPTISM, although I divested myself of it; you have given me back my RIGHT to YOUR INHERITANCE and you are ready to admit me once more at your BANQUET and to the WEDDING OF YOUR SON; I admire, o my God, the graces which you bestow on me and the happiness which I am enjoying after my sinful life; I would have considered it an honour to be treated as one of your servants but you consider me as your SON, as soon as I return to You" (1210-211).

We therefore find again the same topic of the filial adoption, enriched with the images of the Banquet and the Wedding of the Son, to express that we are Brothers and Members of Jesus Christ.

In a second act of thanksgiving, John Baptist de La Salle asks us to address the Son of God:

"Word Divine, Uncreated Wisdom, who became Man for the love of us... Today you are truly my Saviour: you have *returned me to the bosom of the Church* of which I was only a dead MEMBER and

at the same time you gave me a share of all her gifts and of your divine Spirit; you have even given me back all the RIGHTS which I had lost and you have shown me that YOU had come for sinners and not for the just since YOU are so keenly interested to make me recover your grace and the FREEDOM OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD" (I 211-212).

In this prayer, John Baptist de La Salle reminds us that we recover our friendship with God in the Church. We are once more the Children of the Church. We are invited to make an act of thanksgiving to the Holy Spirit who has purified our heart:

"Holy Spirit, who have animated Jesus Christ, who atoned for our sins, who constantly urge sinners to repent and who keep alive in the Just and the Saints a love for Penance, I thank you for the kindness You have shown me when you made my soul recover its interior purity so pleasing to you and be the object of your divine largesses... As I have gone astray through overconfidence in my own judgement, I abandon myself entirely to your will to PRESERVE ME IN A STATE OF GRACE and make me suffer the punishment my sins quite rightly deserve. "Do not forsake me, I implore you, and allow me to promise you NEVER TO COMPEL YOU TO WITHDRAW FROM ME" (I 212-213).

Whilst he refrains from repeating the same expressions he used in the explanation of the graces of Baptism, John Baptist de La Salle asks in this prayer to the Holy Ghost to make of us his Living Temples.

We could thus go on looking for abundant references to our filial adoption related to the Sacrament of Penance, but we must now conclude quoting the MR:

"Ah, what a thrill of joy you will get when you hear the voices of those whom you have led almost by the hand... "these men are servants of the Most High; they have made known to us the way of salvation!" (Ac. 16.17). Then they will represent the good you have done among them. Some will represent to Jesus Christ on the day of judgment the ROBE OF INNOCENCE you helped them keep in all its purity. Others will represent to him the trouble you took to help them wash away their sins IN THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB, and to lead them on the path of salvation.

"All of them will join in asking Jesus Christ to grant you a favourable judgment, praying him not to de-

lay putting you in possession of the happiness you procured for them by your work and your concern" (MR 208.3).

4.5. Extreme Unction

When John Baptist de La Salle refers to this Sacrament, he refrains from developing explicitly the theme of adoption and inhabitation, yet he shows clearly the intimate relation that exists between Baptism and Christ's return to earth.

Let us first consider the explanation of St. James' words: "He will ease his pain":

"(This Sacrament) strengthens and relieves the soul of the sick person, arousing in him a GREAT TRUST in the MERCY OF GOD, which makes him bear more easily the inconvenience and sufferings brought about by the illness, and makes him stronger and more prompt to react against the temptations and the snares which the Devil will have ready for him in this LAST EXTREMITY" (Da 355).

Thanks to Extreme Unction, we receive the grace to keep until the end the solemn promises we made at Baptism to renounce the Devil, the World and the Flesh and to believe in God (cfr. Da 288; 233-234). And besides:

"The second effect this Sacrament produces in the soul is the remission of sins expressed in these words of St. James: "If he is guilty of any sins, these will be forgiven him". First of all, the mortal ones which he remembers having committed, if, not being able to confess them and not having of them a perfect contrition, he receives the sacrament with attrition; "for then this sacrament acts as a substitute for Confession and perfect contrition and remits all the sins and, on this occasion, this sacrament is so necessary that one *would not be saved without it.*"

"Secondly, it remits the mortal sins the sick person is not aware of and those he may have forgotten... "This sacrament is called by the Council of Trent the Consummation of Penance, because it removes the residue of sin, freeing the soul from distaste, dejection, a certain numbness, a certain languidness and weakness which is a vestige of sin, from which the soul has not fully recovered through Penance" (Da 355-356).

The effect of Extreme Unction is therefore comparable to that of Baptism (cfr. Da 212) and it is precisely the explanation of this effect which in-

troduces the filial adoption theme. At the end of the chapter he wrote on Extreme Unction, John Baptist de La Salle writes:

"A blessed candle is placed in the hand of the sick person, when he is about to expire, to expel the Devils, who are Spirits of Darkness, through the particular power which this candle derives from the blessing of the priest and to prove that he wishes to die in the spirit of Christianity, which he already received at *Baptism*, during which a candle was placed in his hand; and that he wishes until the end to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and his doctrine, who is the true Light, to be himself an ARDENT AND SHINING LIGHT BEFORE GOD, which consumes itself for his Love, while he offers God the last moments of his life with the deepest affection of his heart" (Da 364-365).

To remain faithful to Christ, to be an ardent light, to consecrate to God the last moments of one's life, that is truly the way to go to meet the Spouse, to be ready to enter into the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity.

4.6. The Eucharist

How does John Baptist de La Salle view the Eucharist's role in our spiritual life? In the Instructions and Prayers (CL 17), he deals first with the Holy Mass and later with Confession and Communion. But there is a third aspect of the Eucharist to which John Baptist de La Salle attaches a very great importance. It is the attention and respect owed to Our Lord Jesus Christ really present and resident in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. It is interesting to note that these three aspects are to be found in the various names given to the Eucharist.

"The word Eucharist signifies grace or thanksgiving... It is called thanksgiving because it has been instituted and is OFFERED IN SACRIFICE to thank God through Jesus Christ for all the benefits corporal as well as spiritual we have received from him.

"It is called the Most Blessed Sacrament because it HOLDS IN IT JESUS CHRIST who is Holiness itself and because it imparts an intense holiness to those who receive it worthily. "It is called the Sacrament of the Altar, because the Altar is the place where it is CONSECRATED and KEPT. "It is called COMMUNION, because it unites inti-

mately to Jesus Christ those who receive it and because those who communicate are joined together by a sincere and exterior love. "It is called the SACRED HOST, because it contains JESUS CHRIST, who offered himself by dying on the cross and who continues to be offered every day in this Sacrament, when the host is CONSECRATED" (Da 243).

CONCLUSION

Concluding this survey of the role of the sacraments in the spiritual life, we may unhesitatingly state that John Baptist de La Salle focuses all his

spirituality regarding the sacraments on Baptism: filial adoption and inhabitation. We have not been able to enumerate all the explanations of the symbols and the ceremonies of the sacraments in Da, Db and DC. We have preferred to limit ourselves in a general way to the prayers contained in the *"Instructions et Prières pour la Sainte Messe, la Confession et la Communion"* (I, CL 17) where this topic recurs often on important occasions. But as these Instruction have not yet been the subject of an intense study and of a scientific publication, there was nothing else for me to do but to find my own way.

Complementary themes:

Consecration; Duties of a Christian; Church; Grace; Sanctification...

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56. SAINTS

Summary:

1. Some points with regard to Saints in 17th century France. - 2. The Saints in the writings of De La Salle. - 3. The teaching of De La Salle on the Saints. - 4. The Saint according to the vision of de La Salle. - 5. The Saints and the Brother. - 6. The Brother and the Saints.

1. SOME POINTS WITH REGARD TO THE SAINTS IN 17th CENTURY FRANCE

1.1 In 17th century France "the official recognition of sanctity was influenced by the decisions of the Council of Trent and, particularly, by the decree on the invocation and veneration of the saints and on the veneration of relics and holy images of the saints" (Session XXV).¹

1.2. Following this Council, the Church wished for a time "to demonstrate its vitality and capacity to renew itself, and to propose to Christians and the clergy more appropriate models adapted to changing circumstances".²

1.3. What leading spiritual reformers of the time were proposing by way of encouraging devotion to the saints can be seen from the "particular examen" proposed by Tronson to his seminarists for the feast of All Saints. Reflection on the lives of the saints should lead to detachment from created things and to a desire for the things of heaven; imitation of the virtues of the saints; the combatting of one's defects and passions and to the courageous overcoming of the obstacles to one's perfection; a sense of humiliation in the face of one's tepid and negligence in the service of God; confidence that God will grant the graces necessary to imitate the saints and to be able to share their happiness one day.³

1.4. In the 17th century there were 24 canonizations, one beatification and 24 proclamations of veneration. The process accelerated in the last third of the century in which there were 12 canonizations and 18 proclamations of veneration.⁴

1.5. Numerically, the countries which had most canonizations, beatifications and proclamations of veneration were Italy (22) and Spain (17). France had two.

1.6. Those figures proposed to the faithful for veneration and imitation in the 17th century were the great saints of the Catholic reformation, pastors who promoted the renewal of the Church such as Francis de Sales and Charles Borromeo; founders and renovators of religious orders at "the cutting edge" of the Catholic reformation such as Ignatius of Loyola, Philip Neri, Teresa of Avila, Peter of Alcantara; great religious such as Francis Borgia and zealous missionaries such as Francis Xavier; contemplatives and those devoted to prayer such as Magdalen of Pazzi; those devoted to the Eucharist such as Pascual Baylon; those faithful to the Church such as Francis Romana; governors and princes/princesses such as Isabel of Portugal; simple people such as Isidore, the peasant; a martyr, Peter Pascual, bishop of Jaen.⁵

1.7. Devotion to saints of an earlier age was still common in rural parishes whereas in newer

parishes this had been superseded by devotion in confraternities and Marian congregations. Moreover, religious families, including those recently reformed or instituted, honoured their patrons or the illustrious figures of their order⁶ and propagated their devotion among the faithful. Biographies of local saints were not so numerous but there was sufficient to indicate a veneration of the saints at all levels and in all places.⁷

1.8. There was much writing and hagiography proposing saints for each day of the liturgical year⁸ and this was a rich vein of the religious literature of the French Golden Age.⁹

1.9. The critical perspective in this hagiography is very superficial since the historical element was not a determining factor. "In the hagiography of the 17th century, piety was not in any way concerned with the historical. The life of a saintly person was of interest because it presented an "exemplum", the incarnation of certain aspects of sanctity; the faithful were to follow these living lessons and to copy the model. These edifying lives pertained more to spirituality than to biography; their value is religious".¹⁰

1.10. One of the characteristics of the so-called "French School of Spirituality" was the presentation of Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Word. In consequence, among the preferred saints of this time are those who were regarded as closest to Jesus such as St. Joseph, St. Mary Magdalene, St. John and the Apostles.¹¹

2. THE SAINTS IN DE LA SALLE

2.1. De La Salle makes many references to the saints in Da, Db and Dc. In Da and Db it is with reference to explaining the commandment of God and in speaking of prayer while in Dc it is in developing "the feasts instituted in honor of the saints". In the same way he frequently refers to them in Ga and in I while in R, although there are less references, they are very significant from the point of view of the characteristics proposed to the Brothers for imitation. While the theme of the saints is less frequent in Em, he nevertheless not only speaks of

them there but also indicates how one ought to speak of them. In his other works — CE, E, L, MD, MR, PA, RB, RC — there are few references to the theme. MF is the text which is almost completely devoted to this theme of the saints.

2.2. The meditations in MF number 108* of which 105 are of interest to us in this study since numbers 90, 91 and 92 refer not to saints but to the examination of conscience at the end of the year. Of these 105, 7 are dedicated to Jesus Christ (85, 86, 93, 96, 121, 152, 165) while have the theme of the Blessed Virgin (82, 104, 112, 141, 151, 156, 163, 164, 191).**

Besides meditations on Mary, De La Salle also dedicates a meditation to each of the people directly associated with Jesus; his grandparents (Joachim and Anna), his precursor (John the Baptist), his father (Joseph), his friends (Martha, Mary Magdalen), the Holy Innocents and the Apostles. Paul, "specially named apostle" (Dc 242), is also found among these as is Mathias who "was considered as one of the apostles even though he did not belong to the original 12" (Dc 269). Along with the meditations on the apostles and on the Evangelists, De La Salle also dedicates a large number of meditations to bishops, doctors, founders or reformers of religious orders, martyrs and priests: many belong to more than one category as in the case of St Teresa — virgin, reformer and doctor at the same time — or St. Basil — bishop, doctor and founder. Among those considered by De La Salle there are, naturally, a good number of French saints, although not as many as one might imagine. With regard to gender, De La Salle devotes 79 meditations to men (including Jesus Christ) and 20 to women (including the Blessed Virgin) of which the majority are virgins. Three

* There were 114 meditations in earlier Institute editions of MF but 6 of these — 83, 94, 103, 181, 184, 188 — cannot be attributed to De La Salle.

** In this work there are specific studies on Jesus Christ and on his Blessed Mother. In consequence, meditations with reference to these two themes, along with the other Lasallian teaching on the Saviour and on his Mother, will not be considered in this present article. This reduces the number of meditations under consideration to 89.

other meditations are devoted to the Holy Innocents, the Souls in purgatory and to All the Saints while another three are dedicated to the angels (St. Michael and the Guardian Angels). In the case of St. Michael, as with other Saints such as Peter, Paul, Augustine, John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, the Founder dedicates more than one meditation.

2.3. Why does De La Salle choose particular Saints for the consideration of the brothers?

A. Firstly, out of fidelity to the Church. "What are the principal feasts that the Church has instituted in honor of the Saints?" They are the feasts of: All Saints, the Faithful Departed, St Michael, the Guardian Angels, St. John the Baptist, the Apostles and the Evangelist, St. Joseph, St. Stephen, St. Lawrence, St. Martin, St. Nicholas, the Saints who are patrons of the Diocese and of the Parish, the dedication of the Churches (Dc 213; RC 10,10 and 30,6.9).

B. He recommended others because they were patrons of the Institute or of pupils as in the cases, for example, of St. Joseph and St. Cassian (R 62,10; MF 110,1; RC 10,8; 30,9; 30,21,13).

C. Others were recommended by the Founder because they were distinguished by a particular characteristic which he wanted to recommend to the Brothers such as, for example, the spirit of faith and of mortification; zeal for the salvation of one's neighbor (R 62,30); a horror of the world and the need to withdraw from it; recollection or retreat; prayer; detachment from everything (R 63,7). Hence his choice of St. John the Baptist, St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John the Evangelist, St. Ignatius (Martyr), St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, St. Vincent Ferrer,* St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis de Sales, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Francis Xavier, St. Philip Neri, St. Teresa.

D. In EM De La Salle suggests a personal motive for the choice of saints. In mental prayer one must invoke those saints for whom one "has a particular devotion" (EM 61; 87). He also indicates a more objective reason when he suggests that one must invoke the help of those saints who were present or had contributed in some way to the "mystery" (EM 88) or who were particularly outstanding in the practice of the "virtue" (EM

107) or the "maxim" (EM 121) on which one's meditation is based.

E. Obviously, one must also include the person of the Blessed Virgin; "...We only manifest our devotion to the Saints on certain days or at certain times of the year but the devotion we have for the Most Blessed Virgin must be continuous..." (MF 151,3). In meditating on the "mysteries" it is the Most Blessed Virgin who "preferably must always be invoked" (EM 88). Additionally, besides devotion to the Mother of God, one must also have "a particular devotion to one's own patron saint and to those saints whom one has an obligation to specially venerate as well as to those saints who are proposed as protectors for each month" (R 198,20).

2.4. In analyzing the list of feasts for which De La Salle has a meditation, one notices among them some which were celebrated in the France of the 17th century but which were not included in the Roman calendar - eg. St. Genevieve, the conversion of St. Augustine, St. Sulpice, St. Germanus — and others which no longer figure in the actual liturgical calendar — eg. the Invention of the Holy Cross, the name of Mary, the Apparition of St. Michael, St. Peter "ad vincula", the martyrdom of St. John the Evangelist, St. Peter of Verona, St. Alexis, St. Cassian, St. Marcellinus (Bishop of Paris) and St. Catherine (virgin and Martyr). The exclusion from the liturgical calendar of various of these feasts is prompted by a lack of historicity in the accounts on which the feast was based. In this, as in other aspects, De La Salle was consistent with the thinking and the knowledge of his time. In particular, he was dependent on the sources on which he drew.* Thus, for example, he attributed St. Romuald (MF 105,2) with the age of 120 years and draws theological and ascetical conclusions from it when this fact was probably the result of

* Although the Founder did not actually devote a meditation to this saint.

* As Brother Jean-Guy RODRIGUE (op. cit. p. 538) has demonstrated these sources were: "*the Martyrology of France*", PARIS; "*Les Fleurs de la vie des saints*", de RIBADENEIRA, p., and the "*Roman Breviary*".

an error by a copyist which was transmitted from one biography to another over many years.¹²

In De La Salle's time there were doubts over the identity of some of the saints honored in the liturgy, and over some of the actions attributed to them, but the official Church had not pronounced on such cases. Consequently, De La Salle, renowned for his fidelity to the Church followed common practice until the Church spoke.¹³ Hence, in this way he could describe the third century bishop of Paris, St. Denis, as the "Aeropagite", the same person whom St. Paul had converted to the "Unknown God", in spite of the fact that this version had begun to be challenged. In the same way he could comment on and transmit with ease historical traditions such as those of St. Alexis.¹⁴

3. DE LA SALLE'S TEACHING ON THE SAINTS

3.1. De La Salle's teaching on the saints is consistent with the teaching of the catechisms of his time exemplified by that of Trent.

3.2. In accordance with that teaching:

- In general terms, the saints were all the faithful in the state of grace — including those in Purgatory and those in heaven (Db 65).

- In the more restricted sense, and in the sense in which De La Salle practically always used the term, the saints were members of the "Church militant" who were proposed as examples for, among other things, their union with God (MD 67.1), their austerities (MF 113,3), their work for the salvation of souls and their detachment from created things (MF 179,1). They are now part of the "Church triumphant", that gathering of those in heaven (I 84; Da 64), united with God (MF 183,1), fulfilling the will (Db 281; GA 424) of Him in whom they are eternally happy (Da 456).

- There is a relationship between the saints and ourselves through which we form a single Church (I 84).

- They are concerned for our sanctification (I 84) and their one desire is that we join them (I 177). They ask pardon for us (Da 341). We separate our selves from them by our sins (Da 323) but their merits can be applied to us (Da 342) and they are happy when we are moved to penitence (Da 215).

- We may honor them as creatures but not adore them (Da 107; GA 357).

- Honoring them does not cause dishonor to God.

The honor that we give to them is less than that which we pay to the Lord (Da 421; GA 357) and, in fact, through the saints we are actually honoring God (Da 107; De 125; 215).

- We may also honor their relics (Da 109; GA 357) as well as possessing and venerating their images (Da 109; GA 358), not for the images in themselves but for the saints which they represent (Da 109; GA 358), placing candles and lamps before such images (Dc 29), offering incense to the saints represented by the images (Dc 48; 50), making vows in their honor but not to them (Db 88).

- We can direct our prayers to them (Da 451; GA 427) but not in the same way as to God (Db 290-291). We pray to them that they may intercede for us as our representatives or mediators (Da 109; 461; 463; Db 291; GA 421; 184) having confidence in their relationship with God as his friends and faithful servants (Da 108; 461; Db 291; Dc 215; GA 427). By themselves they can grant us nothing nor can they respond to our prayers (Da 109; 461; Db 291). The power and the merit of their prayers is Jesus Christ, the sole mediator (Da 463; Db 291).

- It is not obligatory to invoke the saints (Da 464; Db 292) but it is extremely useful and very traditional in the Church (Da 109; 461; 464; Db 292; EM 87-88).

- If it is necessary to invoke all the saints it is all the more necessary to frequently and specifically invoke the Most Blessed Virgin (Da 108; 464; 468; Db 292; Dc 159-212; GA 427-430).

3.3. Some of the doctrinal emphasis of the time which De La Salle assimilated can be better understood if it is seen from the perspective of the Church's concern to respond to Protestant attacks on devotion to the saints. Hence, for example, the emphasis that honoring the saints does not dishonor God and that devotion to the saints is very useful for the faithful. Such Catholic truths can be found in practically all the catechisms of the time - eg. Trent (414; 416; 417; 418); Fleury (345); Chartres (51; 70; 111); Clermont (265); Troyes (85; 101); Cesar de Bus (II 71+).¹⁵

4. DE LA SALLE'S VISION OF THE SAINT

De La Salle always has a particular insight when, in the meditations on the saints, he focuses on a characteristic of the saint whom he is considering. These characteristics, summarized in the context of a faith-journey, could be outlined as follows;

4.1. Some have been "favored by the grace of God" with a Christian education from an early age. Others have been converted later in life. However, without exception, they have separated themselves from the world, many in a physical sense and all from its spirit, and have given themselves radically to God.

4.2. This self-giving entails an ascetical attempt to detach oneself from created things and from the comforts of life. It entails poverty and detachment, an austere life of renunciation of the senses, penance, sacrifice, mortification, suffering, humiliation and interior purification of motives. Detaching oneself of everything "... has been the practice of all the great saints, who separated themselves from the world and worked for the good of souls" (R 179.18). Or again; "...All the saints made use of austerity to overcome passions and prevent the flesh from rebelling (MF 179,2).

4.3. The work of purification is accompanied by a particular way of life entailing recollection and piety, long and deep prayer, study which is centered on Sacred Scripture, and the cultivation of a faith-vision and of attitudes which are consistent with it.

4.4. The faith of the saints is expressed in creative zeal for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls, especially the poorest. It is expressed through the example of their life and in their pastoral work of announcing the Word of God, in the defense and support of the Church, in the struggle against sin and errors, in Christian education and catechesis, in the varying faith responses to the demands of life. Their life becomes a progressive liberation, their motivation more disinterested, their activities focused on the glory of God and the salvation of souls. In this way, purified and inspired with zeal, the saint becomes effective in his work for the Kingdom of God; thus, for example.

"When a man called to work for the salvation of souls has succeeded in filling himself with the thought of God and of his spirit he can accomplish all that he undertakes. Nothing can resist him, not even God..." (MF 171,3),

Or again;

"... Apostolic men who have worked effectively for the salvation of souls have taken care to have no attachment to created things" (MF 179,1).

Or again;

"It was in this way (through mortification) that the saints who worked successfully for the salvation of souls prepared themselves to be effective in their ministry" (MF 79,1).

4.5. However, "one cannot work for the destruction of evil without drawing on oneself the enmity of those who practice it" (MF 120,2). "...The ungodly and the libertine cannot abide their waywardness being challenged..." (MF 132,3). "The world can only love those who love it and follow its ways..." (MF 182,2). In consequence, "... those who uphold the Gospel and religion are persecuted..." (MF 100,3). "... Insults, affronts, calumnies, persecution and even death, such was the reward given to the saints and to apostolic men, and also given to Jesus Christ" (MF 155,3).

4.6. Yet God rewards those who love him (MF 144,3) even in this life repaying a hundred fold what they have done for Him (MF 118,3). Thus, they can bear anything knowing that they "owned something that was better and lasting" (Hep 10,34) not wishing "to save themselves here so that they would rise again to better life (Heb 11,35)..." (MF 183,2).

Thus, the characteristic most consistently considered by De La Salle in the saints were: "fuga mundi", recollection, spiritual and material detachment, mortification, prayer, faith and zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. It is not a fortuitous coincidence but rather an expression of the consistency on De La Salle's teaching that the same characteristics which he focuses on in his analysis of the lives of the saints are those that the Brothers had to take as topics of conversation during their recreation (cf. 2.3.c).

5. THE SAINTS AND THE BROTHER

De La Salle traces a relationship between the saints and the Brothers indicating *similarities*, *contrasts*, and *continuity* between the lives of both.

5.1 Similarities

The same thing that happened to St. Augustine can also occur in the life of the Brothers — strengthened by grace he was moved to overcome himself and to practice extraordinary virtue yet found it difficult to remain faithful, coming at times even to resist grace (MF 123,1). Similarly, God confers on the Brothers the same honour as he conferred on St. Joachim: to be the spiritual fathers of their disciples (MF 157,1) while their employment is similar to that of St. Joseph as well as being as holy as his — to be charged with the care of children as he was with Jesus (MF 110,1.3). As with the Apostles, the Brothers are called to make God known (MF 78,2) and in their ministry they exercise one of the essential apostolic functions which is the education in faith and religion (MF 102,1) and which they exercise through catechesis and through instruction in Gospel maxims (MF 159,2; cf. R 179,21). As in the case of Luke, the Brothers also can be a friend of Paul if they frequently read his letters extracting, studying, meditating and practicing the principle maxims contained in them (MF 116,1). The goal of the Brother is the same as that proposed by St. Germanus — i.e. to instruct so as to convert (MF 131,3). It is similar to that of St. Ignatius and his followers which was to save souls as well as to educate children in piety (MF 148,3). In the same way as the followers of St. Norbert, the objective of the Brothers is to transmit the Gospel to the poor (MF 132,2) while the martyrdom which the Brother has to endure in their spirit is as violent as that endured by St. Bartholomew in his body (MF 159,3).

In these ways the life of the Brother is similar to that of the saints and, at times, he even has advantages over them. Thus, for example, if Martha had the honor of waiting on Jesus, the Brother has an even greater privilege of which he can partake whenever he wishes — to receive Jesus in the eucharist (MF 147,1).

5.2. Contrasts

The Brothers are not born free of sin, as in the case of John the Baptist, but they must at least live removed from it after their "spiritual birth" and their consecration to God (MF 162,1). Neither are

they precursors of Jesus as was this prophet of the desert but they are his successors in the ministry (MF 138,3). The disciples of De La Salle do not fight against the heretics as did St. Augustine, nor do they convert infidels like St. Gregory the Great, but they fight the evil inclinations of their pupils and teach them the mysteries of the faith and the Christian spirit which is work that is in no way inferior to that of the conversion of infidels (MF 161,2; 109,3).

5.3. Continuity

Today St. Luke can continue being an apostle of Jesus and a preacher of his Gospel to the extent that the Brothers read his writings (MF 178,3). In a similar way, again today, the chains of St. Peter must be the source of miracles in the life of the Brothers, the greatest of which should be communicating to them the love of suffering and of insults (MF 149,3). Today, too, the Brothers also continue responding to decisions made by the saints in a previous era. Thus, for example, St. Leo the Great forbade religious to involve themselves in worldly affairs, a prohibition to which the Brothers more than anybody are attracted (MF 149,3). Similarly, while the Apostles have accomplished their mission, as has St. Cassian, the Brothers continue this mission today through their employment and especially through catechesis (MF 145,3;155,2).

According to De La Salle, the Brothers had to view the saints as *teachers*, inspirational *models*, *prophets*, *animators* and *intercessors*.

Teachers: primarily for their written teaching such as that left to them by St. James which enables them to sanctify themselves and to form their pupils in the Christian spirit (MF 119,2; cf. Da 187). Secondly, through the example of their lives. Thus, for example, St. Joachim, in giving his daughter to God and giving most of his goods to the Temple for the poor and to help pilgrims, teaches the Brothers to detach themselves from creatures and to ensure that their disciples are prepared to meet their Lord. St. Monica, in her patience with her husband, teaches them that when they have to deal with people who by nature

are difficult they need to possess much patience and docility. They also need to ask God for the grace to bear with such people and also to make such people more affable (MF 122,2). Finally, St. Margaret (Queen), in her consideration for the poor, teaches the Brothers how they should look on the poor (MF 133,3).

Inspirational models: at times it may be difficult to imitate Jesus, as when, for example, he pardoned his enemies. However, there is no excuse in not imitating the Saints, such as St. Stephen and St. James the Just, since they like us were his servants (Da 455-456). They teach us that we should be in continual prayer (MF 167,1; 95,1) wherever we are (Da 434) and that we should be chaste, practicing heroic acts in order to preserve it, and like the saints, fleeing from the demon of impurity at the first attack (MF 129,1). Like St. Peter of Alcantara, the Brother can approach God through prayer, recollection and mortification (MF 127,1). The reading of the lives of the saints can also be a means of overcoming vices such as laziness (Da 180) while a consideration of the humility of the saints may serve as a remedy for pride (Da 170). Moreover, the Brother can also find inspiration for his educational work in the teaching and practice of the saints; "... Experience based on the constant teaching of the saints, and on the example which they have given us, is sufficient evidence to indicate that to lead those confided to our care to perfection, it is necessary to be both firm and gentle with them at the same time" (CE 140).

Prophets: in his meditations De La Salle considered some aspect of the life of the saint and then made a reflection on it in a way that confronted the life of the Brother. He transformed the contemplation and the reflection through pertinent questioning; thus, for example, "...Will we complain about living a poor life when so many great saints have practiced such extremes of austerity?" (MF 113,3). Or again, "... Are we as faithful as St. Anthony to the first inspirations which come to us from God?" (MF 97,1) or "... Do you endeavour to have such affection and kindness for the children whom you instruct as St. Barnabas showed for those whose conversion and salvation he was concerned?..." (MF 134,2).

Animators: As inspirational models, the saints not only demonstrate what should be done in the spiritual and apostolic life, and how one should do it, but through their example they encourage us to do it effectively. In speaking of the "martyrdom" of St. John the Evangelist (MF 124,2), De La Salle recalls the affirmation of St. Cyprian that "the feasts of the martyrs are so many invitations to martyrdom" and immediately applies it to the feast of the day; in celebrating the martyrdom of St. John, "... in imitation of him, let us be disposed to suffer with joy and for the love of God..." (MF 124,2). Similarly, the example of the constancy of St. Lawrence should serve as a stimulus for the Brother to develop a love of sufferings (MF 145,3) while the example of the saints in general should encourage them to undergo the long and arduous bloodless martyrdom which is involved in mortification (MF 89,2). The austerities which we read about in their lives should stimulate us to imitate them, according to the spirit of the Institute. In the same way, the very presence and veneration of the images of the saints is useful because they, too, encourage us to imitate the saints (Db 84; GA 358).

Intercessors: the saints can greatly help us (Da 109) and obtain abundant graces for us through the merits of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. They want to be intercessors for us before God (Da 461) and, in fact, help us with their prayers from heaven (Da 65) since God listens to them because their prayers are always pleasing to him (EM 87-88). One of the reasons why we should venerate the images of the saints is because they encourage us to imitate them (Da 110).

What we should seek from each saint should be their "speciality". Thus, for example, from St. Philip Neri, ardent in the salvation of souls, one should seek zeal (MF 119,3); from St. Paulinus, detached from created things, one should seek interior renunciation of the world and of all that men seek in it (MF 137,3); from St. Peter, who left all in faith, one should seek to abandon oneself into the hands of Providence (MF 139,1); from St. Cajetan, abandoned into these divine hands, one should seek the spirit of disinterestedness (MF 153,3); from St. James, so highly qualified in matters pertaining to religion, one should seek to deeply possess the truths of religion (MF 145,2); from

St. Lawrence, who desired martyrdom, one should seek the desire to suffer (MF 154,2.3); from St. Michael, the defender of the Church, one should seek protection for "this Church of Jesus Christ which is our Community" (MF 169,3).

6. THE BROTHERS AND THE SAINTS

6.1. "Why does the Church institute the feasts of the saints? It was (a) to thank God for the graces which he granted to them; (b) to honor them; (c) to invoke them" (GA 372; Da 154; Db 115).

De La Salle presents "the principal feasts instituted by the Church" in DC (213-301) and almost invariably finishes each "instruction" with a response to the question "What must we do to honor the saint and to celebrate the feast properly?". The responses which are most repeated are practically the same as those in GA – i.e. to thank God, to honor the saints (besides esteeming and respecting them) and to imitate and invoke them.

A. To thank God: for "the graces which he granted to them" (Da 154; Db 115; GA 372). Among these graces are: faith, liberation from enemies, love of Jesus, spiritual lights, the call to ministry, zeal, the Holy Spirit (MF 149,2; DC 213-301). God is also to be thanked for the graces which we receive through the saints; for example, their inspirational and enlightening example, faith for preaching (DC 213-301). Parallel and complementary attitudes to thanksgiving are *adoration* of the power of God which is manifested in the lives of the saints (MF 149,1) as well as *admiration* for the Lord who is "admirable in his saints" and who honors them with his favors (MF 146,2; 157,1). His goodness to us is expressed in the protection which he grants us through the saints (angels) (MF 127,1).

B. To Honor the Saints: De La Salle insists on this in various passages of MF (MF 138,1; 145,2; 149,3; 169,2). In Da (154) he succinctly explains what is to be honored in them — the glory which they enjoy and the virtues which they practised. The one condition associated with this is that it must be *in God* because it is in Him that the Brother finds everything (MF 183,1). He also indi-

cated the manner in which we are to honor them; one should *listen to them* and to what they teach us. Furthermore, we should also do it by *acknowledging them, praying to them, invoking them, thanking them* and *imitating them*.

"We *acknowledge them* by giving them some sign of respect and veneration".

"We *pray to them*, asking some grace from God through their intercession" — in summary form this is expressed in Da (154) as: to share in their glory or to possess the virtues which they practiced. "We *invoke them* when we implore their help in our sorrows and temptations".

"We *thank them* when we express our gratitude for some grace or favor which we have obtained". Thus, for example, "... to give thanks for the help of their prayers and for the material and spiritual benefits which we have received from God through their merits..." (Da 154).

"We *imitate them* (Da 108-109) following the example "which they gave us throughout their lives" (cf. Da 187); "... like them, devoting ourselves with great care to our sanctification..." (MF 123,3; 132,3; 182,2; 182,3); practicing the virtues which they practiced (MF 179,2; 155,2; 150,1); doing what they did (MF 142,1; 147,2; 162,2); having the same aspirations, values, attitudes, convictions, desires and joys as they had (MF 173,3; 78,2; 107,3) 131,3; 140,3; 154,2; 166,3; 183,2). Honouring the saints through imitating them is what most pleases them and what is most beneficial for us (Da 109).

With regard to this *imitation of the saints*:

A. As ever, De La Salle is both realistic and demanding; thus, for example, the Brother does not need the eloquence of St. Ambrose in his work with children but he does have to participate in his apostolic zeal (MF 81,2). Similarly, while the Brother is not called on to practice the austerities of the saints, he must at least mortify his senses and his mind (MF 79,1). In the same way, if St. Peter of Alcantara cannot be a model for the Brother in all that he practiced by way of mortification of the body, he can at least be imitated in his recollection (MF 179,2).

B. This is due to the fact that the spiritual life of the Brother has its distinctive character. His mortification has to be in accordance with that stipulated in the Institute (MF 153,1) as well as being in keeping with its spirit (MF 113,3) and appropriate to his state (MF 80,1). The Brother works in the Church according to the specific gift which he has received (MF 170,3) and his journey towards God must be along the path marked out for him in his Rule (MF 125,1).

6.2. Not only does the Brother thus have a rela-

tionship with the saints but he also introduces his disciples to this relationship. Thus, in Baptism the child received the name of a saint "whom he can imitate and whose protection he can implore" (Da 229) and the Brother teaches the child to invoke this protection. Hence, for example, in the morning and evening prayer he prays the following prayer with the pupil: "... St. Joseph, ...(here the patron saint of the parish is included), St. Nicholas, my holy Patron, and all the saints who enjoy the happiness of God, through your prayers obtain for me the grace both to live a good life through imitating all of you as well as the grace to die well..." (E 12,35). On particular days they also recited the litanies of the Most Blessed Virgin and of St. Joseph as well as the Litany of the Saints (E 36; 41; 43).

6.3. In order to imitate the saints it is necessary to know them and to nourish this knowledge. The outline of the saints which De La Salle gives in his meditations (MF) can be seen from this perspective as can the inclusion of particular practices, such as the reading of a brief life of the saint during dinner (RC 27,20), or the inclusion of the lives of the saints and "the maxims and practices of which they made use" among the topics of conversation during recreation (R 62,10; 63,7).

¹ VARIOUS, "Dictionnaire de Spiritualité", Paris, Beauchesne, p. 222.

² ID., IBID.

³ TRONSON, "Supplément aux Examens Particuliers", in "Oeuvres Complètes", Paris: MIGNE, J.P., 1857, col. 871-872.

⁴ "Dictionnaire de Spiritualité", p. 224.

⁵ ID. p. 223-224.

⁶ LE BRUN, J., "Le grand siècle de la spiritualité française et ses lendemains", in "Histoire Spirituelle de la France", Paris, Beauchesne, 1964, p. 273.

⁷ LE BRUN, J., *op. cit.*, p. 273.

⁸ RODRIGUE, J-L., "Contribution à l'étude des sources des Méditations sur les principales fêtes de l'année". in CL 47, Rome, 1988, p. 11.

⁹ LE BRUN, J., *op. cit.*, p. 273.

¹⁰ LE BRUN, J., *op. cit.*, p. 273.

¹¹ GAUTIER, J., "La spiritualité de l'école française du XVIIe siècle", in "La Spiritualité catholique", Paris, Le Rameau, 1953, p. 254.

¹² RODRIGUE, J-G., *op. cit.*, p. 146, n° 1.

¹³ RODRIGUE, J-G., *op. cit.*, p. 37.

¹⁴ RODRIGUE, J-G., *op. cit.*, p. 482; 37.

¹⁵ "Le Catéchisme du concile de Trente", Paris, Chez Etienne Savoy, 1736, 4a. ed.

FLEURY, C., "Catéchisme historique", Paris, Pierre Aubien et Pierre Emery, 1686.

"Catéchisme du diocèse de Chartres", Chartres, Chez Claude Peigne, 1699.

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57. SALVATION

Summary:

1. The word salvation implies a negative element (salvation from) and a positive element (salvation for). In religious terms this means salvation from the human condition of sin and death and salvation for eternal life in union with God. The doctrine that salvation comes from God through Jesus Christ is at the heart of the Christian faith. Although salvation is wrought through God's grace, human effort is required for it to be attained. - 2. In his catechetical writings, De La Salle reflects the traditional Catholic doctrine and the prevalent pessimism about the fate of the vast numbers who seem not to overcome the many obstacles to salvation. - 3. De La Salle urges the Brothers to meditate on their own salvation and to recognize that their ministry is to be cooperators with Jesus Christ for the salvation of those placed under their care. -4. Although some aspects of De La Salle's treatment of salvation may seem today to be overly legalistic and pessimistic, his fundamental appreciation of the mystery of salvation can still provide powerful motivation for the Lasallian educator today.

1. MEANING OF THE WORD

1.1. To fully appreciate the meaning, or the various meanings, of salvation it is necessary to go to the Latin root *salus*, safety or health, which in turn is based on the verb *salvare*, to save. The concept of saving someone or something always involves two elements, one negative (saving from) and the other positive (saving for). Thus the 17th century dictionary of Richelet equates salvation with preservation (French *conservation*) in examples such as "His salvation consists in getting the jump on his enemy". The same dictionary defines salvation in a religious sense as eternal life. Implied in these definitions is the idea of being saved from some danger, either physical or spiritual. The adjective salutary has the same connotation. Defined as something beneficial or useful to a person, the word implies a distance from a corresponding danger or threat. In French, the word *salut* can mean either salvation or a salute, such as a military salute, whereas in English two different words are used. In French the word *Salut (du Saint-Sacrement)* is also used for what in

English is called Benediction, the French expression related perhaps to the *O Salutaris*, the hymn that opens the ceremony.

1.2. The doctrine of salvation is at the very center of the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition and faith. Rooted in the Old Testament promise by God to save his people, the Christian sees the fulfillment of that promise in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For the Christian, Jesus saves, Jesus is salvation. In theological terms, Christology, the study of who Jesus is, becomes soteriology, the study of the saving work of Jesus, the Christ.

1.3. The need for salvation, the "saving from" aspect is a fundamental condition of human existence. Human beings need to be saved from physical evils associated with sickness and the inevitability of death; from emotional evils associated with frustration and loneliness; from the moral evils associated with sin and moral lapses; from

the social evils of oppression, exploitation, enslavement, war, and violence. Human schemes of salvation, such as advances in medicine and psychology, behavior control, and programs of social reform, can provide partial and temporary solutions, but are unable to satisfy completely the human craving for ultimate fulfillment ("salvation for"), that can be found only in the possession of the ultimate reality we call God.

1.3.1. The root of the problem lies both in the limitations of human creatureliness and the estrangement from God brought about by sin. Human beings, as God's creatures, are unable by human effort alone to bridge the gap that separates from God, from everlasting life in union with God, the only true meaning of salvation. Salvation in this sense comes from God as a grace, a gift, through the redemptive mission of his only Son, Jesus Christ, a redemptive action in which human beings are invited to share.

1.4. The theology of salvation current in the 17th century (and indeed from the middle ages until Vatican II) was dominated by the satisfaction theories of salvation and redemption, derived from Saint Anselm, and congenial to medieval theories of justice and retribution. In this view, since the evil came into the world through human sin, actual and original, an infinite offense against the infinite God, God's rigorous justice demands that the reparation be equal to the offense. Jesus Christ, though himself innocent, took upon himself as man the sins of the race, making satisfaction and atonement to God by his suffering and death. As the divine Son of God, his satisfaction had infinite value, thus equating the satisfaction to the offense. This soteriology found its way into certain aspects of the spirituality of the time, especially in meditations and pulpit oratory on the passion of Jesus and the necessity, motivation, and quality of penitential acts.

1.4.1. Another influence on the salvation theology of the post-Tridentine period was the Catholic polemic against the doctrine of justification by trusting faith alone, as it was espoused by the Protestant reformers of the 16th century. This led to a strong re-emphasis on the necessity, not

only of fiducial faith, but of explicit belief in the revealed mysteries. In addition, the Catholic doctrine stressed the necessity of good works and, conversely, the avoidance of certain acts which, when performed knowingly, constituted mortal sin and so merited damnation; the distinction between mortal and venial sins; the reception of the sacrament of penance for the forgiveness of sin; and all seven sacraments as not only signs but causes of grace. In popular religious language, salvation was described as "saving one's soul" or "going to heaven", damnation as "losing one's soul" or "going to hell" for all eternity.

1.4.2. As the conditions for salvation came to be more and more codified and explicit, the prevalent theological climate in the medieval and post-Tridentine Church was rather pessimistic with regard to the eternal salvation of vast numbers of people in whom the conditions were not met. Among them would be non-Catholics; fallen away Catholics; Catholics guilty of the many kinds of unconfessed and unrepented acts, especially sexual, considered to be mortal sins; Catholics who failed to attend Mass regularly or observe the other "commandments of the Church". It might be said that the major thrust of the Catholic reform inaugurated by the Council of Trent, and the motivation for the Founders of apostolic institutes in the 16th and 17th centuries, was to rescue whole categories of persons from imminent damnation through parish missions for adults, catechetical instruction for the children, missionary efforts for the conversion of non-Catholics at home and pagans in foreign lands.

2. SALVATION IN THE CATECHETICAL WRITINGS OF DE LA SALLE

2.1. De La Salle's references to salvation are for the most part phrased in the traditional doctrinal language of the time in expressions such as "saving one's soul" (CE 151 C, Da 120 B, EM 93 C), "life eternal" (Da ix E, 406 D), "the only true good" (Da 101 A). He presumes that the concern for salvation is present in his readers, sensitive to the risk of eternal damnation as compared to the prospect of eternal happiness with God. At the be-

ginning of the *Duties of a Christian*, De La Salle gives the scriptural definition of eternal life, to know the one true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. All the truths contained in the catechism can be summarized as the knowledge of what Jesus Christ has done for our salvation (Da 2 A). De La Salle consistently stresses the need to avoid the dangers to salvation and to make use of the means necessary to obtain it. He often links together the idea of procuring God's glory and the salvation of one's soul (MF 108.2, EM 109 A).

2.2. De La Salle reminds his readers that salvation comes from God, that God wills to save all people, that salvation is wrought by God through Jesus Christ (Da 2 A, 60 B, 322 B). For De La Salle, the mystery of the incarnation is nothing less than the mystery of salvation (EM 92 A). Salvation comes, not from human effort alone (Da 193 D, MF 182.3), but as a free gift through grace (Da 194 C). Faith alone without works is not enough (Da 90 A).

2.3. Although salvation is a free gift of God's grace, human beings must cooperate with grace and have recourse to the means of salvation (Da 62 D, 406 E, 410 A). This is the work of a lifetime that God has given us for this purpose (Da 83 B, Db 134 A, GA 382 D). Some means such as Baptism (Da 217 C) are necessary for salvation, others are useful (Db 247 E). Among the necessary means are a knowledge of the truths contained in the gospel (EM 109), baptism (Da 217 C), and the practice of the virtues (EM 94). God's providence has provided us with heavenly helpers to aid us in achieving salvation, notably the Blessed Virgin (Da 467 C) and the angels (Db 29 B). God has also provided that humans can help to conduct others to salvation (Da 21 A, 139 E, 140 A).

2.4. Sharing the pessimism of his time in the presumption that large numbers of people will probably not attain salvation, De La Salle puts great stress on the dangers to salvation. The enemies of our salvation are engaged in a war to turn us away from God, so Christians must arm themselves for the struggle (Da 65 B, 203 D). The three principal enemies of salvation are the world, the devil, and the flesh (Da 233 E, Db 56 B). The devil is

ever active in placing obstacles to our salvation (Da 164 C, 196 D). The dangers to salvation are many, including association with heretics (Da 113 A). Some people despair of their salvation (Da 113 B, Db 127 C), others are seemingly indifferent (Da 155 D, 161 B, 176 E, 181 B), as is evident in those who neglect the practice of prayer (Da 464 A). A person who fails to receive the last sacraments puts his salvation in great danger (Db 226 A). In this rather extensive treatment of the obstacles, De La Salle seems to be providing the children in the schools with the same kind of motivation given by the preachers of his day during the parish missions.

2.5. To balance this apparent negativity with a note of hope, De La Salle returns often to God's will to save, his love for his human creatures. This is especially manifest in the mission of his Son, Jesus Christ, who for our salvation has instituted the sacraments as a means to acquire grace, to preserve it, and increase it (Da 200 D). The Founder notes, for example, that the reason the priest extends his hands over the penitent is to "teach us that by this sacrament the hand of God draws us away from sin and conducts us on the road to salvation" (Da 322 B).

3. SALVATION IN DE LA SALLE'S WRITINGS FOR THE BROTHERS

3.1. In his writings intended for his religious family, De La Salle urges the Brothers to be ever concerned both with their own salvation and that of their students. It is his view, in fact, that the salvation of the Brothers is intimately linked to their work for the salvation of their students. Thus De La Salle invites in "The Rules I have imposed Upon Myself that "it is a good rule of conduct not to make any distinction between the matters that are proper to one's state in life and the matter of one's salvation and perfection" (BL II, 318).

3.1.1. In the *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer*, the duty of the Brothers to be concerned for their own salvation is a recurrent theme. This occurs even in the first part of the mental prayer, where the method describes the various ways to become aware of the presence of

God. Thus, in recalling the presence of Jesus Christ in their midst, the Brothers can find in him the source and assurance of their salvation (EM 9 E). Likewise, the presence of Jesus Christ in the church building is an opportunity "to obtain from him what we ask since he is totally consecrated for our salvation and for all that relates to the good of our soul" (EM 24 C).

3.1.2. One of the possible subjects for meditation in the second part of the prayer is some maxim from the gospel. De La Salle illustrates this option by suggesting a meditation on the importance of salvation. Even the Brothers, he says, are tossed on a tempestuous sea and always in danger of losing their salvation (MF 164.1). For the purpose of meditation, he suggests the passage from Matthew 16, "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" In the various acts elicited from meditation on this maxim, the Brother might thank God for teaching us the importance of salvation, he might promise God to prefer his salvation to everything else, he might determine to be more faithful to the spiritual exercises that have been established for his salvation, he might beg pardon for neglecting the things that could procure his salvation, he might become more resolute about contributing to the salvation of others, and renounce anything that might put his salvation in danger (EM 109-121).

3.1.3. In his meditations, the Founder often reminds the Brothers that their ministry is to contribute to the salvation of the children confided to their care. Although this theme runs through all the meditations, it comes to the fore most forcibly in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*. There the Founder tells the Brothers that the responsibility for the salvation of the souls of young people has been entrusted to them by God (MR 205.2). In this they are cooperators with Jesus Christ for the salvation of these souls (MR 195.1, 196.1, 196.2).

3.1.4. The Brothers are destined to procure for their pupils the means of salvation available to them (MR 193.3). This is the meaning of the ministry of the Brothers (MR 193.3) and of their employment (MR 200.2). Young people need vigilant

guides to provide the illumination needed to conduct them on the path to salvation (MR 197.3).

3.1.5. To accomplish this ministry the Brothers must have an ardent zeal for the salvation of their charges (MR 201.1), a zeal that includes affection (201.3, 204.3). To this work they are to apply themselves totally (MR 205.2). The obstacles to the salvation of young people are many (MR 197.3). Grace is needed to contribute to the salvation of others (MR 205.2). The power of Jesus Christ enables the Brothers to overcome all the obstacles in the way of the salvation of their disciples (MR 195.2).

3.1.6. At the judgment, God will require that the brothers render an account of how they have exercised this ministry (MR 206.2). The reward in heaven for those who have procured the salvation of others will be very great (MR 207.1), including the happiness of seeing in heaven so many of their former pupils, who will consider the Brother, after God, as the cause of their salvation (MR 208.2, 208.3).

3.2. In the *Collection*, De La Salle takes again a pessimistic view of the dangers to salvation to be found in the world (R 63.18). On the other hand, the Brothers have left the world to join the Society and so have a greater assurance of salvation for themselves (R 63.22, 184.13), as well as the opportunity to contribute to the salvation of others (R 69.4). Still, it is important for their salvation that they remain faithful to their vocation (R 184.1). Toward the end of his life, when De La Salle was revising the Rule, he penned a remarkable passage, based no doubt on long reflection and experience, in which he states that mere observance of rules, apart from the observance of the two commandments of love for God and love for neighbor, is utterly useless for salvation (RC 37.1).

4. THE CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF THE LASALLIAN VISION OF SALVATION

4.1. Ever since Vatican II, both the official approach of the Catholic Church to the meaning of

salvation and theological developments in soteriology have undergone considerable change. The essentials of the doctrine, of course, remain: a fact of human existence is the need for salvation rooted somehow in the origins of the race; salvation is a gift from God who wills the salvation of all; God's will to save has become known in a unique way through the revelation of Jesus Christ; salvation is accomplished in some mysterious way through the action of God's grace and human effort; salvation is mediated through the community of the Church and by the action of individuals within it; although there is a connection between salvation in this world and eternal salvation, the full experience of salvation in the ultimate experience of intimate union with God transcends the limits of this world, its achievements for good, and its history; human sin and error is real and consequently the failure to achieve salvation is always a threat and a possibility for humans who consciously opt to find salvation in something less than God.

4.2. In the post-Vatican II era, however, there is less pessimism than there was in the post-Tridentine era about the possibility of the ultimate salvation of the majority of the human race. Soteriology is less concerned with the legalistic satisfaction of divine justice than the divine love whereby God in Christ embraces the world of sin, suffering, and death to bring it to final transformation in resurrection. The conditions for salvation are less ecclesiocentric, less based on church membership, and more Christocentric or even theocentric, based on a relationship however implicit to Christ and to God. Genuine offers of grace and salvific responses in faith and charity are seen to be possibilities, not only in spite of, but also through participation in non-Catholic and non-Christian religious rituals and traditions. Salvation is seen as something to be realized at least partially in this world as well as the next, involv-

ing the whole person, body and soul, and not merely the "salvation of the soul" alone. The mortal sin that impedes salvation is tied less to isolated seriously wrong acts and more to a negative fundamental option, an enduring and transcendent choice rooted in a fundamental negative attitude toward God, the neighbor, oneself and the world. Finally, although eternal judgment and damnation remain as a threat, some theologians are unwilling to reject out of hand the possibility of eventual and eternal salvation for all of God's human creation.

4.3. In the light of contemporary religious thought, some of De La Salle's pessimism with regard to the possibility of salvation of wayward youth, his stress on the dangers and obstacles to salvation, his insistence on explicit instruction on the Christian mysteries and the details of church observance as conditions for salvation, and his exclusively Roman church perspective, can all strike a modern reader as anachronistic.

4.3.1. On the other hand, the fundamental thrust of De La Salle's teaching on salvation can serve to motivate the ministry of Lasallian educators today. In his writings, De La Salle is sensitive to the needs especially of the poor for some form of salvation in this world. His concern and that of the Brothers for the salvation of their students is genuine and motivated by disinterested love. His entire educational enterprise was aimed at eliminating an environment of ignorance and hopelessness that was a threat to salvation in any form. Above all, he recognized that the divine plan of salvation was indeed a mystery, a mystery worthy of contemplation, a mystery revealed too great for any human attempt to penetrate fully its depths (EM 92 A), a mystery revealed in the astounding fact that God so loved the world that he sent his only-begotten Son not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him (Jn 3, 16-17).

Complementary themes:

Conduct; Consecration; Ministry; Mission; Mystery.

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58. SILENCE

Summary:

1. The word SILENCE in the 17th century and in St. John Baptist de La Salle. - 2. Ascetic value of silence. 2.1. Exterior and interior silence. 2.2. Silence and a life of prayer. - 3. Silence in community life. 3.1. Silence and regularity. 3.2. Silence and interpersonal relations. - 4. Silence in school life. 4.1. The Teacher's silence. 4.2. The pupils' silence.

1. THE WORD SILENCE IN THE 17th CENTURY AND IN ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE

In the 17th century, the word SILENCE has three essential meanings. These are shown in the Trevoux Dictionary (1721):

1.1. In the current sense of "To refrain from speaking"

"It means discretion, restraint in speech, not to speak or to say what one does not dare or that which one wishes to hide".

1.2. To signify an order of the Rule:

It is a characteristic of religious circles: "among religious, it refers to a rule which consists in refraining from speaking together at certain hours. Silence must be strictly observed".

1.3. In a figurative sense, it refers to an interior attitude

Involving control over one's personal thoughts: "thus we say: the silence of passions, to signify a state opposed to the turmoil into which passions plunge us and which prevents us from making a right assessment of things. An interior

silence is a recollection of all our faculties to make them better able to meditate on holy things".

In the writings and the teaching of St. John Baptist de La Salle, the concept of silence recurs frequently in these three senses quite common in the 17th century. He encourages, recommends or prescribes silence, either on a personal level, as an important ascetic value and virtue; on a community level, as a fundamental rule of behavior; or on a school level, as a means to obtain good order and pedagogical efficiency in school work. These three levels sum up the three aspects of silence we would like to go into here.

2. ASCETIC PERSONAL VALUE OF SILENCE

2.1. Exterior and interior silence

For La Salle, "recollection", "retreat", "solitude" or "the flight from the world and from things" constitute first-class values in the spiritual and ascetic growth of the Christian and, in particular, of the religious.¹

At the same time, silence constitutes the condition and the effect: in fact, on the one hand, without silence it is impossible to live deeply absorbed in the presence of God; on the other, silence is a proof and the unequivocal result of an intense interior life and

an assiduous vigilance on one's own passion and on nature's uncontrolled tendencies.

"You should control your tongue. This will facilitate recollection and enable you to preserve God's holy presence. It will also be an excellent means of making you keep silence, and in maintaining regularity, the exact fulfilment of your spiritual exercises, the observance of the Rule, moderation, calm and peace. Such great advantages should induce you to refrain from too great liberty of speech" (MF 126,3).

On this point, what St. La Salle states in the *Collection* is significant: "Hold silence in great esteem and observe it willingly, for it is the guardian of all virtues and an obstacle to all vices, since it prevents detraction, uncharitable, untruthful, and unbecoming language. It is the means of keeping us occupied only with necessary things, and of preventing the distractions which follow frivolous conversations and useless words" (R 78-79).

To be silent and to practice silence is what we are recommended to do in a series of ascetic and spiritual considerations. But exterior silence is insufficient. In fact, the same text goes on: "Strive always to unite interior with exterior silence. Forget created things to think only of God and His holy presence, with whom you should endeavour always to converse interiorly" (R 79).

As we can see, in the first place, the Founder considers silence a factor of exterior good order and of a regular life only in relation to spiritual growth and interior life. On the same page of the *Collection*, he mentions in reality another important aspect of this viewpoint: "Often reflect that he who is not reserved in speech, cannot become spiritual, and that a sure means of attaining perfection rapidly, is to avoid sins of the tongue" (R 79).

Silence represents one of the clearest and most valuable manifestations of self-mastery, strongly stressed by De La Salle as an essential condition of the spiritual life. Referring to the model set by St. Francis de Sales, he gives this advice:

"Learn from this saint to overcome your passions. Never allow emotion to appear in your words or actions. Humility will greatly help you to attain this end, as also silence on these occasions when people give offence" (MF 101.2).

Similarly, having related the example of St. Peter, Martyr, silent victim of a calumny, he goes on:

"Are you so silent when reprimanded for faults of which you are not guilty? What you should do on such occasions, but what you probably fail to carry out, is to say nothing in your own defence, but to endeavor to profit by the humiliation" (MF 117.2).

Letter 128 addressed to a female religious² constitutes a sort of small treatise on silence, its spiritual advantages and the most efficacious means to practice it. Here are the main passages:

"Now is the time for little speech and much action. Let your aim be to become silent and very humble and to apply yourself very much to prayer, for this is what God wants of you.

"You will find a very useful, even a very necessary virtue, if you are to adore God, serve him in spirit and in truth, resist temptations, and save yourself from falling into sin.

"You must learn how to be silent, to conceal your feelings and to speak only when necessary. So that you may not fall into the habit of excessive talking, try to observe strictly the following rules:

Do not speak at all outside recreation time unless the need is urgent, and even during recreation speak but little. The present state of your soul demands that you be faithful to this. And you must not even make a single comment about what goes on, remembering, however, that your silence must not spring from pride.

Take care never to justify yourself, but, on the contrary, admit that you were wrong, without of course telling an untruth. If you cannot speak without justifying yourself, remain completely silent. I do not see that you ever have any reason to justify yourself.

Always remain silent when others annoy you, and let God alone be the witness of your innocence".

In the same way, when he suggests an ascetic fasting project at the beginning of Lent, he puts it in concrete form when he suggests the more difficult and efficacious fast of "the eyes, the tongue and the heart":

"You will fast with the eyes by a great recollection, and separation from all that can distract you; with the tongue by means of exact silence, which will allow you to disengage yourself from creatures in order to attach yourself to God during this holy season; and with the heart by a complete renunciation

of vain thoughts, which might distract you and interrupt your communings with God.

"The fruit of a Christian fast is the mortification of one's senses and of one's evil inclinations, and detachment from creatures" (MD 16.2).

2.2. Silence and prayer life

Within the framework of the ascetic value of silence, La Salle underlines strongly the close relationship that exists between silence and a life of prayer, understood especially as an exercise in mental prayer. Not only because it predisposes in a natural way for the practice of the presence of God and prayer, but also because silence is in a more particular way an integrating element of prayer.

In its first meaning, silence is understood as an important aspect of recollection and of the interior attitude of freedom with regard to exterior things; this renders possible the meeting with God. And consequently as an essential condition to be able to pray? Among the many texts which dwell on this idea, an eloquent synthesis is offered us in Letter 103:⁴

"The greatest good you can procure yourself is recollection, and when you have achieved it, you can say what Solomon said, that all good things have come to you with it.

Curiosity is one of the greatest obstacles to growth in piety. Therefore, you must be on your guard against it; and above all else, try to be recollected and aware of the presence of God, for in this we have the surest means of becoming interior. Come now, for the love of God, make the effort. You know the harm thoughtless behavior does you. So, control your eyes and your tongue for this reason. There is nothing so important for you as this. In this way you will make your spiritual exercises with God in mind and will learn to make them well both interiorly and exteriorly. God, you see, not only wants your actions done well outwardly; he wants them also to be carried out with the right interior dispositions...".

As a matter of fact, silence constitutes the atmosphere most conducive to an intimate meeting with God. A very clear idea when referred to the experience of St. Catherine of Siena:

"When she was being ill-treated and humiliated by her parents, she was able to converse interiorly with God, and to console herself in his holy company.

During the period of her absolute silence, she was visited by Our Lord, who conversed familiarly with her" (MF 118,3).

In the second meaning, we are dealing with a peculiar aspect of interior silence experienced in the practice of prayer and the meeting with God. It would take up a whole chapter and so here we will simply allude to it. A prayer which has attained a certain depth, does not need so many words and so much reasoning:

"When we begin to experience some facility in making reflections on these Acts, it is advisable to use fewer words in these reflections, and then to dwell on them for some time in an interior silence, so that we strive to imbue our minds with the reflection we are making in a more interior way, for the great number of interior words used in our Mental Prayer serves rather to dissipate the mind, to embarrass the depth of the Soul, than to provide her with diligence towards and attention to God and to render her interior" (EM 44).

That becomes possible for whoever has reached a certain degree of interior life, the signs of which are very clear for La Salle:

"This behavior is easy for those who are truly interior, who walk as much as possible in God's presence; who are always very recollected in the use of the eyes and the mind; who observe silence exactly, who mind their own business, and who are trained in the practice of obedience" (EM 123).

This interior silence experienced in prayer represents an exercise of great formative value and becomes also a source of continuity in one's attitude in daily life. Similarly, the "devoirs d'un Chretien" stress this type of silence. "The spirit hides itself in a deep silence" (Da 473); "to dwell before him in intense recollection and deep silence" (Dc 190) are expressions which describe a fundamental spiritual attitude towards what has been experienced interiorly.

3. SILENCE IN COMMUNITY LIFE

One of the "ten commandments proper to the Brothers of the Christian Schools" stipulates:

"Keep the rule of silence strictly" (RC67; R 5).

This is one of the basic principles on which community life is built and one which the Founder recalls vigorously and frequently. The Letters⁶ often use it as a subject of precise and firm, even sad, exhortations: "Practice exact silence, for the love of God; It is one of the main points of regularity" (L 11.7). "Watch, I beg of you, over silence in your house" (L 36.9-12-19; 56.3). The reason why La Salle insists so much on silence in community, besides those already pointed out in the preceding paragraph, are of various types, but they all aim at the realization of a religious atmosphere impregnated with the presence of God and in which one may experience a genuine interior growth, through regularity, charity, recollection and the proper use of time. Let us reflect on the two most important of these.

3.1. Silence facilitates Regularity

"Please take care to be exact in regard to silence. It is one of the most important means of keeping a community faithful to the Rule" (L. 52.6; 12.23). Chapter XXII of the Common Rules⁷ is explicitly consecrated to silence and describes in minute detail this aspect of community life, restricting the time when one is allowed to speak to recreation time (RC XXII, 1; R. 78). All the other cases are to be settled by Brother Director and are subject to precise restrictions. The Rule stipulates also that "they shall keep silence most rigorously from the time of retiring at night until after Mental Prayer next morning; they shall not speak even to the Brother Director during this time, without an absolute necessity" (RC XXII 14). It stipulates that the Brother Director should watch particularly over this aspect of regularity. "He will watch so well that all keep silence in and out of the house, that he will note even a word uttered without permission" (RD 157). In fact, many of the texts that have been quoted because they reflect a personal ascetic aspect may also be viewed from a community perspective which La Salle never loses sight of. Considering his insistence on silence, there is a touch of irony in what he writes to a Brother:

"I am at a loss to know why there is so little order in your community, my very dear Brother.
Is it not because you do not keep silence? Examine

yourself on this point. Complaints are made that you speak too loudly.

Be careful, then, to keep silence strictly. You know very well that silence and recollection are two means of becoming interior..." (L 73.1.3).

On the 31 December, in the examen of conscience suggested to the Brothers on the practice of regularity throughout the year, silence takes pride of place: "Have you observed silence strictly? This is the first means of establishing regularity in a community, and it is useless to expect to have order in a religious house without it" (MF 92.1). Naturally, what is required in community applies also outside the house, especially in the streets:

"You should, moreover, keep silence in the streets and say your beads, as the Rule prescribes, in order not to be distracted by the numerous things which strike the eye, and so as to keep the holy presence of God in mind. Patience and silence are particularly necessary when anything injurious and insulting is said to you, and whenever you hear anything likely to give offence" (MF 92.2).

3.2. Silence upholds good interpersonal relationships

In this sense, the principal aspect to underline would naturally be positive: How to establish good communications with one's Brothers? La Salle pays great attention to this.⁸ However, the negative aspect, which interests us here, is no less important, for it is the prerequisite and the condition of it, according to the succinct and clear principle enunciated by La Salle himself: "You may take it as certain that it is in retreat and in silence that we learn to speak best. The greater your love for this, the more competent you will become to fulfill the duties of your ministry in regard to your neighbor" (MF 135.1). In fact, it is silence that safeguards good reciprocal relations, favors discretion and respect, inside the community and between communities; it sustains charity... In this regard, the wise norms of the Rule are a proof of great wisdom, either in the case of internal community relationships (RC XXII 3.4.11) or of external ones (RC XIV 7).

To speak more than is necessary is never good: "Don't stand around talking to the Brothers so

much, I beg you. Unless you take care, you will fritter away the time of the spiritual exercises talking to them, and that just must not happen... Do not speak on the way to recreation nor on the stairs when going about the house" (L 37.9). The principle enunciated in RB⁹ is certainly applicable to this context:

"Those who have nothing to relate except gossip and frivolous, silly stories, and those who affect introductions so long that nobody else can speak, would do much better to keep quiet. It is far better to gain a reputation for being a person of few words than to bore people with nonsense and stupidities or always to have something to say (RB 245).

Particularly when charity has to be defended: "Take care never to get into arguments with anybody, for in doing so you can offend against charity, which should be outstanding among you" (L. 73.8).

4. SILENCE DURING SCHOOL TIME

In the Lasallian school, silence takes on a great importance and is amply exploited for its rich pedagogical and educational value. These values are considered under various aspects to be intimately related to each other. We will combine them under two main headings:

4.1. The silence of the teacher

The Rule is categorical regarding the need to make of silence a characteristic of school life; that of the teacher is the first and necessary condition:

"Silence, being one of the principal means of establishing and maintaining order in school, the Brothers shall look upon its exact observance as one of their principal rules; to bring themselves to this exactness, they should frequently call to mind that it would be of little use to try to have their pupils observe silence, if they themselves were not faithful in this respect. For this purpose they shall be very attentive always to employ the signs in use in schools. They will be particularly careful not to speak irrelevantly in class; do so when it is absolutely necessary and when it cannot be done by sign language. That is why they will speak only on three occasions: 1st, to correct the pupils during lessons, when necessary and when no pupil is able to do so; 2nd, during the Catechism; 3rd, during the Reflections which each

Brother should make during morning and evening prayers and then they will speak in a moderate tone" (RC. IX, 10-11).¹⁰

The Conduct of Schools repeats constantly such principles, applies their practical conclusions and puts to the best use their multiple advantages."

In concrete terms, the teacher's silence:

* Promotes an atmosphere of order and intense activity in the schools: "His silence will produce more than anything else a very strict order in the school, by giving him the means to watch over himself and over his pupils" (CE 124). "To avoid frequent punishments, which are a source of great disorder in a school, it is necessary to note well that it is silence, restraint, watchfulness on the part of the teacher that establish and maintain good order in a class, and not harshness and blows" (CE 149-150).

* It is a mark of self-discipline, self-mastery, skill in controlling oneself. It is not without reason that silence is included among "the twelve virtues of a good teacher"¹² (CE 228, R 6).

* It is an example of great value for the behavior of the pupils who are not only asked to keep silent, but who see it practiced at all times, from the start of the school day: "After the teachers have taken their places... they will remain silent to set an example for the pupils, controlling everything that goes on in the school in order to insure good discipline" (CE 6). In fact, "it would be of little use for the Master to exact silence from his pupils, if he were not silent himself; that is why he will teach them better this practice by his example rather than by his words" (CE 124). Meditation 33 states the same thing very strongly:

"If you wish your pupils to practice virtue, do so yourself. You will lead them to it far more easily by giving them the example of a wise and reserved conduct, than by anything you can say. If you wish your pupils to be silent, be silent yourself. Similarly you will make them pious and modest if you show yourself to be such" (MD 33.2).

* It enhances the teacher's authority much better than the multiplication of words or disciplinary measures: "They must convince themselves that authority is acquired and maintained more easily by means of firmness, gravity and silence, than by blows and harshness" (CE 186).

For all these reasons, and for others of a practical nature on which it is not necessary to dwell (for example, to avoid teacher excessive fatigue in a classroom that is overcrowded and stuffy...) the teacher's training to maintain silence was one of the fundamental elements in the formation of the new Teachers:

"So much so that in the text *Formation des nouveaux maîtres*, it is specified that the first thing to be learnt by those who are training to become teachers is that of speaking! Through an exercise in progressive self-mastery and to experience the efficacy of silence, the new Teachers learn not to use their voice at all during a quarter of an hour, then half an hour, and finally a whole hour. When they are able to do that, they will show that they are sufficiently able to remain calm and masters of themselves".¹¹

4.2. The silence of the pupils

Not only do the Common Rules order us to keep silent, they also urge us strongly to ask our pupils to do likewise:

"They will continually pay attention to three things in the school... 3) to make the pupils keep silent during all the time they are in school" (RC VII, 2). The Conduct of Schools, in its turn, abounds in information and directions aiming at insuring that silence reigns in the school. Many means are used "to avoid disturbing the silence which must be continuous in the school" (CE 123). The silence which is demanded and imposed on the pupils, just as that of the teacher, depends on values which need to be safeguarded. It is these rather than the silence itself that La Salle had at heart. The most important of these are:

* Without an appropriate silence, it would be impossible to acquire the application needed to insure a genuine apprenticeship: "Silence is one of the principal means of establishing and maintaining order in schools. For this reason, every teacher will see that it is rigorously kept in his classroom and will permit no one to speak without permission" (CE 122). School work is so important for the future of the pupils, that it is necessary to avoid any loss of time and to draw maximum profit from the possibility to work efficiently. It is a gift of God that must not be squandered. For that reason, La Salle wants the pupils to understand the value of silence as an expression of the will of

God who calls them to apply themselves to their class work. "To this effect, the teacher will make the pupils understand that they must keep silent, not because he is present, but because God sees them and it is his Holy will" (CE 122).

* The Lasallian school is a school of ACTING rather than of SPEAKING. Apprenticeship through practical exercises is very important, whether it is a question of reading, writing or arithmetic. Silence insures that work is seriously done: "In order to acquit himself well of his duties, the teacher must be trained to do three things simultaneously: 1st, To watch over all his pupils to encourage them to do their duty and maintain order and silence..." (CE 19).

"It is therefore not a question of looking at silence negatively, as a prohibition, but rather as an exercise in self-discipline which safeguards work, calm, precision, the full valorization of time. Silence means to speak when necessary, to avoid confusion, to apply oneself seriously. As has already been stated, a whole system of pedagogical means is set in motion to make sure that the work carried out in the school is orderly, precise, efficiently done: the use of the *signal*, the numerous *duties* entrusted to the pupils who know what they should do and how to go about it without causing any disorder or confusion, the precise rules governing moves from class to class, changes of occupation, etc."¹⁴

It is therefore not silence for its own sake.

Were the opposite to happen, the efficiency of the teaching would be put in jeopardy and a certain dislike for the school would be brought about. In fact, among the reasons which explain pupils' absences, carefully analyzed in the Conduct of Schools, we find this third position: "The third reason why pupils absent themselves is because they acquire a distaste for school. This may be due to the fact that they have a new teacher who is not sufficiently trained and does not know how to conduct himself in a school, but at once resorts to punishments, or because he is too lax and has no order or silence in his classroom" (CE 184-185).

CONCLUSION

As has been brought out in these rapid sur-

veys, La Salle, when dealing with silence, acting in perfect coherence with his practical and realistic character, does not consider so much its intrinsic value but rather silence as a means to an end. The end is the very substance of his discourse:

Whether he examines it from the ascetic viewpoint, where silence is a condition of contact with God and of meeting him in prayer or from the community angle, where he sees in it a means at the service of regularity and good interpersonal relationships or even more so when he deals with it from a pedagogical and scholastic aspect, in which it is an essential condition that prevents all the teacher's educational efforts from coming to nothing.

¹ It is a vast chapter on Lasallian spirituality in which one must also include the theme of silence. Cf. M. Sauvage and M. Campos: *Annoncer l'Evangile aux pauvres*, pp. 164-174 and 178-189. See also, Clément-Marcel, FSC: *Par le mouvement de l'Esprit*, 105-127 and Alphonse, FSC: *A l'école de St. Jean Baptiste de La Salle*, pp. 143-188.

² The Letters of St. John Baptist de La Salle, Edition critique by Bro. Felix-Paul. Paris 1954, p. 402-403. The text is repeated in Blain 2, p. 276. It is important to note that Blain refers to the silence of De La Salle in the chapter on charity, under the title: "Première marque de l'éminente charité de M. de La Salle: son goût de Dieu et des choses de Dieu" and particularly in the paragraph "the powerful love M. de La Salle for solitude, the hidden life and silence".

³ Cf. Frédién-Charles, FSC: *L'oraison d'après St. Jean Baptiste de La Salle*, Ligel, Paris 1954, p. 29 etc... and M. Sauvage-M. Campos: *Cahier lasallien 50*, Rome, 1989.

⁴ The Letters..., o.c., p. 362 and Blain 2, p. 313.

⁵ Cf. EM 72-73: "Entretien par simple attention", see *Cahier lasallien 50*, p. 138-148.

⁶ The Letters, o.c.: *Les Lettres* of La Salle are normally

replies to those which were sent to him every month by the Brothers to render an account of their life and conduct. The frequent allusions to silence show that it was a matter which deeply affected the community.

⁷ RC 75-77. The reference is to the Rule of 1718. Obviously, the texts quoted in this chapter on silence are tied up with those contained in other chapters (in particular III, V, VI, IX) in which are to be found suggestions on the manner in which one should behave in various places and circumstances. Reference to silence is also to be found in these texts.

⁸ Starting with the importance given to the subject of recreations (RC VI; R. 77-78). Among the Meditations, MD 30 is particularly important: "Of the manner in which conversations should be conducted" An attentive analysis of this text has been carried out by Antonio Temprado FSC in *La Parole selon La Salle* (Sinite, Salamanca 1977) p. 163-184.

⁹ La Salle: *Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité Chrétienne*, Troyes, 1703, cf. CL 19.

In this text, silence is viewed as a rule of prudence which governs social relations, p. 174, 194, 202, 207.

¹⁰ On the topic dealing with silence in school, cf. Saturnine Gallego: *San Juan Bautista de La Salle*, Vol. 1, BAC Madrid 1986, p. 343-344. Mario Presciuttini: *La Scuola Lasalliana come ambiente educativo*. In *Rivista Lasalliana*, 4/1989, p. 3-17; 2/1990, p. 118-135 (in particular for "le système des communications verbales", p. 134-135).

¹¹ In the Lasallian world, in the Conduct of Schools, ATTENTION is given pride of place. The *Rivista Lasalliana*, makes itself the interpreter of this new interest. Cf. No. 1, 2, 3, 12. Contributions by A. Barella and S. Scaglione.

¹² The "Twelve virtues of a Good Master": gravity, silence, zeal, vigilance, piety, patience, restraint, gentleness, enumeration, Brother Superior General Agathon. Starting with this a famous little treatise entitled precisely: *Les douze vertus d'un bon maître*. This topic was recently brought up-to-date in the *Rivista Lasalliana* by Aldo Barella, 3/1987, p. 3-15.

¹³ Mario Presciuttini, *Rivista Lasalliana* 2/1990, p. 1345. The text "Formation des nouveaux maîtres" is published in the edition of the Conduct of Schools by Brother Anselme. Paris, 1951, p. 305-319. See especially page 306.

¹⁴ Mario Presciuttini: *Rivista Lasalliana* 4/1991, p. 11 and the notes.

Complementary themes:

Contemplation; Conversations; Detachment; Mortification; Renunciation; Retreat; The School; The World; Solitude.

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59. SIMPLE ATTENTION

(Contemplation)

Summary:

1. The nature of the prayer of simple attention: 1.1. Description of simple attention; 1.2. Simple attention and contemplation; 1.3. The Carmelite influence. - 2. The predispositions and qualities of simple attention: 2.1. Predispositions; 2.2. Qualities. - 3. Simple attention as a part of De La Salle's method of prayer: 3.1. The analogy of appreciating art. - 4. The effects of the practice of simple attention: 4.1. Simple attention and good works; 4.2. Simple attention and the spirit of faith.

1. THE NATURE OF THE PRAYER OF SIMPLE ATTENTION

1.1. De La Salle uses the term simple attention only in *Explication de la Méthode d'oraison*. He describes the prayer of simple attention as follows: "Applying ourselves to the presence of God by simple attention consists in remaining before God with a simple, faith-inspired awareness that He is truly present, and dwelling in this awareness for some time, say ten or fifteen minutes, more or less, as we may feel ourselves interiorly absorbed and attracted" (EM 30).

1.2. De La Salle states that attention is necessary to every prayer (Da 424, 425, 426; Db 251, 252, 302; E 7, 26); but his description of the prayer of simple attention identifies it with contemplation, as that term is used in the tradition of prayer, particularly the Carmelite tradition (DS I, 1064-66; II, 2035-2055). De La Salle himself declares in *Explication de la Méthode d'oraison* that "simple attention is also called contemplation" (EM 72).

He does not use the word contemplation again in that treatise, and he uses it only two other times in his writings (MD 28.2; MF 177.3), possibly to avoid any semblance of quietism.

1.3. De La Salle's understanding and description of simple attention, although derived primarily from his own experience, were certainly influenced by Carmelite spirituality, which, in his time, was greatly affecting almost all the schools of spirituality in Europe (DS II, 2036). His earliest biographers point out that De La Salle made retreats with the discolored Carmelite Priests, and that he had a special devotion to Saint Teresa of Avila, "from whose writings he had imbibed his great spirit of mental prayer" (Blain 2:40, 272, 320, 366, 493; MAR 188-89 see English translation, p. 11). De La Salle would have had access to the works of both John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, since a French translation of Teresa's writings had been published in 1601 (DS 2048), and John's works were published in Paris in 1695 (DS 2054).

2. THE PREDISPOSITIONS AND QUALITIES OF SIMPLE ATTENTION

2.1. De La Salle notes that persons are more disposed to receive the grace of the prayer of simple attention if they are interiorly free, that is, detached from their own desires and pleasures, and make the fulfillment of the will of God the purpose of their life (EM 30-31, 35).

Persons of good will, even though not fully disposed, can become more receptive to the grace of the prayer of simple attention if, during the time of meditation, they receptively and lovingly meditate on a passage of Scripture with a few sustained reflections and without discursive reasoning (EM 29-30).

2.2. The qualities which De La Salle associates with the prayer of simple attention include reverential faith, interior respect, silent worship and adoration, love, admiration, gratitude, thanksgiving, self-abasement, and a heartfelt desire to unite oneself with God and share in God's Spirit (EM 72-3, 99). In the prayer of simple attention, the mind and heart become centered in a state of sustained, loving awareness of the presence of God, without reasoning or discursive thought (EM 34, 99), but simply dwelling, actively and ardently, in a disposition of animated, devout, and affectionate attention (EM 73, 99).

De La Salle's description of the qualities of simple attention calls to mind his description of the spirit of faith in the *Règles communes* (RC 18-20), and *Recueil de différent? petits traités* (R 38-50) (spirit of faith).

3. SIMPLE ATTENTION AS PART OF DE LA SALLES'S METHOD OF PRAYER

De La Salle speaks of simple attention as part of his method of prayer and makes it clear that the dynamics of the method will lead anyone faithful to the method to receive, in time and to some degree, the grace of simple attention (EM 29-30).

3.1. De La Salle uses an analogy. As the person who has never studied painting needs at first

to learn by explanations, reasoning, and reflection to recognize a masterpiece and only afterwards can simply gaze in wonder and appreciation at its beauty, so the beginner at prayer needs to go through a similar process to arrive at the prayer of simple attention (EM 31-33).

Thus, in his method of prayer, De La Salle invites beginners to place themselves in the presence of God by using discursive reasoning based on faith, as well as many reflections leavened with affection and tenderness. For those who are progressing in prayer, fewer reflections will be needed and these reflections will be dwelt on for longer periods of time as the need for discursive reasoning diminishes. Finally those who are more advanced will pray with simple attention, which may be sustained by sentiments of affection (EM 73). De La Salle is confident that those who continue the practice of the method of prayer will gradually, even imperceptibly, be graced, at least to some degree, with the practice of simple attention and will finally dwell with contentment and delight in the simple awareness of the presence of God (EM 30, 34).

During the prayer of simple attention a person dwells primarily in the respectful and receptive awareness of God's presence (EM 30, 31-2, 34). But simple attention can also be directed to a mystery of faith (the Incarnation or the Passion, for example (EM 60), to a specific occasion in the life of the Lord as he teaches a virtue (EM 96, 99), or to the truth of a maxim of Scripture (EM 113).

4. THE EFFECTS OF THE PRACTICE OF SIMPLE ATTENTION

The effects of simple attention include detachment from created things, interior consolation, a relationship of complete intimacy with God, a facility in doing good and in the practice of virtue, a deepening of prayer, and a continued awareness of the presence of God (EM 34-35, 99-100).

4.1. According to De La Salle the purpose of prayer, including the prayer of simple attention, is both the conversion of heart and the practice of good works. His method of prayer includes the formulation of practical resolutions for the practice of virtue (EM 80). However, when he speaks

about the results of simple attention he notes that the gentle attraction to do good works and to practice virtue flows directly from the prayer of simple attention itself without formal resolutions (EM 99-100).

De La Salle declares that simple attention attracts the heart gently but effectively to the practice of virtue and produces a strong and supernatural affection for good, even in the face of difficulties and repugnances. The practice of virtue that results from the prayer of simple attention is, then, less the effect of a personal resolution consciously added to prayer than it is the result of the detachment from created things and the attraction to good, sentiments that are aroused in the heart by the experience of simple attention itself.

4.2. For De La Salle, prayer in all of its various forms nurtures the spirit of faith, but the prayer of simple attention is related to the spirit of faith in a special way. The characteristics which De La Salle uses to describe simple attention and its effects are so similar to those which he also uses to describe the spirit of faith, that simple attention and the spirit of faith appear to be identical faith stances before God. The practice of simple attention during the time of prayer and the practice of the spirit of faith in the ordinary experiences of life not only nurture one another, but can be considered the same practice. Simple attention centers the person in the presence of God during the time of prayer with the same faith-inspired awareness and the same intimate union of wills as the spirit of faith does in the ordinary experiences of life (EM 30-35, 60, 72-73, 99-100; R 38-50).

Complementary themes:

Conversion; Consolation; Detachment; Glory of God; Maxims of the Gospel; Mental prayer; Mystery; Prayer; Presence of God; Scripture; Spirit of faith; Spirit of the world; Will of God; Zeal.

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60. SOLITUDE

Summary:

1. The meaning and use of the word. - 2. The sense and the message which De La Salle gives to the word "solitude". 2.1. Solitude - the option of some saints. 2.2. The dynamic aspect of solitude. 2.3. Solitude as a way to self-knowledge. 2.4. Solitude as a means of encountering God. 2.5. What solitude involves. 2.5.1. The tasks of solitude. 2.5.2. Solitude leads to a penitential life. 2.5.3. Solitude implies having God at the centre of one's life and detaching oneself from creatures. 2.5.4. Prayer - an essential aspect of solitude. 2.5.5. Study and experience of the Scriptures. 2.6. Solitude is not an absolute. 2.7. The fruits or the advantages of solitude. 2.7.1. "He became a new man and a man of God". 2.7.2. As a preparation and a condition to work effectively for the conversion of others - a ministerial perspective on solitude. 2.7.3. The most appropriate context for solitude. - 3. The solitude of the Brother. 3.1. De La Salle's teaching on solitude was directed at the Brother. 3.2. The solitude of the Brother in his community. 3.3. Ministerial solitude - the balancing of solitude with ministry. 3.4. The tasks of the Brother in his solitude. 3.4.1. Mortification: Prayer. 3.4.2. Reading and experience of the Scriptures. - 4. Summary.

1. THE MEANING AND USE OF THE WORD

De La Salle makes use of the word "solitude" 25 times once in both MD and R and the rest in MF. In his time the word signified "a desert place or a place which was uninhabited or separated from the world". It also had the sense of "being alone, separating oneself from contact with people" as well as indicating places which had previously been popular, or much-frequented, but which were now scarcely populated (cf. FURETIERE, *Dictionnaire Universel*, "Solitude"). It is with the sense of the first two of these meanings that De La Salle makes use of the word.

Moreover, in analyzing his use of the word "desert" one notices that there is a very close connection between it and "solitude" so that on many occasions De La Salle uses the two words interchangeably. However, there are other occasions in which the word "desert" carries specific connotations and consequently such usage does not permit

this interchange. He uses the word "desert" 39 times in the following works - Da (4), Db (8), EM (2), GA (3), MD (7), MD (19). The word "solitude" also has a close relationship with the word retreat ("retraite") which is used 93 times by De La Salle usually in a broader and more general sense than "solitude". Occasionally, he uses all three terms interchangeably — or at least two of them — as can be seen in the following example:

"...This saint (Peter Celestin) thought of nothing else but his "desert" and longed to continue his "recollected" life ("retraite")... The responsibilities which he had to bear... forced him to live in a way which was diametrically opposed to the inclination for "solitude" which he had felt from his infancy..." (MF 127,3).

"St. Anthony, already filled with the spirit of God in the "desert" ...His zeal for his own sanctification had retained him in the desert... Once the persecution had passed he returned to the "desert".... You must act in a similar way — you must love "recollection"..." (MF 97,3; cf. MF 105,1).

2. THE SENSE AND THE MEANING WHICH DE LA SALLE GIVES TO SOLITUDE

2.1. "Solitude" as an option of some Saints

"Solitude" is the word particular to MF which can be seen as the "biographies of sanctity". De La Salle describes solitude as the option particular to some saints such as, for example: St. Jerome (MD 1,3; MF 170,1.2); St. Anthony (MF 97,3); St. John Chrysostom (MF 100,1.2); St. Romuald (MF 105,1.3); St. Benedict (MF 111,1); St. Gregory Nazianzen (MF 126,1); St. Peter Celestin (MF 127,1.3); St. Basil (MF 170,1.2); St. Remigius (MF 171,1.2.3); St. Bruno (MF 174,2); St. Hilarion (MF 180,2); St. Severus (MF 103,2); St. Romanus (MF 181,3).

De La Salle greatly valued this option for solitude and saw it as eminently sensible and, consequently, this focus on the lives of the saints was his starting point in recommending a life of solitude and recollection to the Brother. He had no fear of taking for such a starting point situations or types which were at times very different from those which were encountered in the life of the Brother. His interest was centred beyond the superficial facts on the value of the option for solitude, emphasizing what was entailed in the option along with the fruits which could be derived; and he recommended it to the Brothers.

The type of saint presented with reference to solitude is varied. For example, St. Peter Celestin "...was attracted to solitude from his youth» (MF 127,1.3) - the text actually says "from his infancy". In other examples it stems from an option arising from different circumstances. Thus, for example, in the case of St. Jerome, who dedicated much time to the study and the interpretation of Sacred Scripture, it was the advice of St. Gregory Nazianzen which prompted him to "retire to the Syrian desert" in order to "give himself to a holy and penitent life in that solitude" (MF 170,1.2) and thus to "grow old in solitude and in the practice of all kinds of austerities" (MD 1,3). St. Romuald lived a very long time in solitude (100 years!) from the age of 20 (MF 105). In the case of St. Basil it was the pious education and instruction received from his grandfather which made such an impression on him that he "renounced the world

for ever to take refuge in solitude" (MF 136,1). With regard to St. Hilarion, it was the example of St. Anthony, who had already attracted fame, which prompted Hilarion to go in search of him so as to learn about his style of life; the power of the word of Jesus inviting to renunciation, along with the death of his parents when he was 15, led him to lead a solitary life (MF 180,1.2).

2.2. The dynamic aspect of solitude

The option for solitude does not stem from a sort of selfish "flight" from the harshness of life. It is not a question of distancing oneself from the concerns of the world (MF 105) out of some sort of irresponsibility or desire to be uninvolved. On the contrary, it is the result of a search for a series of factors which are conducive to a particular environment. But there is more to it than this since these factors are not automatically effective. They require appropriate dynamisms without which the positive results of solitude cannot emerge. The justification of solitude and its positive value lies in the fruits which it is called to produce.

A close reading of De La Salle's writings will indicate that solitude is something which is not sought for itself as a sort of narcissistic solipsism. One is drawn to solitude for something which is beyond it in itself. De La Salle speaks of solitude as something that could be described as a "learning for" or "preparation". Moreover, it is a "strategy" or a "process" which involves particular practices or work. In more personalized terms, one could say that solitude is a step towards, or a condition for, an *encounter*. One can see this with the help of De La Salle's own texts.

2.3. Solitude as a way to self-knowledge

This particular aspect is affirmed by De La Salle in only one text but it is full of interest since the introspective function facilitated by solitude is described in it. He comments that St. Anthony, "once he had disposed of his wealth in favour of the poor, retired to the desert where he worked with his hands to earn what enabled him to live and to help the poor" and that "continuous prayer was added to work". He then adds:

"... In order to consecrate yourself to God it is not sufficient to detach yourself from all that you had and to renounce everything exterior; it is also necessary to strive for perfection and to uproot passions and your own evil inclinations. It is in recollection where this good is achieved. Indeed it is impossible to overcome yourself without self-knowledge and it is extremely difficult to acquire this in the world" (MF 97,2).

In this passage De La Salle concisely sketches the process involved in surrendering oneself to God. In the first place it involves renunciation and detachment from everything exterior. This is followed by the work of interior perfection and the uprooting of passions and one's own inclinations. However, control of oneself requires self-knowledge which is something almost impossible to attain in the world, in contrast, solitude and recollection provide an appropriate environment to accomplish this.

2.4. Solitude as a means of encountering God

In themes such as "the world and relations with it", "retreat"- "recollection" or "solitude", it appears, at first glance, that De La Salle makes use of the language of negation. However, on closer scrutiny, one can see that his message accentuates the centrality of God and that everything else is viewed from this perspective. Thus, for example, if he insists on "separating oneself from creatures", in reality he is insisting on the positive teaching of situating God as the centre of one's life and, in consequence, viewing everything from this new perspective. We can see this with reference to solitude. Speaking of St. Hilarion's total gift to God, he indicates that the saint was prompted to give himself completely to God by the example of St. Anthony. "He was also moved to give himself completely to God by being profoundly touched by the word of Jesus Christ in the Gospel" (alluding to Lk 14,33). De La Salle then comments:

"...What happiness it would be if this divine word so penetrated your heart that you no longer had attachment for any creature!... Nothing contributes more to obtaining this than solitude since in preventing one from seeking anything other than God it forces one to empty one's heart of all affection for what is created in order that it may be filled comple-

tely by God..." (MF 180,2).

In reality it refers to being "disciples of Jesus" (LK 14,33). What is important for De La Salle is that God completely fills the heart and that solitude is a means of achieving this. The goal and the fruit of solitude is the centrality of God. He explains it even better with reference to St. Remigius, Archbishop of Rheims:

"... It is in solitude or complete separation from creatures that you learn to detach yourself from all that is attractive to worldly people and to lose the taste for it and, in consequence, to converse with God who takes great delight in communicating himself with those who have detached themselves from everything since he delights in speaking one to one. The more one's heart is emptied of earthly attractions the more he makes himself known to them and fills them with his spirit..." (MF 171,1).

Such texts are not comforting. De La Salle presents God in opposition not only to "all that is attractive to worldly people" (something which may be easily understood - cf. his impression of those who are dominated by the spirit of the world) but also with respect to "everything created" which, while it may be justified in the context of his time, goes against our modern sensibilities and requires a degree of nuancing. However, from De La Salle's perspective, it is a text which clearly expresses his thought — solitude facilitates knowledge of God and an encounter with Him which involves a one-to-one conversation and the filling of one's being with His Spirit. Such a preparation is essential for those for whom God has destined great work (MF 171,1). Elsewhere, he indicates the purpose of solitude in an expression which, in view of its synthesis, could be termed lapidary. Referring to St. Augustine, he indicates that, once he had been converted, "he retired to an isolated place where he lived an extremely solitary and penitential life for three years" (MF 161,1). He then comments:

"... It was in this holy retirement that the Saint became a new man and a man of God and it was there that, after his conversion, he prepared himself to work effectively for the conversion of others..." (MF 161,1).

This is the great value of solitude and the practi-

ces which go with it. It allows one to become a "new man" and a "man of God" besides being a preparation for apostolic work. According to De La Salle, solitude allows one to situate God as the centre of one's life. Through it one "learns to converse with God" (MF 171,1), to "relish God" (MF 161,1), one becomes "filled with the Spirit of God" (MF 97,3) or with the "fullness of God" (MF 171,1), one is "completely filled with God" (MF 100,2; MF 180,2) or with "God and with his Spirit" (MF 171,3) or with "divine love" (MF 171,2).

2.5. What solitude involves

There is nothing further from the mind of De La Salle than to present an idyllic or comfortable picture of solitude. It is true that, at times, he speaks of it as a *paradise* — as, for example, "... St. Jerome lived in that solitude as in a paradise" (MF 170,2); and, speaking of St. Bruno and his first six companions, "... solitude became a paradise for them" (MF 174,2). However, in the very next line, he also refers to the tasks involved in solitude; "... it is there that he learned to despise himself and not to value any created thing" (MF 170,2; MF 174,2). According to De La Salle, there was a purpose to solitude — there was a dynamic aspect to its pursuit and it involved particular practices. It embraces a spiritual process and — if this is the charism received from God — the preparation for an apostolate.

2.5.1. The tasks particular to solitude

At times De La Salle presents these in summary form. In synthesis, the tasks of solitude are:

A. *the search for one's own perfection* - "after having perfected himself" (St. Anthony MF 97,3); "... love recollection so as through it you can work effectively for your own perfection..."; a recommendation to the Brothers in the same meditation.

B. *the search for one's own sanctification* - "... zeal for his own sanctification had retained him in solitude..." (St. Anthony MF 97,3); "... in the tranquility of solitude, ignored by the world, occupied only in lamenting one's own faults and in practising the means of living a holy life..." (MF 174,2).

De La Salle, on occasions, simply indicates the practices typical of solitude:

"... recollection, mortification and prayer were the means used by this Saint (Peter Celestin) to sanctify himself (MF 127,1); St. Jerome "retired immediately to the Syrian desert in order to give himself to a holy and penitential life. Once there, he gave himself to prayer and to meditation on Sacred Scripture and to the practice of its teachings, keeping vigil and fasting continually, isolating himself from all contact with the world..." (MF 170,2).

The tasks which De La Salle associated with solitude can be indicated in an orderly way and in more detail as follows.

2.5.2. *Solitude implies living a penitential life* (cf. "penance", "mortification"). De La Salle expresses this through the example of the Saints; for example

St. Jerome - "... who grew old in solitude and in the practice of all kinds of austerities" (MD 1,3) *St. Benedict* - "... who took refuge in a frightening solitude... where he lived,, given over to extremely harsh austerities..." (MF 111,1). *St. Peter Celestin* - "... who spent three years completely mortifying his body so as to be able to resist temptations which tormented him" and which led him to such extremes of austerity that "he used a rock as a pillow for sleeping; he was in his element in silence, daily discipline was his recreation and the belt which he used was a chain of iron..." (MF 127,1).

St. Basil - who, "... in solitude where he built a monastery and gave very wise rules to the religious who submitted themselves to his direction, ...became so accustomed to live in such abstinence that, at the end of his days, his body became so weak as a result of the austerities which he had undergone; and through these means — solitude and fasting — prepared himself to do great work in the Church" (MF 136,1)

St. Augustine - acted in a similar manner "retiring to an isolated place where he lived an extremely solitary and penitential life for three years..." (MF 161,1).

What was the purpose of this penitential life? De La Salle also indicates the answer to that question, again through the example of the lives of the Saints. In the case of:

St. Jerome - it seems that at the end of his life he was moved to undertake it out of "fear of the final judgement" (MD 1,3) even though years before, after having conferred with one of the greatest experts of his time in Sacred Scripture, St. Gregory Nazian-

zen, he had decided to withdraw from the world and to lead a life of penance in order to put Sacred Scripture into practice and in this way come to a fuller knowledge of it (cf. MF 170,2) *St. Peter Celestin* - sought through a penitential life to "resist temptations which tormented him: and to sanctify himself" (MF 127,1)

St. Basil - prepared "to do great work for the Church" through such a life (described in more detail in MF 136)

St. Augustine - the penitential life and other practices particular to solitude "made him a new man and a man of God" (MF 161,1).

2.5.3 Solitude involves situating God as the centre of one's life

De La Salle makes much of this aspect when he considers the option for solitude which the Saints made or when he was recommending this option to the Brothers. At times, one can see his own convictions about solitude and the value he places on it as, for example, when he describes its functions:

"... Since in solitude one cannot seek anything other than God one is forced to empty one's heart of all affection for created things with the aim of filling oneself completely with God" (MF 180,2).

In the same commentary he alludes to the "renunciation of everything" (cf. Lk 14,33) or not to have "any attachment for any creature" as the first condition of being a disciple of Jesus. To have one's heart "detached from all things" is, for De La Salle, the height of happiness (cf. MF 105,1). Thus, for example, *St. Jerome*, in his solitude, "learned to detach himself and not to value any earthly thing" (MF 170,2). The previously quoted commentary on *St. Remigius* expresses very clearly De La Salle's thought and is a key to the understanding of his insistent recommendations on recollection and on prayer;

"... It is in solitude or complete separation from creatures that one learns to detach oneself from all that is attractive to worldly people and to lose the taste for it and, in consequence, to converse with God who takes great delight in communicating himself with those who have detached themselves from everything since he delights in speaking one to one. The more one's heart is emptied of earthly attractions the more he makes himself known to them and fills them with his spirit..." (MF 171,1).

2.5.4 Prayer as an essential task of solitude

In the context of solitude and of recollection De La Salle reiterates the decisive importance of prayers as an essential dynamism to practise.

In the case of *St. Augustine*, his "becoming a new man, a man of God" has much to do with prayer. In solitude "he learned to relish God" and it was there, too, that he "also frequently poured out his heart in the divine presence, inconsolable for his past errors and when the enormity of these became apparent he was, at times, plunged into the love of the Lord and never tired of appreciating and giving thanks for the extraordinary mercy of such a loving God towards him. At other times, overwhelmed by the sense of God's greatness and incomprehensibility and by the gifts He bestows on man, his heart was first melted and then moved in loving expression towards his God" (MF 161,1). Bearing in mind the expression of feelings which *St. Augustine* indicates in his *Confessions* (cf. RODRIGUE, J.G., CL 47, p. 390), anyone familiar with the language of De La Salle with respect to the presence of God and with his teaching on the method of prayer (cf. CAMPOS, M., and SAUVAGE, M., CL 50) will recognise in this passage a description of *Augustine* praying:

"... It is in solitude... where one learns... to speak to God who takes great delight in communicating himself to those who have detached themselves from everything since he delights in talking one to one..." (MF 171,1).

In the case of *St. Benedict*, in the frightening solitude in which he took refuge, "... he lived in the practice of continuous prayer" (MF 111,1).

De La Salle insists on the necessity of "filling oneself with God and with his Spirit" (cf. 2.3) and sees this blessing occurring in its fullness only through recollection and prayer;

"... In this world you should not seek and desire reputation but rather the fullness of the spirit of God in order to live according to your state and to properly fulfil your employment... Rest assured that you will not attain this fullness better than through recollection and prayer. Consequently, you must love the first and apply yourself with great fervour to the second" (MF 171,1).

2.5.5. *The study and experience of Sacred Scripture*

With regard to this De La Salle does not present a systematic teaching but rather uses the examples and experiences of the saints as a means of making his personal commentary. Thus, for example, when speaking of St. John Chrysostom, he says that "he retired into solitude where he applied himself to the study of Sacred Scripture which provided him with many extraordinary insights into religious doctrine" ("un fond de religion"). A similar commentary emerges with regard to the imposing figure of St. Jerome who, having discovered that "secular learning, far from leading him to relish God, was rather leading away from Him, renounced it and then spared no effort to instruct himself in Sacred Scripture to attain full knowledge of all the mysteries contained in it..." (MF 170,1). St. Jerome was consulted from all corners of the globe and he also visited many countries seeking contact with the greatest experts in the Scriptures until his conversation with St. Gregory Nazianzen convinced him of the necessity to retire into solitude and there to "give himself to prayer, to meditation on Sacred Scripture and to the practice of its contents" (MF 170,2). It was there that St. Jerome discovered that to "properly know Sacred Scripture one had to begin by putting it into practice" (MF 170,2).

With reference to this theme De La Salle also draws consequences from the maxims of the Gospel. However, in our context, perhaps the most interesting aspect is to see how he links "the study of the Sacred books of Scripture, particularly of the New Testament", with "being filled with the spirit of God" which is a central goal of solitude. A similar perspective is presented in his commentary on St. Augustine;

"...There (in solitude) he learned to relish God and to practise to perfection the rules of the Holy Gospel which furnished him with material for his meditations..." (MF 161,1).

2.6. **Solitude is not an absolute**

We have referred to this in indicating previously that solitude is not sought for itself (cf. 2.2) and, in his consideration of those saints who lived in soli-

tude, De La Salle indicates that there are more important values than solitude which may demand that one abandons it. For the moment, one must take as a starting point the fact of the diversity of charisms and that the will of God leads people along different paths (cf. "action of God") as is clearly evidenced in the stories of sanctity used by De La Salle as his starting point in speaking of solitude. Among the saints whom he chose to consider there were some who took the option of solitude for life. There were others who chose to live the option within a community while, for others, the option was limited to a particular period of time, more or less long, which was interrupted, either by a personal decision or following an appeal from an ecclesiastical or other source. In this respect the lives of Saints Anthony, Peter Celestin and Severus are of particular interest.

St. Anthony - De La Salle describes the spiritual journey of this saint in detail (cf. MF 97,1.2) and he indicates that at a certain moment the saint interrupted his solitude in response to a more important necessity:

"...After having perfected himself, and already filled with the spirit of God in the desert, St. Anthony left it for a time in order to encourage the martyrs and to confirm the Christians in their faith (who were in danger because of persecution). Zeal for his own sanctification had maintained him in solitude and that which he had for the salvation of his brothers drew him out of it. Further... once the persecution had passed he returned to the desert" (MF 97,3).

St. Peter Celestin - Rather different were the psychological traits and circumstances operating in this saint who, from an early age, was apparently drawn to solitude (cf. MF 127,1.3). However, given his eminent sanctity, in his absence he was elected Pope and, since there was no way of avoiding it, he was forced to assume this extremely important responsibility. In his case it was the ecclesial call, much against his will, that led him to break with the charism of solitude (cf. his inner tension is well-expressed in MF 127,3).

St. Severus - The meditation on this saint (MF 103), according to the experts, is almost certainly not from the pen of De La Salle (cf. RODRIGUE, J.G., CL 47, p. 539). However, in this meditation a similar experience of leaving solitude in response to a call to

the episcopacy is also related (MF 103,2).

2.7. The fruits or advantages of solitude

2.7.1. "He became a new man" and "a man of God"

Throughout the previous sections we have already noted the fruits or the advantages of solitude as indicated in De La Salle's thought. In summary form, we can say that solitude facilitates an encounter with God and the centring of one's life in Him; in the expressive phrase that De La Salle used with reference to St. Augustine, "in this holy retreat he became a new man and a man of God" (MF 161,1). Moreover, because of what is entailed in it, and through the fulness of God and of his Spirit, solitude constitutes the best preparation for "effective work for the conversion of others" (ibid.).

2.7.2. A preparation for, and a condition of, "effective work for the conversion of others": a ministerial perspective on solitude

As in many themes De La Salle is not neutral in his treatment of this theme and the ministerial perspective is always present whenever he deals with it. This is explained by his own understanding of the salvific plan of God and by the fact that his thought is directed to the Brothers who have been sent by God for the salvation of those confided to their care. The option of the saints and their experience of solitude allow him to express his thought with clarity. There is a close relationship between solitude and the salvific ministry. For example, St. Remigius who was plucked out of his solitude and consecrated archbishop of Rheims at the age of 22, "... displayed ardent zeal for the good of the Church in the performance of his episcopal duties and omitted nothing which could contribute to their accomplishment..." (MF 171,2). From this starting point -- as in many other cases — De La Salle sets out his thesis and describes the internal dynamism of solitude;

"...This is the fruit which normally accompanies the retired life... (the "real and authentic retreat" says De La Salle)...; the more one has been filled with divine love the more one seeks a way of communicating it to others for the good of the Church since God obliges one to deal with the world. Consequently, these extraordinary men, full of the spirit

of God, apply themselves with all possible diligence to make others both know and relish what they themselves feel and, burning with the zeal which inspires them, they are effective in helping many souls to give themselves to God" (MF 171,2).

Nor is this everything. De La Salle completes his thought by indicating that solitude is a condition of ministerial effectiveness and he expresses this with conviction;

"...When a man called to work for the salvation of souls has succeeded, like St. Remigius, in filling himself with the thought of God and of his spirit in solitude, he can accomplish all that he undertakes. Nothing can resist him — not even God, so to speak, as Moses demonstrated in a way when he demanded that "God accomplish what he asked for the people who were confided to him..." (Ex 32, 14) (MF 171,3).

2.7.3. The most appropriate context for solitude

A. De La Salle concludes that solitude is the perfect environment in which both to become a man of God and to prepare oneself to be used in a ministerial way by God;

"...What happiness it would be if this divine word (referring to Lk 14,33: "... He who does not renounce everything cannot be my disciple") so penetrated your heart that you had no attachment for any creature! Moreover, you will be worthy of your ministry only to the extent that you take on this disposition since this is the first thing that God desires of those who wish to be his disciple. Nothing contributes more to obtaining this than solitude since in preventing one from seeking anything other than God it forces one to empty one's heart of all affection for what is created in order that it may be filled completely by God..." (MF 180,2).

In commenting on the Gospel preaching of St. John Chrysostom, who "won hearts for God", he writes;

"...When one has been filled with God in solitude one can then speak of him boldly and effectively and lead those to know him who have been buried in sin and ignorance, living in a blindness which they themselves do not recognise..." (MF 100,2).

"...With reference to St. Augustine he writes;

"... It was in this holy retirement that the saint, after his conversion, ... prepared himself to work effecti-

vely for the conversion of others..." (MF 161,1).

B. This would be the appropriate place to gather together the significant expressions of De La Salle with regard to solitude which reveal his personal conviction on its advantages;

"... St. Romuald lived 100 years in solitude which seemed a very short time to him because of the consolations ...which the Lord gave him to enjoy during this time. According to Lawrence Justinian, if the world knew the delights that are enjoyed in recollection cities would be turned into deserts and the deserts would soon become populated..." (MF 105,1). St. Jerome, in order "to receive from God the insights which He wanted to communicate to him, withdrew from the hustle of the world in such a way that worldly affairs did not prevent him from immersing himself in the truths which He wished to reveal to men..." (MF 170,1); he "... lived in that solitude as in a paradise" (MF 170,2). A similar appraisal was made by St. Bruno and his companions; "... Such was the style of life lived by St. Bruno and his companions that they could say with St. Jerome that the city was as unruly as a prison for them and solitude as peaceful as a paradise..." (MF 174,2).

3. THE SOLITUDE OF THE BROTHER

3.1. De La Salle's teaching on solitude destined for the Brothers

According to De La Salle, solitude is not an option only for some saints since the type of life lived by the Brother also involves its share of solitude. His general teaching on solitude (outlined above in 2) was destined for the Brothers and, in fact, all this teaching was developed by De La Salle with the Brothers of the Institute in mind.

3.2. The solitude of the Brother in his own community

The solitude of the Brother is none other than the style of life of the Institute outlined in the Common Rules. This is "his" solitude or his desert or, to be more precise, the solitude of the Brother is precisely his community with the experiences, the demands and the exercises which are involved. De La Salle's comment on the Blessed Virgin are perfectly applicable to the Brother; "... Mary fled into the de-

sert (Ap 12,6), that is, into the Temple, a place apart from contact with people where she found the solitude which God had destined for her..." (MF 191,3). In the same meditation De La Salle says to the Brothers; "...You have the happiness of living in the house of God; in it you have committed yourselves to his service..." (MF 191,2).

Obviously, De La Salle is not content with what is called "exterior" solitude or recollection. It is necessary to perform the tasks particular to solitude and recollection so that it be really effective. The purpose of solitude is, precisely, to facilitate and guarantee interior recollection. The community of the Brother is this "solitude" which is capable of making him a man of God and an effective instrument for the ministry which God has entrusted him;

"... If recollection, mortification and prayer were the means used by this saint (St. Peter Celestin) to sanctify himself, you also have the possibility to make use of them in order to grow closer to God since in your Institute there are many such exercises daily..." (MF 127,1).

3.3. Ministerial solitude - balancing solitude and ministry

The life of the Brother is similar to that of the saint who embraced solitude for a time then undertook apostolic tasks before returning to solitude (cf. 2.6). De La Salle himself underlines this similarity. After considering St. Anthony — who "withdrew to the desert" and "after having perfected himself, and filled by the Spirit of God in the desert, he left it for a time with the aim of encouraging the martyrs and to confirm the Christians in the faith..." and "once the persecution had passed he returned to the desert..." (MF 97,3) — he directs the following thought to the Brothers;

"...You have to act in a similar way. You must love recollection in order to work effectively for your perfection. However, you must leave it when God calls you to work for the salvation of those he has confided to you. As soon as you have completed what God has asked of you, you must retire again to your solitude, imitating St. Anthony..." (MF 97,3).

He makes similar recommendations in his commentary on St. Peter Celestin, who was pluc-

ked from his solitude to become Pope but who, after a time, resigned his office in order to return to solitude;

"...While you are required by God to devote your attention to the external functions of your employment, and to find the means to sanctify yourself through them ... Give yourself then to them in such a way that as soon as your presence there is no longer necessary return to your community, as to a secure place, and find your consolation in the assiduous performance of the spiritual exercises..." (MF 127,3).

The life of the Brother revolves around the community and his ministry. He exercises both by "the order and will of God" (cf. RC 2,4) and both are related to personal sanctification and to that of the pupils. Both need to be mutually fed and both constitute "the work of God" and the "work of one's own sanctification". The tasks and the practices of solitude have a profound ministerial sense. They are not simply ascetical or personal practices but are required for ministry. The community is the "ministerial solitude" of the Brother while the ministry of the Brother is enriched and fed in the solitude of the community.

De La Salle insists that the secret of success in the ministry to pupils lies in being filled with God which is the chief goal of an environment of solitude which constitutes the Lasallian community. Consequently, then, it is more a question of integration and the mutual complementarity of community and ministry than of opposition;

"...When one has been filled with God in solitude one can then speak of him boldly and effectively and lead those to know him who have been buried in sin and ignorance, living in a blindness which they themselves do not recognise... Given that your community has, as its obligation, to daily make God known to pupils, instructing them in the truths of the Gospel and teaching them to put them into practice, you must fill yourself with thoughts of God and be inflamed with the love of his holy law with the aim of ensuring that your words are effective with the pupils" (MF 100,2). "...The employment which you exercise demands great zeal but this will be of little use if it does not produce effect and it will not produce this effect if it is not the fruit of God's love which is within you" (MF 171,2).

The expressions "to fill oneself with God", "to

be inflamed with love for his holy law", "the love of God residing within you" refer to this centrality of God that was earlier classified as "the search and the fruit of solitude" (cf. 2.4).

3.4. The tasks of the Brother in his solitude

Simple allusions of De La Salle with regard to the example of the saints who sanctified themselves in solitude indicate the nature and the value of the tasks which the Brother undertakes in his solitude. However, there is nothing new or distinct from what has been previously outlined (cf. 2.5) in that they have reference to the ministry which the Brother exercises. It is sufficient to simply quote the appropriate texts;

3.4.1. Mortification and Prayer

"...Be faithful in carrying them out (the practices of recollection, mortification and prayer which are daily exercises in the Institute) and be convinced that the fruit you produce in souls will be in proportion to the love you show for these three practices and to the extent that you practice them..." (MF 127,1). "...In this world you should not seek or desire reputation (alluding to St. Remigius who was so favoured by God in solitude that the nature of his virtue gained him an extraordinary reputation) but rather the fullness of the spirit of God in order to live according to your state and to properly fulfil your employment... Rest assured that you will not attain this fullness better than through recollection and prayer. Consequently, you must love the first and apply yourself with great fervour to the second" (MF 171,1).

"...Through these two means — solitude and fasting — St. Basil prepared himself to do great work in the Church. If you wish your ministry to produce abundant fruit in souls nothing will so help you to attain this than withdrawal from the world and temperance. This contributes in great measure to the preservation of purity which draws abundant graces from God not only for one's own benefit but also for the benefit of others..." (MF 136,1).

3.4.2. The reading and the experience of Sacred Scripture

"...You have the happiness to live detached from the world, often reading and hearing Sacred Scripture. In consequence, you must learn from it the means of salvation and the holy maxims that through your profession you are obliged to practise and to teach to others. Meditate on it often and en-

sure that it is also the normal subject of your conversation" (MF 100,1).

"...You are not seeking to make your disciples simply Christians through your work but to make them real Christians and it is of little use having them baptised if they do not live in conformity with the Christian spirit. Moreover, to communicate it to others one must have it in abundance oneself... "...Your employment obliges you without any doubt to put Sacred Scripture into practice. Therefore, read it frequently, with attention and affection. Make it the object of your study with the aim, above all, of putting it into practice" (MF 171,3), "... If you wish to be filled with the spirit of God and to be properly prepared for your employment centre yourself in the study of the books of Sacred Scripture, especially the New Testament, with the aim of it being the norm of conduct as much for yourselves as for those whom you instruct..." (MF 170,1).

4. SUMMARY

By way of summary it could be said that, for De La Salle, solitude or recollection is an essential condition for encountering both oneself and God and, in consequence, is an essential condition for ministerial effectiveness. In his solitude — that is, in his community — the Brother meets God and

becomes filled with his love thus preparing himself to be an instrument of salvation. The nature of life lived by the Brother involves a time for "solitude-encounter" and a time for involvement in the "salvation-ministry" of others. Underlying this Lasallian vision and teaching as models are those saints, "images of sanctity", whose experience has served as De La Salle's starting-point in developing his teaching on solitude. It is also based on the long experience of holy people and a long tradition of religious life as well as, undoubtedly, the orientations of the directors with whom he himself worked. Furthermore, although this is not specifically alluded to, there is the biblical dynamism of prophetic call — a constant in the dual-faceted encounter with God, with a God who cherishes plans of salvation and who sends one to save others — which is a central theme in Lasallian teaching and spirituality.

It would be very interesting to parallel Lasallian teaching on solitude with the personal biography and foundational journey of De La Salle himself from this perspective of solitude and to see the function and the richness of the dynamisms — recollection, the tasks proper to solitude, style of Lasallian community, the experience of retreats, creation and nature of novitiate etc...).

Complementary themes:

Child-Pupil-Disciple; Community; Disciples; Employment; Exercises; God's role; God's work; Heart-to touch hearts; Mental Prayer; Ministry; Renunciation-Detachment; Retreat; Rule-Regularity; Saints; Salvation; Silence; State; World; Zeal.

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61. THE TEACHER-PUPIL RELATIONSHIP

Summary:

Introduction. - 1. The teacher in the time of De La Salle. - 2. The vision of the teacher envisaged by De La Salle and shaped in the Brothers of the Christian Schools. 2.1. The environment of the educational relationship. 2.1.1. Respect. 2.1.2. Good example. 2.1.3. Personal knowledge of each pupil. 2.1.4. Tenderness. 2.1.5. Gratuity and disinterestedness. 2.2. The content of the educational relationship. 2.2.1. The presentation of a style of life impregnated with Gospel values. 2.2.2. The basics of culture. - 3. The vision of the pupil in the educational relationship. - Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

The binomial expression "teacher-pupil" has been the object of very different interpretations throughout educational history. In the Middle Ages the prevalent emphasis was on the teacher, as "magister dixit" reflected more the quality of learning than for virtue or other qualities. The emphasis was shifted towards the child by John-Henry Pestalozzi (1746-1827), the great Swiss educationalist, who created a trend of thought and a pedagogical praxis which continues to-day as child-centred education, and whose ideas have been the inspiration for many modern educational approaches. However, the most modern trends in present-day education situate the validity of educational activity in the relationship created between the teacher and pupil — the possibility and the quality of educational activity is thus dependent on the quality of this relationship.

This modern tendency is no more than a reflection of a deeper philosophical and anthropo-

logical development within the person which has led to the realization that integrated growth only occurs within the context of "harmonious relationships with others" and which has led to the coining of a neologism, "relationality", to express this orientation. A similar idea was expressed by Ivan Illich who spoke of "conviviality", the capacity to live together in harmony as in a banquet to which the whole of humanity is invited.

In the time of De La Salle there was no code which legislated on the nature, extent or characteristics of this relationship with the result that each teacher created his own and imposed his own rules. However, the teaching religious orders were already trying to improve this relationship as were innovators in the education of children. In this context, then, it is surprising that De La Salle, far ahead of his time in this, had developed a theory and a pedagogical praxis in which the emphasis was placed precisely in the relationship between teacher and pupil.

1. THE TEACHER IN THE TIME OF DE LA SALLE

"As for me, I would beg from door to door in order to find a real school-master" (Adrien Bourdoise).

Around the mid-17th century there was an awareness in France of the lack of good teachers and a desire to find a solution to this problem. It was not that teachers did not exist but rather that they did not respond to the necessity of availability and of self-giving and, above all, to the requirements of a vocation. The situation at the time could be summarized as follows;

- Religious communities of women dedicated to teaching had quite well-prepared personnel.
- There were also "clerical-teachers" with a confusion of functions and a consequent "clericalization" of their functions in the schools.
- There were also lay teachers — the majority of them in the cities, very few in the country-side — doing what they could as isolated individuals. Some of these were private tutors to wealthy families.
- There were also the authorized "Writing Masters", a strong organization established as a powerful Corporation which was to oppose De La Salle's educational project with incredible violence.

With the exception of this last group, the elementary teachers gave the impression of being a diverse and dispersed group, fragile and unstable, and deficient in formation. But it was a group which was rising constantly given the growing demand for education. There were two basic requirements for these teachers: morality and an acceptable standard or, in other words, basic knowledge since, as yet, there were no institutions to prepare them professionally which, in itself, was another of the problems. The school authorities gave the teacher an examination and enquired about his life and habits:

"...The school-master must be pious and modest, charitable with everybody, an enemy of idleness, of gambling, of hunting and of worldly distractions, he must not be given to the frequent company of women, and must be of great probity..." (Charles Demia).

As one can see, there is no mention of a single professional skill nor anything to do with the nature of relationships with pupils.

2. THE VISION OF THE TEACHER ENVISAGED BY DE LA SALLE AND SHAPED IN THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

"The exercises of the community along with school work require a person who is completely dedicated..." ("Memoir on the Habit", 1689-90).

"For this purpose they keep schools so that, with children under the direction of the teachers from morning until night..." (RC 1,3).

According to De La Salle, the Christian teacher, through his vocation and religious consecration, had to be conscious of the fact that his whole life would be dedicated to the children who were in front of him. He saw Christian education almost as a daily and silent liturgical act of self-sacrifice for the spiritual well-being of the "children of the working-class and the poor". And what were the means which De La Salle offered his Brothers to help them relate in a fraternal and effective manner to "these destitute children dressed in rags, ill-disciplined and with little education"?

2.1. The climate of the educational relationship

Modern psychologists and sociologists place great insistence on the "human environment", the context in which the human relationship occurs and develops, to the point of affirming that this context, more than the contents, creates the "climate" - "the medium is the message", as Marshall MacLuhan asserts. It is clear from the writings of De La Salle that he was very much aware of these "modern" pre-requisites in the art of good communication.

2.1.1. *Respect - The Primacy of the person*

When one studies illustrations related to schools and to teachers of the 16th and 17th centuries one never ceases to be surprised at the very frequent sight of some means of punishment either in the hands of the teacher, or very near to him. Consequently, it was a real educational revolution which De La Salle proposed in indicating with striking clarity that: "... Silence, circumspection and the vigilance of the teacher, rather than harshness and beatings, are what establish good order

in a class" (CE 15,2,7 = Management P2, V, 2°). Behind this wise principle was the implicit rejection of the coercive approach to education in vogue at the time along with a re-definition of educational activity on more human and Christian foundations. In consequence, the primary attitude that De La Salle demanded of the teachers in their relations with the poor children before them was respect. Hence, with regard to the Inspectors of Schools, he wrote that they must "take great care to ensure that the teachers do not beat pupils with sticks, hands or feet..." (CE 21,2,20 = Management P3, V, 2°) while, in a letter of May 1st 1709, he indicated to Brother Robert that it was "shameful to slap pupils. Control your impatience..." (LA 54,10).

What was the basis of this new attitude proposed by De La Salle?

1. Contrary to the general idea that the child was a second-class citizen, having duties but no rights, De La Salle affirmed that "children are gifted with reason and must not be corrected as animals. They must be reprimanded and corrected with justice" (MR 204,1). In this connection it is interesting to read what the Management of Schools has to say in the long chapter on the subject of corrections. Teachers were required to use the more formal expressions of "you" when ordering their pupils. Moreover, "... it is important that you never make use of harmful or inappropriate words calling them, for example, "rascal", "rogue", "stingy", "brat", etc. None of these words should be heard from the mouth of a Brother of the Christian Schools" (CE 15,4,10-11 = Management P2, V, 4°).

2. The dignity of the baptised sons of God. In the face of the titles of nobility held by the mighty of the earth, De La Salle asserted that these poor children were noble by their baptism; "...The dignity of the Christian stems from his birth given that he is a son of God and that he belongs to Jesus Christ..." (RB 101,1,21).

3. The living image of Jesus Christ. The "preferential option for the poor" was the life option of De La Salle and the first Brothers; "... Honour the poor. May you be moved in faith to do so with love and zeal given that they are members of Jesus Christ" (MF 96,3).

2.1.2. *Good Example*

"Your first duty to your pupils is that of edification and good example. Have you considered that you must be a model for them of the virtues which you wish to inculcate? Have you conducted yourselves as befitting good teachers" (MF 91,3).

In Christian educational circles at the time of the Founder there was much insistence on the importance of the "model". Precisely because of the view that the child was bom full of evil tendencies and inclinations there was need to present them with an appropriate "model", whose qualities they could imitate, as soon as possible. The natural and most appropriate models should be the parents and it was in this fact that De La Salle, at the beginning of the Common Rules of his Institute, situated his sociological and moral discourse in which he described the plight of the "abandoned children of the working-class and the poor" who were deprived of parental example and exposed, in consequence, to the harmful influence of inappropriate "models" - ie. "bad companions". This led De La Salle to insist with the Brothers that "those charged with directing souls must possess virtue beyond the normal which will serve as an example to others" (MD 33,2).

2.1.3. *Personal Knowledge of each pupil*

To-day, as in any era, the teacher who does not know his pupils is open to all sorts of errors and this was a fact on which De La Salle placed great insistence; "...One of the principal concerns of those dedicated to instructing others is to succeed in getting to know them and to understand the way in which each of them acts... This is one of the qualities most necessary to direct those in their charge" (MD 33,1). Similarly, in the Management of Schools, he indicated that "you must refrain from punishing children during their first days in school. Before doing so it is necessary to understand their nature, character and inclinations" (CE 15,6,39 = Management P2, V, 5°, sec 3).

In order to achieve this pre-requisite of personal knowledge of each pupil, the Christian School of De La Salle established a methodology in the form of Registers or Forms which constituted a reliable data-bank of personal information which followed the pupil throughout the educa-

tional process. This information concerned such things as family circumstances, previous schooling, progress in the school since admission, progress by levels and lessons, the principal elements of his character, temporary absences and their causes, and even behaviour outside of school (cf. CE 13,4,3 = Management P2,3). What is striking here is the surprising "modernity" of these criteria.

2.1.4. *Tenderness*

One of De La Salle's greatest educational innovations consisted in replacing the general atmosphere of fear which prevailed in the elementary schools of his time with an environment of acceptance, tenderness and love. From the outset he recognized that respecting and knowing the child was not enough — to transform the child required that the child be surrounded by a climate of tenderness. The effect was immediate and spectacular and it was a shock to the educational climate of the elementary schools of his time. So vital was this principle to the Christian School of De La Salle that he incorporated it in the Rule of the Brothers; "...The Brothers will tenderly love their pupils" (RC VII, 13). To recognise oneself as loved and to be able to love are two spiritual experiences which carry immense transformational and purifying potential for the person and, especially, for the child and such experiences, in themselves, apart from many other reasons, explain the immediate success of the Brothers' Schools: before being organizational and academic successes they were a success in human relationships. In his biography of De La Salle, Blain recounts an incident which has not received much commentary but which indicates the healthy effect of this relationship of respect and mutual love between teacher and pupil; "... One has seen children in the schools making a sign to the Brother so that they could approach him in order to speak to him; and, then, putting their arms around his neck, kissing him tenderly, without any further explanation of this unusual gesture other than saying: "It's because I love you!" (Blain 2, Appendix p. 101).

In the midst of the austere spiritual vocabulary of the 17th century it is striking that De La Salle employed the word "tenderness" (tender/tenderly) 79 times in his writings, especially in his Mediations; "...You have to teach these destitute child-

ren daily. Love them with tenderness, following the example of Jesus Christ in this..." (MF 166,2). This tenderness was to be converted into an educative love which was manly, demanding and freeing and which, in the pedagogy of De La Salle's school, took on a particular characteristic — i.e. preventive education or, putting it another way, protecting the child from his own weakness and from the dangers of his environment: "... Substituting for parents and for pastors, you are under the obligation to watch over the children in such a way that you will have to give an account of their souls..." (MR 203,3). This expression, "To watch over the children", is a very characteristic expression of De La Salle appearing frequently in his writings. He justifies this insistence by saying to the Brothers that "... God has honoured you by entrusting the education of children to you and, particularly, the care of their souls. It is this that He had most at heart when He made you guides and guardians of these youngsters..." (MR 203,3). The intensity of this care would be an expression of zeal which, for De La Salle, was the passion for the glory of God and the well-being of children, and which he indicated as one of the essential components of the authentic spirit of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. This educative love had two characteristics:

A. A love for all without distinction: "...The Brother should not have particular affection for any pupil..." (CE 21,2,13 = Management P3, 1, 2°).

B. A love which involved firmness rather than weakness: "...If you use the firmness of a father to draw them or remove them from evil, you must also have the tenderness of a mother..." (MF 101,3).

2.1.5. *Gratuity and Disinterestedness*

In the thinking of De La Salle, gratuity was never to be reduced to an economic or financial aspect but rather referred primarily to a consecrational dimension of self-giving to God and to poor children without asking anything in exchange for this. Why did De La Salle place such great insistence on this? Because it would always be a basic condition for evangelization and, therefore, for the ministry of Christian Education. It would be the concrete expression and reflection of the gratuitous, loving gift of God to man in Jesus Christ

whom the Brother represents and for whom he is called to faithful witness; "...What a great joy it is for you to be able to teach the truths of the Gospel to your disciples purely for the love of God..." (MR 207,2). And elsewhere "... Be on your guard against all human attitudes in your dealing with children. Have pure intentions in your work, similar to those of Jesus Christ..." (MR 196,3). As a sign of this disinterestedness, De La Salle was very insistent that the Brothers received absolutely nothing from the pupils or from their parents; "...They should not receive anything either from the pupils or from their parents, or from any other person, for any reason whatsoever and they should not keep anything belonging to the pupils..." (CE 21,2,15 = Management P3, 1, 2°). As if this was not enough, he went on to indicate that "if, for whatever reason, they took something from the pupils, it must be returned at the end of class..." (idem).

In summary, the climate of the educational relationship in the Christian School envisaged by De La Salle, in demanding an availability and self-giving from the teacher which was both constant and total, took on the liturgical significance of religious consecration and sacrificial offering. As such it was understood by De La Salle himself; "... It is, in truth, to make a sacrifice of your own life, to use it only in his service..." (MF 70,2) while, elsewhere, he wrote; "...You must consecrate to him completely and give your life, if it were necessary, in order to carry out your duty. Is this how you act? Do you find such generous attitudes within yourself?..." (MR 135,2).

2.2. The contents of the educational relationship

Having thus created a bridge, through mutual affection and acceptance, what was the purpose to which De La Salle put it?

2.2.1. *To propose a style of life impregnated with the values of the Gospel*

De La Salle summarized this objective in a phrase which was very common in his day; "... Instil in the children the spirit of Christianity which gives them the wisdom of God..." (MF 194,2). One could not be more precise with so few words.

Elsewhere he wrote; "... to inculcate Jesus Christ in the hearts of children and to communicate to them the spirit of God..." (MF 80,2).

Christian education, in the Lasallian School, begins with the faith witness of the teacher and develops through four convergent objectives:

1. To know God through faith
2. To adore him through prayer and sacrifice
3. To obey him through the observance of his commandments and by avoiding sin
4. To love him through the grace which he gives us in prayer and the Sacraments ("Duties of a Christian towards God and the means of accomplishing them" - Preface).

The methodology of Christian initiation employed by the teachers in the schools organized by De La Salle is interesting but an analysis of that theme goes beyond the scope of the present work.

2.2.2. *The basics of culture*

From the beginning of the Italian catechetical movement, as later with the French movement, aspects of elementary formation showed concern for the Christian education of children. The popular Christian School was the concrete result and expression of this effort in favour of an integral formation of the child and De La Salle's schools were organized on this model. With the exception of catechetics, what was given in these schools was an "apprenticeship" in basic skills such as reading, writing and counting rather than "teaching". At that time such an apprenticeship opened many doors to self-improvement, as the Management of Schools indicated when inviting the Brothers to convince parents not to "...withdraw their children from the school when they were too young in order to put them to work..." giving, as the reason, that "... one must make them see the importance that knowing how to read or write has for a working class person since through it, no matter how unintelligent they may be, they are capable of everything..."(CE 16,2,21 = Management P2, VI, 3°). However, in the Christian School as envisaged by De La Salle, this "secular" learning was not a simple pretext for teaching the Christian faith — it had its own specific contribution as is apparent with total clarity in this question of De La Salle:

"... Have you taught those secular subjects such as reading and writing, which you are obliged to teach, with as much care as possible? If you have not done so you will have to give a strict account to God..." (MF 91,3).

At the end of these preliminary reflections one may ask what were the means which De La Salle offered to his Brothers in order to guarantee the solidity and permanence of this optimum educational relationship which he sought? What follows are some of the means which he offered:

1. A life of prayer, asceticism and control of oneself.

2. A community of educators who helped each other, shared their educational experiences and evaluated their pedagogical work: "... not to leave a Brother alone in class before he has been trained by a Brother with much experience..." (CE 16,2,12 = Management P2, VI, 3°).

3. A preoccupation for a good initial formation and for establishing a plan of permanent formation: "... Afterwards, you must withdraw to devote yourselves to reading and to prayer with the aim of assimilating in depth the truths and the maxims which you wish to inculcate..." (MR 200,1).

4. The effort to adapt oneself to the mental and cultural level of the child: "... Children are simple and, for the most part, lacking in education; they require that those who are helping them to save themselves do so in a very simple way so that all the words that they use with the children are clear and easily understood..." (MR 193,3).

5. The equilibrium between tenderness and firmness to which we have referred earlier. De La Salle promoted a school with quality: "that the school should function well" was one of his reiterated phrases. He had such a high regard for the importance of the Christian school that he wanted to optimize its possibilities at all levels — for example, at the academic or organizational levels. Consequently, this was not a question of "occupying" or "entertaining" pupils in class. On the contrary, it went directly to the central objective of his educational project - ie. to form an adult Christian, an honest citizen, useful to himself and to others as a result of this "pastoral urgency" he wanted a seri-

ous tone to characterise his Christian school and the results of this were very soon apparent.

3. THE PUPIL IN THE EDUCATIONAL RELATIONSHIP

When one speaks of the educational relationship between the teacher and pupil in the Christian school envisaged by De La Salle there is one essential reference — his Meditation on the Good Shepherd for the second Sunday after Easter (MD 33) — where he gives a masterly description of the attitudes of both. In his commentary, De La Salle highlights the fact that "the sheep must know the shepherd" and that when he devotes himself to the sheep the result is that "... it arouses in them love of the shepherd, creating a sense of pleasure in being in his company since they find rest and relief in it..." (MD 33,2). De La Salle also hoped that "the sheep would listen to the shepherd and understand him because his instructions were consistent with their capacities" (MD 33,3). "To take pleasure in his company" is certainly a felicitous expression which appropriately reflects the effect of the moral and affective proximity between teacher and pupil which alone makes possible a productive educational dialogue.

The Management of Schools is another work of De La Salle in which suggestions of this relational type also appear as in, for example, the chapter on absences of the pupils from school; thus, for example,

"... Children who absent themselves from school through fickleness will be encouraged to come to school more by winning them over through goodness than by correction or harshness..." (CE 16,2,5, = Management P2, VI, 3°). Or, elsewhere,

"...The fourth reason why pupils miss school is because they have little attachment to the teacher because he does not know how to win them over or to encourage them..." (CE 16,2,15). And, finally,

"...The solution to this type of absence lies in the attempts of the teachers to make themselves very kind, presenting themselves as affable and open... doing everything for all pupils so as to draw them all to Jesus Christ..." (CE 16,2,16).

One cannot end this theme without making allusion to a simple and ingenious device of non-

verbal communication which was used in De La Salle's schools from the beginning — ie. the "signal" — and which had much to do with the tranquility and economy of energy which marked the daily life of these schools. It consisted of two small pieces of wood which were linked together so that when the teacher pressed one against the other it made a very clear and distinct sound: thus,

"...With the aim of favouring the observance of silence, a great number of signals have been devised in the Christian school..." (CE 12,0,2 = Management P2, II).

The second chapter of Part 2 of the Management is entirely dedicated to the use of this "signal". Each sound or gesture made with it had a specific meaning and, as such, really constituted a code of non-verbal communication which was very useful and practical, bearing in mind that, at that time, there were between 60 to 100 pupils in the classes. Another means of communication was by means of the teacher's own bearing. The management indicates various examples: for example,

"...To indicate to a pupil that he should fold his arms the teacher will look directly at him with his own arms folded at the same time..." Or, again,

"...To indicate to a pupil that he should join his hands the teacher will join his own hands and look directly at the pupil. In a word, in these and in similar situations, the teacher will do the same thing that he wants the pupils to do while looking directly at

them..." (CE 12,4,1 et 5 - Management P2, II, 4°).

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, De La Salle was unsparing in providing teaching resources to maintain a physical and spiritual proximity between teacher and pupil in his Christian schools. However, it is evident that the greatest element in this encounter was the reciprocal love between the teacher and his pupil. Far from being a love which stifled or bound, it was a liberating love which was a sacramental sign of the liberating love of God:

"... As teachers of the children whom you educate you have the responsibility to take all possible care to help them achieve the liberty of the sons of God which Jesus Christ attained for us through his death..." (MR 203,2).

It was De La Salle's desire that the sign of this authentic liberating love in the teacher would be his constant dedication to the integral progress of his pupil:

"... Children are the most innocent members of the Church and, normally, the best disposed to respond to the influence of grace. It is the desire of the Lord that you commit yourselves to make them holy so that in all things they grow to full maturity in Jesus Christ who is their head... so that they can partake of the promises of God through Jesus Christ..." (MR 205,3).

Complementary themes:

Celebrate-Cult; Child-Pupil-Disciple; Christian; Christian Teacher; Community-Society-Institute; Correction; Disciples; Duties of a Christian; Example-Edification; Gospel; Gratitude; Instruction- Instruct; Love; Prayer; Zeal.

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62. TRUTH

Summary:

1. General definitions of Truth. 1.1. Set up of this article. - 2. Religious truth. 2.1. God is the Truth. 2.1.1. Biblical approaches to the truth. 2.1.2. The Roman Catholic Church, basing itself on the Bible and Tradition, is the sole guardian of religious truth. 2.2. Speculative truths and practical truths. 2.3. How we find out our way to truth. 2.3.1. Through reading and study. 2.3.2. Through prayer and Meditation. 2.4. Christian teachers must form their disciples to the truths of religion. 2.4.1. Truth and the sacrament of Penance. - 3. Human truth. 3.1. Why should we be truthful in our relations with our neighbour? 3.1.1. Vocabulary used by La Salle. 3.1.2. Truth and the honest man. 3.1.3. Truth and the Eighth commandment. 3.1.4. How do teachers form their pupils to respect human truth. 3.2. To be truthful with oneself. 3.2.1. Various ways of telling lies. 3.2.2. How to be truthful. - 4. How the Founder is a model in the practice of religious and human truth.

1. GENERAL DEFINITIONS OF TRUTH

"Nobody wants to chase after error and untruth. The desire for truth is a desire as strong and active, as it is natural and necessary; but where are we to find this precious truth, for which so many long? Where does it dwell?" These are considerations and questions which his biographer places in De La Salle's mouth (CL 8,203). The answer to the questions he asks himself is to be found in his writings as well as in the example of his life. He does not define truth at the epistemological level; he uses this word as it was used in his time. If we are dealing with knowledge, "truth is then the conformity of our judgment with what things are in themselves". The same *Trevoux* Dictionary adds; "It is yet another maxim, an evident principle; and this is said not only of knowledge that we acquire through study or through meditation, but also in regard to the mysteries of religion" (t. VIII, 352). The absence of truth consists at once in the *error* which is the outcome of ignorance or lack of examination (t. III, 827) and in *falsehood* "When we intentionally

make someone believe a thing to be true when we know it is false or to believe false what we know to be true" (t. V, 932).

1.1. Set up of the article

In the present article, we shall examine how La Salle speaks about the truth, first on the religious level, then on the human level, in our relations with others or with ourselves. Thanks to references to his life, we shall try to show the perfect conformity between his teaching and his example.

2. RELIGIOUS TRUTH

2.1. God is Truth

On the religious level, the Founder maintains that truth is God himself (Db 23a, MR 193,1). He is the one and only true God (Da 453D, MF 168,2) and "the first truth we must believe and which is the foundation of our faith is that there is

a God, that there is only one God, and that there cannot be several Gods, because, according to St. Thomas, there is only one who can be independent and possess a sovereign and infinite perfection" (Da 15B).

2.1.1. *The Biblical approach to the Truth*

The Bible speaks abundantly of the Truth. In God the Truth means that he is to be believed, he is faithful, that we can trust him and abandon ourselves to him — these are the various meanings of the hebrew word *emeth*² - - and that he cannot either deceive himself (Da 3B) or be deceived (Da 12A), or want to deceive us (Db HE). He is the God of Truth (Ps 31,6); his word (Ps 119, 160), his law (Ps 119, 142) and his decisions (Ps 19,10) are also true. This Truth expressed itself in the past through the prophets (Rm 1,2; He 1,1) and, in the New Testament, by his Son (Ib) the true Light and fullness of Truth (Jn 1,9,14). This Son, Truth itself, (Jn 114,6; MD 38,2) came to witness to the truth (Jn 18,37). Before his Passion, he promised the Spirit of Truth (Jn 15,26) to his Apostles to make them understand all that he had taught them (Jn 16,13; Da 6IB). Jesus even asks his Father to confirm his Apostles in the Truth (Jn 17,17-19).

2.1.2. *The Roman Catholic Church*

Through his Apostles, Jesus has transmitted this Truth to the Church: "The doctrine which Jesus Christ has bequeathed his Church is the same which he taught, which his Apostles taught the faithful of their time and which they passed on to the pastors which came after them, either in writing or orally (Da 70E). It is therefore in the Bible and in Tradition (Da 70,8A) that are contained all the truths³ that the Church is in duty bound to transmit and we find a synthesis of them in the Apostles' Creed (Da 13C). She alone "column and foundation of the Truth" (ITim 3,15; Da 72C), can do it for "she alone is of the true religion, all the others usurp this name and are false and imaginary" (Da HIE). The Founder's fidelity to the Roman Catholic Church makes him consider those he calls pagans, atheists, idolaters, infidels, heretics and schismatics (Da 68B-C-D) being "completely cut off from the Church by their errors".⁴ This position is no longer consonant with the Vatican II Declara-

tion which states: "The Catholic Church does not reject anything which is true and holy in these religions... However, it teaches and is obliged to teach unceasingly Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14,6). In him, men find the fullness of the religious life and God has reconciled everything" (2Co. 5,18-19).⁵ There is no doubt that this same fidelity would have enabled him to subscribe to this new approach of our times.

2.2. **Speculative and practical truths**

De La Salle distinguished two categories of religious truths: those concerning speculative faith (Da 6A), which he also calls fundamental (MR 200.1) or essential (MR 200.2) or of pure speculation (MR 194.3) and practical truths (Da 6B; MR 194.3). The word MAXIM may refer to one or the other category.⁶ The first truths are those which must be believed (Da 6A), the others "those that make us lead a Christian life conformable to that of the Apostles after the example of Jesus Christ". (MR 200.2) Without the practical truths, the speculative ones are insufficient for salvation: "It is not enough to be instructed in the Christian truths which are purely speculative to be saved... (MR 197.2). In the case of the former as of the latter, the human will does not suffice by itself: "It is quite common to see Christians even in regular communities who have little taste for the practical truths, who oppose them in their heart and sometimes in their exterior conduct" (MD 5,2). And also: "Even the most saintly, most learned and most enlightened of men are liable to fall into error and falsehood" (Da 3A).

2.3. **How we find the Truth**

However, God desiring that "all men come to the knowledge of Truth" (1 Tm 2,4; MR 7E), it is made accessible to us in various ways which match up more or less: the preaching of the Church, the receptiveness of a pure heart, as the Sixth Beatitude promises (Mt 5,8): "It is the case of those who, having their heart exempt from any vice and any affection for the least sin, are faithful only to God; they will see God, because there is no darkness in their soul which prevents them from seeing the Eternal Truths..." (Da 191D).

2.3.1. *Through reading and study*

Then, by listening to the word of God: "It is from this sacred book that you must draw the knowledge which you should daily impart to your pupils. Thus they will imbibe the true Christian spirit. But it is necessary that you, in the first place, should nourish your soul with the holy truths contained in this precious book, and that you should let them sink into your mind by frequently meditating on them" (MF 169.1). Another means is spiritual reading: "Like them (Jesus and the Apostles), you must leave your work and devote yourself to reading and mental prayer, in order to learn at their source the truths and the holy maxims which you wish to teach them..." (MR 200.1). We can also consider the book we are reading as a personal letter from Jesus. If we cannot understand their (the divine truths') meaning, we should approach those who are able to explain them to us (R 143-144). Study is another means, intellectual this time: "You must strive to attain a perfect knowledge of the truths of religion by study, because ignorance in such matters would be criminal since it would cause ignorance in those whom you should instruct" (MF 153.1) and that "you must therefore not only know these truths in a general way, but also know them all so well that you are able to make your disciples understand them clearly and in detail" (MR 198.1).

2.3.2. *Through Prayer and Meditation*

As we are exhorted to do in these passages, we must have recourse to prayer and meditation, "for Jesus Christ is in the midst of the Brothers (doing mental prayer) to teach them the Truths and the Maxims of the Gospel, to drive them into the depth of their hearts and to inspire them to make of these truths a rule of conduct, to help them understand them and teach them how to put them into practice in a way most agreeable to God and consonant with their profession" (EL 10A).⁷ To help us go deeper into these truths, we must also make acts on the truths of faith, especially if we are tempted not to believe in them (Db 288C). Being a good teacher himself, De La Salle "wrote prayers for confession which are at the same time instructions on the things most necessary concerning the sacrament of Penance, so that those who already can, when reciting them, remember these truths and, those who do not know them, would

need only to recite them to learn them easily" (I 174C). It is easy to realise that all these means which help us to find the truth are not only aimed at acquiring the knowledge of speculative truths but rather at the practice of these Truths by the genuine Christian.

2.4. Christian teachers must educate their pupils in the truths of our religion

Teachers, being better educated and imbued with the truths of Christianity, can transmit these truths to their pupils and help them practise them. The duty to teach is first of all the responsibility of the Teaching Church and the parish priests who are required by her to explain the Gospel «to teach parishioners the truths and maxims of religion and how to apply these truths to their daily life as true Christians" (Da 476C). It is an honour for teachers to participate in this manner in the ministry of the Church (MR 199.1). They are the representatives of Jesus Christ (MR 195.2). As such, they must not alter his message (MR 93.1).⁸ They must teach catechism every day (MR 200.1) and do so with simplicity, coming down to them by accommodating themselves to their level" (MR 198.1), "explaining the Christian truths to them in a concrete fashion, one that conforms with the limitations of their minds" (MR 197.1).⁹ The Founder is therefore always eager to combine in the minds of the children, knowledge of the truth with its practice.

2.4.1. *Truth and the Sacrament of Penance*

There is one area in which the teacher must form well his pupils to respect the Truth, that area is that of Confession. It is particularly in *L'Instruction methodique pour apprendre a se bien confesser* (CL 17, pp. 97-172) that the Founder elaborates upon his teachings. He has placed in the hands of his teachers and their pupils a large number of books: *Instructions pour la confession et la Communion* (CL 17, pp. 175-218) to which must be added a chapter on the content of the examen of conscience (Ib. pp. 219-233). Together with a section of *Grand abrege* (CL 23 pp. 394-406), pages 117-207 of the second volume of *Des Devoirs d'un Chretien envers Dieu* (CL 21), the *Petit Abrege* (CL 23 pp. 462-463), plus the text followed by

Devoirs d'un Chretien (CL 20, pp. 279-332). Thus, we cannot but be impressed by the importance which the Founder gives this sacrament and his preoccupation to form upright consciences which do not trade the Truth.

3. HUMAN TRUTH

3.1. Why be truthful in our relations with our neighbour?

On the human relations' level, the word *emeth* often means the conformity of human speech with what is being expressed.¹⁰ "Just as the union of the spirit and the body is manifested mainly in the words through which we express our thoughts, our intentions, our deepest feelings, to communicate them to others, it follows that the truth of what is being said is an essential dimension for the human being for in falsehood the interior unity of the individual and the foundation upon which is built a self-assured existence in a human community are destroyed. What is brought into play in the eighth commandment, is the very essence and dignity of man, as well as the possibility of life in society".¹¹ The truth we owe others comes therefore within the framework of the respect due to their dignity as human beings created in the image and resemblance of God (Gn 1,26-27).¹²

Since Christ's revelation reminds us that man is inseparable from God, it is therefore not enough to know and practise truth only in our relations with God, for whoever says he loves God but does not love his neighbour is a liar (1Jn 1,6). That is why La Salle teaches us the way we must be truthful towards our neighbour. He does it, one might say, more systematically than for religious truth. His teaching is in fact condensed in the chapter on the eighth commandment in the *Devoirs d'un Chretien envers Dieu*, (Da 141-146) in the *Regles de la bienséance et de la civilité chretienne*, (RB 185; 216) on the manner in which the Christian teacher ought to train his disciples to tell the Truth in the *Conduite des Ecoles Chretiennes* (CE 157; 167; 211).

3.1.1. *The Vocabulary used by La Salle*

In the sphere of Truth related to one's neighbour, the vocabulary employed by La Salle is very

rich. We will show our respect for the Truth by being true and genuine,¹³ in our natural behaviour,¹⁴ in our sincerity, our honesty and simplicity (there is no need here to define these words since they have the same meaning today). On the contrary, we may deviate from the Truth in various ways some of them more pernicious and damaging than others to our neighbour, such as untruth, calumny, false testimony, rash judgment, fraud, imposture and duplicity or even when we alter or falsify things, or sell at excessive prices. Other offences will affect the Truth less seriously, for example, to forge, disguise, dissimulate or feign the truth. We can also fail against the Truth through hypocrisy, ambiguity, subterfuges and trickery. We may hide it, whilst it should be said, or not say it for a variety of pretext-s.¹⁵ The desire to be singled out, particularity, as well as affectation and excessively studied manners of speech will lead us away from the simplicity which suits the expression of the Truth.

3.1.2. *Truth and the Honest Man*

"Nothing is beautiful unless it is true", was a common saying in the XVIIth century, or this other: "We should never move away from nature".¹⁶ The people of this period and particularly the writers, searching for "this Truth which is not that of fashion that is transient but that of reason and humanity which perdure... believe that the eternal nature of the soul is worth more in the eye of the artist than the flashes of a day".¹⁷ From the realm of the Arts and letters, this search for what is natural¹⁸ has become the ideal of the honest man who knows how "to distinguish the apparent from the real"¹⁹ as we may note in the book of the Founder *Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chretienne*. In this treatise which one of his biographers considers "the one which the Founder wrote with greatest care"²⁰ he describes, with the aid of numerous Biblical references, particularly from the Book of Ecclesiasticus,²¹ how the honest man must be irreproachable in the sphere of Truth, if he wishes to safeguard his honour. Through these quotations, we imagine the indignation of the author when faced with cases of untruth (RB 186B-C) and duplicity (id. 187C) and to what extent the behaviour of the liar is obnoxious (Id. 186E). It were better for the honest man to refrain from speaking rather than to offend the

Truth and harm his neighbour (RB 187C). He must also keep his word (RB 189D).

3.1.3. *Truth and the Eighth Commandment*

He is more explicit on this subject when he deals with the Eighth Commandment of God which forbids false testimony and lying. At this point, he expatiates on a teaching which could be called traditional. Besides condemning officious and pernicious lies (Db 109E), the latter causing "spiritual or material" damage to one's neighbour (Da 143A), he even condemns white lies (Da 143A), since we are bound "to always tell the truth" (Db 107C). The damage caused by perjury or by calumny must be made up for (Db 107E) in proportion to the damage caused (Da 143B). One can lie in one's actions: by cheating in weights and measures (Da 143C), by selling goods at inflated prices (Da HOC) or by falsifying them (I 229D), or very simply by cheating when gambling (RB 143C). All these sins must be the object of a rigorous examination of conscience and an avowal free from self-indulgence, even though that is accompanied by a sense of shame, for, in confession, the liar would commit a sacrilege (Da 310A).

3.1.4. *How teachers are to educate their pupils to respect human truth*

To educate their pupils to respect truth in their relations with their neighbour is very important. The Founder says that lying is one of "the most common sins that pupils may commit" (Db 183D) and one of the "five vices which should not usually be forgiven" (CE 157D). And he adds: "Liars must be punished for their lies — even the least — in order to make the pupils understand that there are no little lies in the sight of God, since the Devil is the father of lies, as Our Lord tells us in the Holy Gospel" (CE 157D-E; Jn 8,44) and "let them be pardoned rather, or punished less severely, when they frankly acknowledge their faults; they may be afterward made to conceive the horror which they ought to have of them, and they will be obliged to ask pardon humbly of God" (CE 158E). Elsewhere he writes: "Let your first duty be to inspire in them a horror for stealing and lying" (MR 202.1). In his search for the Truth, the teacher, must make use of his good judgment. He must be exacting towards the Inspector (the pupil who invigilates while the

teacher is absent from the classroom): "He must be neither frivolous nor a liar, and he must not be capable of partiality towards anyone, so that he would accuse his brothers, his friends, and his companions — that is, those with whom he associates - as well as the others" (CE 2HE). Thus the teacher will inform himself of the exactitude of the accusations by asking the opinion of the "most reliable pupils". The formation of the pupils to respect truth must be focused not only on visible things but also on purity of intention so that they will behave as being in God's presence and avoid doing their good works to please men "so that these may look at them and praise them" (Ml 6,16-18; MR 202.2).

3.2. To be true to oneself

If there is an area where truth suffers from subjective distortions, it is that of one's own coherence between what one says is true and good and the practice of the True and the Good. It is easy to delude oneself regarding one's motivations. Contemporary research in in-depth psychology is sufficiently eloquent on this topic. However, the Founder has not waited for these discoveries to unmask the possible discrepancy between SAYING and DOING.

3.2.1. *Various ways in which we fail to be true to ourselves*

The Founder warns us against *illusions* (MF 187.2; R 172.13), *appearances of virtues* (MD 11.1) and *"pseudo inspirations"* (R 44.6) which would cause people to deviate from regular observance. *Hypocrisy* (R 172.12), *pretence* (da 278D) or *concealment in one's conduct* may slip in to simulate the good dispositions of one's soul. *Pretexts* to conceal one's conduct are other common temptations (R 49.1; MD 55.1 and 3). Through an error of judgment, one may also *overestimate one's strength* (Da 169D) and *"one's own lights"* (MD 15.3) which may be false (MD 68.2). So the Founder warns against false piety (Da 40B. 170A), false religion (Da HID; MF 175.1), false penance (I 202D), false virtue (R 157.1), just as he does for the false joys of the world (MD 34, title). It is only rarely however that our actions are free from any taint of self-satisfaction (EM 31B; R 52.3).

3.2.2. *How to know the truth about oneself*

To know and practise the Truth about ourselves, we must receive the light of the Holy Spirit (MD 44.1), who makes us act with God in view, according to the spirit of faith (R 76.19). It is obvious that this requires a certain discernment of visible things "to know what is true or false, apparent or genuine in them; if we behave as disciples of Jesus Christ..." (MD 44.1); we need to be attentive (R 93,3-5) and to watch over ourselves (R 91,6-15). Religious regulations help one's individual goodwill by means of numerous moments during which examinations of conscience related to one's conduct are carried out (MR 205.1; 206.1; R 93.4; 153.3).

To authenticate all these procedures, the Founder establishes the exercise in which the Brothers had to render an account of their conduct to their Brother Director (R pp. 27-31), whilst at the same time, he asked the Brothers to write to him every month. The Brothers' relations with their Director must be free from duplicity (R 30.7), or disguise, or finesse, or detours (R 212-21), without excessive reserve or dissimulation (R 212.20). Simplicity (MD 19.3; RC 29.4) and openness of heart (R 214.4) are normally acceptable attitudes. One must be sincere, even though one is ashamed to reveal one's intimate thoughts and actions (MD 19.2). If the Brothers wish to do God's will, they must obey without fail, for faith assures them that "they are obeying God in the person of the Director" (R 43.12). The practice of mental prayer will also draw on them all sorts of lights (EM 54A-D; MF 177.3).

4. HOW THE FOUNDER IS A MODEL IN THE PRACTICE OF HUMAN AND RELIGIOUS TRUTH

How did the Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools "live" the Truth in his life? Whatever he preached in words and in writing, he applied to his behaviour. "Where does truth dwell", we enquired at the beginning of this article? He replies: "In the Church. She is the mouthpiece of Truth, its depository and its oracle" (CL 8, 203). On this level, he would not tolerate insinuations and calumnies which questioned his

orthodoxy. He would rather have seen his schools destroyed than join forces with those who opposed the Bull **Unigenitus**. (id. 89+, 106). He was extremely pained to see his brother Jean-Louis join their ranks. The efforts he made to dissuade him having been useless, he preferred to distance himself from him (id. 228). Letter 65 is particularly eloquent about the respect which he had for the Church on the question of Jansenism. Similarly, he never felt any inclination towards quietism, the other heresy of the period.²² His zeal for the triumph of truth made him open schools at Vans and Ales in heretical country and the Brothers "had the consolation to convert several of the adherents who persevered in the Catholic faith".²³ Two remarkable conversions are said to have been made by him: that of a young calvinist and that of Chevalier d'Armetat, even though the latter's was not quite total.²⁴

His respect for Truth towards others was characterised by a great thoughtfulness. For example, he refused to accept a legacy made in his name and to him as Superior of the Brothers, whilst he had been discharged from his functions. He only accepted it on behalf of the community when the notary crossed out his title.²⁵ He was calumniated several times²⁶ and M. de La Chetardie even called him a liar accusing him of being the author of a Memoir drawn up by the Brothers: although he had protested his innocence without convincing the parish priest, he answered him "that he was going to say Mass with that lie (on his conscience)".²⁷ From all his writings emanates an intense horror for untruth, the devil being the father of it and drawing it from his stock, as he liked to quote this passage from the Bible on which he bases at all times his teaching and from which he draws his doctrine on the truth.²⁸

As for his personal conduct, he never undertook any important initiative neither spiritual nor pedagogical, or for the management of the community, without consulting the Brothers or his directors to secure their advice.²⁹ In the most intimate part of his being, he lived the spirit of faith which he gave his Institute. In the Letters he wrote his Brothers each month, his advice aimed solely at helping them live in conformity with their engagements. Thus what his teachings contained, he put it in concrete form in his life.

¹ Trévoux says that "*vrai* and *véritable* are considered synonymous in meaning". T. VIII, p. 476.

² *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe*, T. IV, p. 365.

³ VL, T. VI, letter V, pp. 37-42. Of the 258 uses of the word VERITÉ listed in this article, 130 are in the plural and deal with religious truth.

⁴ These six categories of persons cannot be accused of lying. They are wrong because they did not tell the full truth. It is due more "to ignorance or lack of judgment" (cf. Trévoux, T. III, p. 352). Heresy also is an error against one or more dogmas of faith, an error which is held stubbornly (Ib. T. IV, P- 79).

⁵ Vatican II, *Nostra aetate*, 2.

⁶ De La Salle defines the word MAXIM: "sentence or passage from Holy Scripture" (EM 109).

⁷ Cf. two other beautiful passages in MR 28E and MF 221 E.

⁸ SAUVAGE, Fr. Michel, *Les citations néotestamentaires dans les Méditations pour le temps de la Retraite*, CL 1, p. XLVII: "Minister of the word of God, the Brother must strive not to alter it, repeats the Founder after St. Paul; he will utter it in all its coarseness even which is that of the cross, without trying to look for studied human words, for what saves is not giving one's assent to a man but adhesion to Christ whom man has been sent to introduce to those he is to evangelize".

⁹ The adaptation which the teacher must make of his words to the comprehension of his pupils is often mentioned: MR 10D, 31B, 26A, 69B, 23B.

¹⁰ *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe*, T. IV, p. 364.

¹¹ *La foi de l'église*, pp. 119-120.

¹² AUBERT, Jean-Marie, *Abrégé de la Morale catholique*, p. 374-377.

¹³ TRÉVOUX, T. VIII, p. 476: "*Vrai* and *Véritable* are syno-

nymous. *Vrai* denotes objective truth... *véritable* properly speaking expressive truth".

¹⁴ Ibid. T. IV, p. 151: "*naturel* is also said of that which is not counterfeited, nor artificial, or disguised, or masked. It also means genuine".

¹⁵ De La Salle does not use the word *pretention* but the verb *pretendre* and the participle *prétendu*. (Da II D; R 44.6).

¹⁶ In GAXOTTE, Pierre, *La France de Louis XIV*, p. 187.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 189.

¹⁸ The word *naturel* must not be used as the Founder uses it when opposing it to the view of faith, he talks of "looking at things with the eyes of nature" (R 78.21-22), i.e. "according to the natural inclination or repugnance one has for it" (R 79.1-3).

¹⁹ In GAXOTTE, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

²⁰ Dom Elie MAILLEFER, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle*, p. 108.

²¹ Si 21,24 (RB 186B); 21,35 (186E); 21,26 (186C); 27,16 (188A); 22,21 (188B); 22,22 and 27, 17-19 (188C). There are also referencies to Ep 4,25 (RB 186B); Ps 34,13-14 (186D); Jn 8,44 (187B), ITm 3,8 (187D).

²² MAILLEFER, *op. cit.*, in English, p. 90.

²³ Id., 116.

²⁴ Id. p. 74-75 and 145-147.

²⁵ Id. p. 156-157.

²⁶ Among other examples, CL 8, p. 168-169.

²⁷ CL 7, 439.

²⁸ DEVILLE, Raymond, *L'école française de spiritualité*, p. 119, where he refers to the Scripture as a source of the spiritual doctrine of this school to which the Founder belonged.

²⁹ MAILLEFER, *op. cit.* in English, p. 12, 25, 27, 32, 33, 39...

Complementary themes:

Apostles; Catechism; Christian; Commandments of God; Community; Institute; Duties of a Christian; Director; Church; Pupil; Disciple; Scripture; Word of God; The Holy Spirit; Examination of Conscience; Spirit of Faith; Brother of the Christian Schools; Christian Teacher; Maxims; Ministry; Obedience; Mental Prayer; Penance; Piety; Regularity; Salvation; Vigilance; Will of God; Fidelity; Missions; Decorum; School; Joy; World.

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63. VIGILANCE

Summary:

1, Lexicographic approach. 1.1. Dictionaries of the 17th and 18th centuries. 1.2. Vocabulary of Biblical Theology. - 2. Preventive vigilance and pedagogy. 2.1. Vigilance as a factor in scholastic discipline. 2.2. To exercise this vigilance: provide the continual presence of adults. Recruitment of specialised staff. Call on student supervisors. Give preferential treatment to boarding schools. Extend the duration of the period of compulsory education. 2.3. Spiritual finality of vigilance. Natural tendency towards evil. Follow up the child to help him. - 3. La Salle and vigilance. 3.1. Vigilance as an educational means. Pedagogical responsibility in school-work. Moral responsibility related to the behaviour of the pupils. 3.2. Vigilance as spiritual responsibility. - 4. Conclusion.

1. LEXICOGRAPHIC APPROACH

1.1. 17th and 18th century Dictionaries

The dictionaries of Pierre Richelet, Antoine Furetiere, Trevoux and *le Grand Vocabulaire franpais*, suggest a similar definition of the word VIGILANCE. Let us recall, for example, that of Pierre Richelet: "Intense concentration of the mind to observe everything. Action of the person who is alert and keeps a sharp eye so that everything goes off as smoothly as is desired. Vigilance is commendable in any person whatsoever. Jesus Christ strongly recommended vigilance to his disciples". The other three dictionaries also use words such as diligence and care which underline the dynamic, one might say, zealous character of vigilance.

As will be seen later on, the word is not used only in connection with the school. That is interesting, for in this way, the general application of vigilance to personal and social life, as well as in the exercise of responsibility is underlined.

We are faced, once more, with a word having several applications. It is worth noting, on the other hand, that as the Founder's writings show, vigilance also possesses a spiritual connotation,

and that is why we will mention Jesus Christ.

1.2. Vocabulary of Biblical Theology

The Vocabulary of Biblical Theology does not refer directly to the substantive VIGILANCE but rather to the verb *veiller*. In a brief introduction, the author of the article recalls the metaphorical meaning of this verb: "To Watch is to be vigilant, to fight against torpor and negligence, so as to reach the goal aimed at. For the believer, the goal is to be ready to greet the Lord, when his Day will come; that is why he watches and is vigilant, in order to live in the night without being part of the night".

Going briefly through the main passages of the New Testament which exhort us to be vigilant, the author presents these teachings under three headings:

a) TO HOLD ONESELF READY FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD: it is the teaching of Jesus Christ himself as reported in the Synoptics, in St. Paul (Rm 13 and 1 Th 5) and of course the Apocalypse which is all of it an urgent exhortation to exercise vigilance.

b) TO BEWARE OF DAILY TEMPTATIONS: Read, for example: Jesus in Gethsemani, ICo. 16, Col. 4, Ep. 6, 1 P 5. "Vigilance which is a persevering expectation of the return of Jesus, must be practised all through the Christian life, in the fight against daily temptations... for Satan and his henchmen watch closely the disciple to make him disown Christ... For the Christian therefore: pray with faith, be always on your guard, practice renunciation to avoid the devil's snares... This vigilance is particularly recommended to leaders who are responsible for the management of communities; they must defend these against the redoubtable wolves".

c) WATCH AND PRAY: Following the example of Jesus (Lk 6,12; Me 14,38). Certain passages of St. Paul (Ep 6,18 and Col 4,2) seem to point out that it was a practice in primitive communities.

Consequently, the author concludes: "Required by belief in the Lord's coming, vigilance is therefore a characteristic of the Christian who is expected to resist the apostasy of the last days and be ready to greet the Coming of Christ. On the other hand, since life's temptations anticipate eschatological trials, Christian vigilance must be practised day by day in the battle against the Evil One; it requires from the disciple continual prayer and abstemiousness: *Watch and pray, be sober!*

These commentaries apply particularly well to the 17th century: people believed in and spoke much about Satan's power and the need to avoid his snares. Teachers have therefore an important role to play: they must watch over their young, weak and ignorant pupils, and therefore particularly exposed to the devil's attacks. They are invested with a dual educative and spiritual responsibility. However, they will never be able to carry it out efficiently if they do not first watch over themselves.

2. TEACHERS' VIGILANCE AND PREVENTIVE PEDAGOGY

2.1. Vigilance as an element in school discipline

When school discipline was being introduced in schools in the 16th and 17th centuries, vigilance

- and this includes it in its restricted form as supervision — it was not separated from the use of punishments. Together they constituted two aspects, or two moments, of an identical pedagogical will; to establish order and discipline in scholastic institutions.

Vigilance is perhaps the more important of the two, in so far as, where it is well practised, it should render the recourse to corporal punishment superfluous. There is a debate therefore between the preventive and the repressive manner. Vigilance is rooted in a complex body of moral theology data involving: belief in the radical weakness of human nature, certainty concerning the continuous tempting activity of the Devil, the conviction that collective life gives rise to "evil associations", bad example, and provokes a contagion of evil habits.

To exercise vigilance in schools is not easy and becomes sometimes impossible. It is necessary at times to face up to a body of data such as;

- habits of independence among the students of the Middle-Ages;

- the non-existence of precise regulations to ensure the proper functioning of the schools;

- The absence or serious dearth of qualified staff for this task;

- school accommodation was all too often inadequate for the functioning of large groups of students, except where buildings were erected specifically as schools;

- excessive numbers of students. It is worth noting, in passing, that that was one of the reasons why *the Petites Ecoles de Port-Royal (1637-1660)* accepted only small groups of from 10 to 15 pupils.

It was therefore considered necessary to first invent the means to ensure vigilance.

2.2. Means to ensure vigilance in schools

2.2.1. *Ensure the continual presence of adults with the students*

The accepted principle was not to allow a single student to be alone, either in class, or outside of school hours or outside the school. Georges Snyders (op. cit, p. 39) takes up an illuminating passage of *Heures et règlements pour Messieurs les pensionnaires* (Jean Croiset, 1711) which sums up what he was

driving at: "Do not consider too harsh such a large number of prefects and other people who observe you, never lose sight of you, if you do not move without being observed, if in your rooms, in the study room, in church, during games, on outings and in all your recreations, you are each under the gaze of several prefects: a fine and excellent education cannot be imparted at a smaller cost; this eternal vigilance is annoying, but necessary".

At all times, in every place, especially in boarding schools, meetings between pupils without an adult being present are to be avoided. The latter listens to the conversations, inspects lockers and desks, reads the correspondence, invigilates day and night. No student may go out alone: he must be accompanied by an adult or, if that is not possible, by a serious companion of reliable conduct, who wisely is changed often... One can retrace this type of surveillance to its monastic origins. At first applied with the youngest boys in mind, it spread later in the 16th and 17th centuries to all the children. Of course, the same efficiency cannot be expected in day-schools and that is regrettable.

2.2.2. Recrutement of specialised staff

It is the will to set up this constant surveillance which prompts the appearance of new categories of people in boarding schools, from the 16th century onwards. These are the Supervisors and Wardens, whose duty it is to take charge of a group of students during all the time these are not under the responsibility of their teachers.

These Supervisors must watch over the conduct, the studies, the sleep of their pupils. At the end of the 17th century, Rollin writes that the characteristics of a supervisor are: "the spirit of vigilance, attention and exactitude"... "he sees everything without seeming to" (quoted by Jean de Viguerie *op. cit.* p. 236). In important institutions, all these supervisors are organised in a hierarchical manner, so that their duties may be adjusted to their individual skills, and so as not to leave pupils without supervision. All of them share the life of the students, especially in boarding-schools.

2.2.3. The need for student-supervisors

This happens when there is an excess of students and a relative shortage of adult supervisors. In reality, this situation becomes easily

widespread, even in day-schools and in primary schools, for there teachers are often overworked. This participation seems to have taken two forms: the resort to informers and the nomination of pupil-supervisors.

For lack of adult-supervisors, and no doubt to break up the age old solidarity of student corporations, teachers resorted to informers. Some thinkers went so far as to write that informing on guilty companions was a moral duty, particularly when it was a question of the reading of forbidden books or suspicious relations between pupils. The pupil who had witnessed a fault and did not inform on his companions was liable to suffer physical punishment for it, just as if he himself had been the culprit. Aries writes (*op. cit.* p. 282): "Such denouncement set up as a principle, seemed the only means in the hands of the teachers to control each moment of the lives of the pupils, henceforth considered unable to behave themselves".

It became customary later on to choose some pupils and to share with them the invigilation and the maintenance of good order.

They were assigned multiple tasks: to make the pupils repeat the exercises, to carry out supervision at fixed times, to report the culprits to the Teacher. They held their authority from the Teacher. Under different guises, they are to be found in the main pedagogical texts of the 16th and 17th centuries. We shall see further on that the Conduct of Christian Schools does not make an exception of them. This is what Aries has to say on this topic: "The use of informers and the monitorial system were held to be so efficient at the beginning of the 18th century, that St. John Baptist de La Salle, in spite of his mistrust of certain current practices of his time, such as corporal punishment, adopted them without any hesitation or scruple" (Aries *op. cit.* p. 284).

2.2.4. To give greater importance to boarding-schools

In this perspective involving the continuous control of the behaviour of the pupils a marked preference given to boarding-schools, whenever possible, is to be noted. As we are reminded by Georges Snyders (*op. cit.* p. 35-36): "The boarding-school seems likely to be the best way to make such a violent and turbulent youth live in a met-

hodial, regulated and organised manner. Even when the number of dayboys remains considerable, it is the boarding-school that appears to be the ideal educational situation. For, one hardly ever leaves the boarding-school, except for very brief holidays. One cannot therefore escape the hold adults exercise there".

2.2.5. *To prolong the period of compulsory education*

In the case of dayboys and boarders alike, school calendars surprise us. The annual holidays were of one, two, three weeks' or a month's duration. In the *Conduct of Schools*, for example, they were held in September. Daily and fortnightly timetables were quite heavy, in order to keep the pupils as busy as possible. There was no free time during the day: idleness, considered a bad counsellor, according to popular wisdom, was to be avoided at all costs.

Besides, efforts were made to control often the life of the pupil outside of school hours, in particular — and this happened frequently — when he lived with the family of a tradesman or in a small pension... On those occasions, the Prefect of Studies would make unscheduled visits, to inspect and catch unawares the dayboys.

On the other hand, school institutions always planned activities for vacation days and free time so as to maintain the pressure.

2.3. **Spiritual finality of vigilance**

2.3.1. *The "Natural tendency towards evil"*

Every human being, but particularly the child, is weak, ignorant, naturally inclined to evil. Consequently, as Georges Snyders says (op. cit. p. 42): "Youth should be spent entirely sheltered from evil, in the only pedagogical world, a sort of world "in white", made up of ignorance, free from any encounter with sin, and also a world of invigilation, of discipline, of uninterrupted methods". This double theme: separation from the world and unrelenting invigilation, are seen as a means to shield the child from his evil tendencies. It is the view of many moralists, among whom one could quote the Port-Royal Jansenists, Bossuet, Rollin, when they speak of pupils. In that, one can detect traces of the augustinian doctrine. As Pierre Gio-

litto explains (op. cit. p. 289-290), educators are convinced that in every human being there exists a certain amount of ingrained selfishness and malice, a natural trend downwards, as a result of original sin. The same author quotes this passage, somewhat exaggerated, from La Bruyère, "Children are haughty, contemptuous, irascible, envious, curious, interested, lazy, frivolous, shy, intemperate, liars, dissembling. They do not want to endure pain and like to cause some themselves; they are already Men". "To eradicate the evil that lurks in the child, continues Pierre Giolitto, presupposes having secured from him faultless obedience, this being the first and indispensable condition of any education". That is why vigilance and correction remain very closely associated.

2.3.2. *To follow up the child in order to help him*

Invigilators are always invited to blend together affection and severity. They are there, not only to watch over, but also to understand personally the child, to love him tenderly, without abolishing austerity and renunciation. These exhortations full of noble sentiments do not conceal completely a residue of mistrust towards the nature of the child.

But invigilation is not and does not aim at being harassment, or a police system. The intentions and the spirit of invigilation seem to be prompted by higher motives: what is wanted is to help the child.

In secondary Colleges, as later on in the Petites Ecoles, the Prefects or Invigilators are normally male or female religious who enjoy a real prestige and considerable authority. Moreover, aren't they always invited to give themselves the good example? They help the pupils in their school work as well as in their behaviour. Their pedagogical action must be adapted to the age and character of each child, and alternate any recourse to fear with that of kindness. "Their invigilation must not be solely negative, writes Georges Snyders (op. cit. p. 40-41) and aim at forbidding such an action; it constitutes a long and constant work of exhortation, advice, persuasion... In a word, a relentless invigilation, but one which aims at having a purely pedagogical value... That is why the boarding-school multiplies the barriers which must protect

morals, barriers behind which the child may live in an enclosure free from temptations, completely receptive to his teachers' influence; he will be led constantly by the hand, nothing is left to hasard, each moment is planned well-defined, edifying".

3. LA SALLE AND VIGILANCE

3.1. Vigilance as an educative means

3.1.1. *Pedagogical responsibility in school work*

In the second part of *The Conduct of Schools*, La Salle points out that the first of the nine means to "establish and maintain order in the School" is "the vigilance of the teacher". Chapter I of the second part (cf. CE 116-124) is therefore consecrated to three essential forms which this vigilance must assume:

- Correcting all the words which are mispronounced by a pupil when reading.
- Making all the other pupils who have the same lesson follow when any one of them is reciting.
- Enforcing a very strict silence.

As we can see, La Salle's preoccupation here is mainly pedagogical. The three modes mentioned aim at ensuring great efficiency in the work done at school, so that the apprenticeship minutely described in the first part of the *Conduct* is facilitated.

I believe that we can sum up the content of the three articles mentioned above by saying that the teacher's vigilance must make it possible to:

- ensure the quality and soundness of academic knowledge acquired;
- sustain, or arouse, the attention of all the pupils when simultaneous work is being done;
- create the necessary atmosphere of silence which renders possible efficient and orderly work.

3.1.2. *Moral responsibility concerning the conduct of the pupils*

The eighth means to ensure the good running of a school, according to the *Conduct*, is "the appointment of several officials and their fidelity to acquit themselves well of their duty"; this is dealt with in another chapter of the second part.

Among the ten types of school officials, two interest us more directly here. "Inspectors and Supervisors" (CE 210-213).

Assuming personal responsibility for former practices and adapting them to the peculiar situation of the *Petites Ecoles* without a boarding department, La Salle suggests that teachers seek the help of some pupils to carry out a constant invigilation of the class. He therefore establishes the office of Inspector in all the classes. An Inspector exercises his responsible duties in the absence of the Teacher, a daily occurrence in the schools. The text of the *Conduct* points out clearly which are the aims of this institution, which are the duties of the Inspectors and the qualities they should possess. He insists on the care the Teacher should take in choosing and nominating them, the attention with which he must examine the Inspector's report before coming to any conclusions or making any decisions.

A further precaution: the Inspector is himself placed under the control of two "supervisors", whose identity is unknown to him, and who are asked to report to the Teacher on the manner in which he fulfils his task.

Should they not fulfil their obligations, all of them may be punished and dismissed. It is just another way of stressing the importance La Salle attached to supervision. Once we are speaking about the school, we can sum up his thought in this extract from a letter which he addressed to Brother Robert on May 21, 1709: "Be vigilant over the children for there can only be order in a school if you watch over the pupils; in this way they will make progress. It is not your impatience that will correct them, but your vigilance and your good conduct." (Letter 58)

The duty of vigilance applies also outside the school, for the responsibility of the teacher stretches, as much as possible, over the pupils' conduct in the streets of the town and the district where they live. That is expressed in these lines of the *Conduct of Schools* in the article on "Supervisors": There will also be certain Inspectors or Supervisors for the streets — especially for those in which the pupils live — who will observe in what manner the pupils of this district behave when returning from school. Some of them will stay in each district or important street and will

observe everything that takes place and at once notify the teacher of it in private. (CE 213)

It is not unreasonable also to link with this pre-occupation about vigilance, art. 3 of Chapter 7 of the second part of the Conduct of Schools, dedicated to the "Holidays" (CE 201-203). It is sufficient to quote the following passage to understand La Salle's and the Teachers' preoccupations concerning the month of September: "On the last day of school, nothing will be done from one o'clock until half past three except the Catechism; and this will be on the manner in which the pupils should pass the time of their vacation. Among the counsels which the teachers will give the pupils so that they may spend this time well, the most important are:

1. Not to fail to say each day the morning and evening prayers that are recited in schools.

2. To assist at Holy Mass daily with devotion and to say throughout Holy Mass the prayers which are in the Manual of Exercises of Piety.

3. To assist at High Mass and Vespers in their parish churches on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation.

4. To go to Confession and, for those who have made their First Communion, to go to Holy Communion at least once during this time.

5. To go each day to some church to visit and adore the Blessed Sacrament for at least a quarter or half an hour.

6. To say the Rosary every day, in order to acquire and preserve a devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

7. Not to associate with bad companions.

8. Not to plunder gardens and vineyards, which would be stealing and a great sin.

9. Not to go bathing.

10. Not to play cards or dice for money".

(CE pp. 201-202)

3.2. Vigilance as a spiritual responsibility

The duty of vigilance does not derive exclusively and, without a doubt, essentially from pedagogical considerations. As we have seen above, it is rooted in the theology of salvation proper to this period, and also, remotely, in numerous New Testament passages. Moreover, the realisation of salvation is seen through a very characteristic anthropology marked by an evident pessimism regarding the congenital weakness of the human

person. To that must be added, the belief in permanent, aggressive and nefarious action of the Devil, unrelentingly engaged in bringing about the eternal loss of human beings. More than others perhaps, 17th century Christian educators are conscious of the perils incurred and worried in their endeavour to protect the children.

John Baptist de La Salle is no exception. We note these different ideas, especially in his spiritual writings. Luckily, his trust in the possibilities of progress in the young and in the efficiency of the "Christian schools", allow him to harbour a real optimism. One should re-read the numerous passages of the Meditations which he wrote, to rediscover his views on this point.

They may no doubt be summed up in this way. The Christian teacher is a vigilant Pastor who has been called to do all he can to:

- keep the children away from sin,

- bring them back to God,

- through the exercise of constant vigilance in school and in church,

- by watching over the company they keep, for bad company or the example of libertines have pernicious effects,

- so as to help them save themselves: of all that, he will render a very rigorous account.

The bulk of this doctrine is to be found basically in the following two passages. The first is taken from the third point of the fifth meditation for the time of the Retreat: "You encounter so many obstacles to salvation in this life that, if you were left to yourself and your own resources, it would be impossible to escape unharmed... It is much easier for children to fall over some precipice, because they are weak in mind as well as body, and have little understanding of what is for their own good. They need the light of watchful guides to lead them on the path of salvation, guides who have an adequate understanding of what God expects of young people, and their usual shortcomings. Thus they will be able to help children be aware of pitfalls and keep away from them.

This is why God has provided children with teachers, and why He has given teachers all the care and vigilance, as well as the responsibility, needed to prevent anything harmful to salvation from capturing the hearts of the children. More

than that, teachers are responsible for guiding children so well through all the dangers they meet in this world, that thanks to such attentive guidance and to the protection of God, the devil doesn't even dare approach them...

This is the main concern you must have for the children entrusted to you. It is the main reason why God has entrusted you with so holy a ministry, and He will call upon you to give an exact account on the day of judgment. (MR 197.3)

This first extract is completed by the following drawn from the 126th meditation for Feast Days and deals with the nefarious influence of bad association: "Evil associations are so dangerous, particularly for young persons, that there is nothing over which we should more carefully watch in those whom we have to instruct. Similarly, there is nothing we should more insistently impress upon our pupils than the necessity of forming friendships only with such of their companions as are good, pious and reserved. (MF 126.1)

4. CONCLUSION

As we can see, like his contemporaries, De La Salle, rates the Teacher's vigilance well above simple

invigilation. It is not enough to "establish and maintain order in schools", one must also consider vigilance as an essential element of the ministry of Christian education. Whilst it is an aspect of preventive pedagogy, the importance of which should not to be minimized, vigilance is also a means in the implementation of the Brother's pastoral mission.

If it constitutes a shield for the pupil thanks to its dissuasive effect, vigilance appears to have a fourfold aim: pedagogical, moral, social and spiritual. What the Holy Founder says about it is inspired both by the needs of simultaneous teaching which he wishes to systematize in his schools and the primordial concern to evangelize these youths by helping them to save their souls.

It is very important to put all these considerations in a 17th and 18th century context. The concepts related to the education of the pupils have changed considerably in the past three centuries. So have the aims and modalities of vigilance. Without forgetting their educational responsibilities, to-day's teachers refrain from carrying out a vigilance of this kind. They try to be more attentive to the development of personal freedom in an atmosphere of reciprocal trust, based at times on self-discipline, in order to help youth attain their personal autonomy.

Complementary themes:

Child-Pupil-Disciples; Correction; Disciples; Education-to bring up; Example-Edification; Goodness-Tenderness; Guardian Angels; Heart-to touch hearts; Love-Charity; Mortification; Penitent-Penance; Piety; Salvation; Silence; Spirit of Christianity; Spirit of the world; Teacher-Pupil relationship; Zeal.

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64. VOWS

Summary:

1. A vow is a promise made to God to do some good thing. Over the course of the Church's history an elaborate theology and canonical practice developed around the vows of religion, traditionally poverty, chastity, and obedience. - 2. In his writings, De La Salle speaks of specific vows made by individual saints, but not of the vows of religion. - 3. In the Founder's lifetime some Brothers made vows of obedience, stability, and association to keep gratuitous schools, all ordered to the mission of the Institute. - 4. In his writings, even though many Brothers were not bound by vows, De La Salle considers them all to be consecrated by their entry into the Institute. - 5. It is disputed whether it was the Founder's intention that the Brothers should eventually take vows of poverty and chastity. - 6. The vows of the Brothers have evolved from 1725, when the Bull of Approbation introduced the vows of poverty and chastity, until 1987 when the Rule defined the vows as chastity, poverty, obedience, association for the service of the poor through education, and stability.

1. THE MEANING OF THE WORD

1.1. The dictionaries define the word vow in religious terms as a promise made to God or to some saint to do some specific good thing. The solemn promises made by members of religious orders are known as the "vows of religion." From the 13th century on, the vows of religion were consistently poverty, chastity and obedience, derived and motivated by the notion that these were three evangelical counsels distinct from the commandments binding on every Christian.

1.1.1. Recent biblical and theological scholarship has shown that there is little basis in the New Testament for two classes of Christians, ordinary Christians who observe only the commandments, and "perfect" Christians who practice the counsels. It is stressed today that the so-called hard sayings of Jesus are addressed as challenges to anyone who would be a Christian. Also, there is a sense in which chastity and obedience are binding on everyone, whereas poverty is a social evil that every

Christian should strive to eliminate. The tradition of "evangelical counsels" remains strong however and is used consistently in the documents of Vatican II, the 1983 Code of Canon Law, and other official Vatican documents pertaining to the religious life, and especially to the vows of religion.

1.2. The theology of vows current in the 17th century, and in the traditional theological manuals ever since, derives from the extensive treatment of the subject by Saint Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century. In this theology, to make a vow was considered an act of the virtue of religion. The matter of any vow would have to be a promise to do something that would be a greater good, objectively or for the person. Once the vow is made, it entails objective obligations that transcend the control of the subject making the vow. Vows are thought to be useful for the person, as well as for the glory of God. Since the matter of the vow has a social aspect, vows can be dispensed only by the social authority, the natural or the ecclesiastical society, affected by the vow. Only ecclesiastical authority has

the power to designate certain vows as solemn. In this theology, the three vows of religion constitute the religious state as a state of perfection. The vows can lead to the perfection of charity since they involve sacrifice for a higher good of personal control over the fundamental goods of human existence, namely possessions, sexuality, and power.

1.3. Prior to the 13th century, the vows of religion were simple vows, meaning that acts contrary to the vows do not involve invalidity, e.g. a marriage contracted by a person with a vow of chastity. After the 13th century, the vows of religion professed in religious orders were declared solemn, with serious consequences for the validity of certain ecclesiastical and civil acts, such as marriage, ordination, legitimacy of birth, inheritances, flight from the monastery etc. As a result, legal conflicts in dealing with individual cases arose between secular and ecclesiastical authorities, between bishops and the religious clergy. To address these problems, by the 17th century there had developed, side by side with a theological casuistry on the obligations of the vows, extensive jurisprudence on questions relating to the validity of monastic vows, their annulment and dispensation.

1.4. Religious vows were high on the list of targets for the Protestant reformers of the 16th century. Part of the reason was that the scriptural basis for the structure of religious life was seen to be weak. More important, perhaps, were the wide spread abuses that had developed in the late middle ages, especially the forced entrance into religious life of persons underage, those who were an embarrassment to their families, or an obstacle to the rights of primogeniture. In addition, there were flagrant violations in some orders and monasteries of the letter and the spirit of the vows. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) and the subsequent tightening of Catholic discipline did much to eliminate these abuses and to engage the religious orders, both old and new, in the reform of the Church.

1.5. In the post-Tridentine period there were new challenges from within the Church to the traditional monastic approach to religious life and the vows. The founders of the new active institutes

often began, as did Ignatius and his companions, with vows primarily focused on the specific mission of the congregation. Eventually, the Jesuits adopted the traditional vows of religion, but added a specific vow to maintain the missionary dimension of the engagement. Some of the newer congregations opted for no vows at all, as did the Vincentians and the Oratorians of Philip Neri and Cardinal Berulle. The tradition was strong enough, however, to have most of the rapidly multiplying congregations adopt the three traditional vows, often in the form of simple rather than solemn vows, with or without a specific missionary vow, and to build the theory and practice of religious life around them.

2. VOWS IN THE WRITINGS OF DE LA SALLE

2.1. In his catechetical writings, De La Salle summarizes the traditional teaching on the nature of a vow. Thus, a vow is a promise made to God to do some good thing, but it does not prevent doing something better, e.g. a vow to make a pilgrimage would yield to a vow to enter religious life (Da 117-118). A vow is an act of religion since thereby a person recognizes the sovereign dominion of God over the self (Da 118 B). Vows are made only to God because a vow is an act of religion by which we consecrate to the worship and service of God all the things we promise by the vow (Db 88 C). A vow made to the Blessed Virgin Mary is in fact a vow made to God in honor of Mary (Da 118 C). A solemn vow of chastity is an impediment to marriage (Da 393 A) and the basis for dispensation from a solemn engagement to marry (Da 394 C).

2.2. De La Salle's meditations provide many examples of vows, all of them evidently private vows, made by various saints, especially the vow of virginity made by Mary (MF 191.1), Saint Genevieve (MF 95.1), Saint Catherine of Siena (MF 118.1), Saint Mary Magdalene of Pazzi (MF 130.1), Iphigenia, the daughter of the King of Ethiopia (MF 167.3), and Saint Francis de Sales (MF 101.1). Significantly, De La Salle notes the missionary vows made by Ignatius and his first folio-

wers, namely, a vow to leave all their goods, to work for the salvation of souls and their own spiritual advancement, and to submit entirely to the Pope (MF 148.3). Saint Teresa of Avila made a vow to do anything she knew to be more agreeable to God (MF 177.3). The strangest reference to a vow is the story De La Salle relates about the body of Saint Severus. When that saint's casket was being moved to the cathedral of Rouen, in every place where it rested overnight, the weight of it became so heavy that it could not be moved until a vow was made to build a church on the site (MF 103.3).

2.3. Nowhere in this writing does De La Salle discuss the vows of religion as such. Although the Brothers were expected from the beginning and by Rule to share everything in common and to lead a chaste and celibate life, the Brothers did not take vows of poverty and chastity in the Founder's life time. Whether or not he intended that the Brothers would eventually take the vows of religion is still a matter of much dispute.

2.4. However that may be, De La Salle treats extensively of the values, the virtues, and even the fundamental obligations represented by the vows of religion. Obedience in its most demanding forms was a driving force in his own life, and the vow of obedience that the Brothers did take was a stabilizing force for the young Society. Obedience is the theme of a whole series of meditations the Founder wrote for the Sundays after Epiphany (MD 1-15). Poverty, too, was a foundational element in the origins of the Institute: in the Founder's own conversion from a life of relative ease to hear the cry of the poor and to become poor himself in order to minister to them. The conditions in which the Founder lived with his Brothers were poor indeed, a situation reflected most tellingly in the meditation for Christmas day (MF 86). The motivation for the Brothers to lead a celibate and chaste life, and the means to preserve chastity are frequent themes not only in the Rule, but in the Collection and the meditations.

3. THE VOWS OF THE BROTHERS IN THE FOUNDER'S LIFETIME

3.1. In the course of the first assembly of the principal Brothers of the young Society, 1686 seems to be the best date, discussion took place on the possibility of giving stability to the enterprise by taking vows. The vow of obedience was mentioned prominently and it seems that some Brothers also suggested a vow of chastity, after the Founder cautioned prudence, the Brothers finally decided to take only the vow of obedience. The biographers disagree on the duration: Blain says for three years, Maillefer and Bernard say for one. In the light of subsequent practice, Brother Maurice Hermans suggests that this first vow would have been made for three years, but annually renewed (CL 2,35). In any case, it is certain that, from a canonical point of view, this vow was a private vow and it seems equally certain that not all the Brothers but only those present at the assembly made the vow.

3.2. In the year 1691 the affairs of the Institute were in a perilous state. The Founder was recovering from a near-fatal illness, the Brother he had chosen to succeed him had died, Brothers were leaving the community and those that remained were undertrained and overworked. To provide for the physical and spiritual renewal of the veterans and for the formation of the recruits, De La Salle was able to lease property in suburban Vaugirard. To put the struggling society on a firmer footing, he asked for the collaboration of two of his most trusted Brothers. On November 21, 1691, the feast of the Presentation of Mary, De La Salle, Brother Nicolas Vuyart, and Brother Gabriel Drolin pronounced what has since been known as the "heroic vow." Addressing themselves to the Most Holy Trinity, they consecrated themselves by a vow of association and union to bring about the establishment of the Society of the Christian Schools. The vow has been called heroic because in very difficult circumstances the three men vowed to oblige themselves, without being able to withdraw from the obligation, to stay together

even if only the three remained and they would have to beg for alms and live on bread alone. Again, this was a private vow, and potentially a perpetual vow, although it could be argued that the obligation ceased once the Society was established. Only a few years later the Society had enough stability for the Brothers to adopt a Rule, to elect a superior, and for some of them to make perpetual vows.

3.3. It was in 1694 at Vaugirard, at the close of what is now considered the first general chapter of the Institute, that De La Salle and twelve Brothers made perpetual vows for the first time. Assembled on Trinity Sunday in a remote part of the house, one after another, beginning with the Founder, they made perpetual vows of obedience to the body of the Society, stability, and association to conduct gratuitous schools. Without formal ecclesiastical approval, these perpetual vows were private vows from the point of view of church law, as were all the previous and subsequent vows made by the Brothers during the Founder's lifetime.

3.4. In his writings, the Founder rarely refers to the Brothers making vows. In a letter to Gabriel Drolin in 1704, he refers to the dispensation from vows requested by Brother Gabriel's blood brother, Gerard (L 15.4). More significantly, he writes in 1706 to Brother Hubert, then 23 years old and the Director at Laon, "With regard to the vows, it is not I but you who must decide on that; the decision to make them must be your own. But since you ask my opinion, I must say that I see nothing in your conduct that could be an obstacle" (L 34.3). Rather differently, he had written in 1705 to Brother Paulin, "I very much want you to take triennial vows, my very dear Brother. Be ready to do so when I come to Rouen" (L 52.4). The only other references to the vows of the Brothers occur in the Rule of 1718 in specific regulations concerning the vows and Brothers who have or have not made them.

4. CONSECRATION AND VOWS AT THE ORIGINS OF THE INSTITUTE

4.1. If references to the vows of the Brothers are rare, the same is not the case with regard to consecration. As noted in the appropriate article, De La Salle considered all of the Brothers as consecrated to procure God's glory from the moment of their entrance into the Society. Their quality as consecrated persons was considered quite independently of whether they had made or ever would make vows, whether temporary or perpetual.

4.2. The fact that all Brothers were considered consecrated but not all made vows raises the question of what the vows add to the commitment of a person already consecrated. In raising the question of vows in the heroic vow of 1691, and in the discussions about perpetual vows in 1694, De La Salle seems to have considered the vows a means of providing an element of stability for an important but otherwise precarious establishment. Without either civil or ecclesiastical status of any kind, the young Society could be held together by the willingness of some of its members at least to take upon themselves before the Lord, with the implication of divine penalties for infidelity, the obligation to remain in association and obedience to assure the survival of the gratuitous Christian schools. It might be said that consecration is a fundamental but unspecified disposition before the Lord, whereas vows add the note of specificity and obligation (R 2).

5. THE VOWS OF THE BROTHERS AND THE VOWS OF RELIGION

5.1. Much speculation has centered around the question of what the intention of the Founder might have been with regard to having the Brothers take the vows of religion. It could be argued that this was his intention since he borrowed freely from other practices of the religious orders at the

time and the Rule already contained chapters on poverty and chastity. De La Salle's reluctance to admit the vow of chastity in 1686 and 1694 is explained by the biographers in mostly practical terms, suggesting that in due time the Brothers might have been ready and De La Salle prepared to allow them this step. Another indication comes from the fact that, after the Founder's death, the superiors, who knew him personally and could have divined his intentions, so readily accepted the incorporation of the three vows of religion into the Bull of Approbation.

5.1.1. On the other side, there is reason to think that De La Salle wanted to preserve the originality of his creation, that there were as many differences as similarities between the other religious congregations, defined as such by the "vows of religion," and his own. De La Salle would have been aware of the complex canonical legislation and theological casuistry in the contemporary approach to the vows of religion. He would have known, too, of the preference of the Vincentians and the Oratorians to eschew the vows of religion for more creative ways to encourage commitment to spiritual growth and to the apostolate. Above all, perhaps influenced by the example of the Jesuits, it is significant that the vows taken by De La Salle and his early disciples were all geared to the mission of the Institute rather than the practice of the religious life as defined in the monastic tradition by the three vows.

6. THE VOWS OF THE BROTHERS FROM 1725 TO 1987

6.1. With the conferment of the Bull of Approbation in 1725, the vows of poverty and chastity were added to obedience, and the specific vows were designated as stability and teaching the poor gratuitously.¹ The vows of the Brothers were now officially designated as simple and public vows in an institute of pontifical right.

6.2. In the period of reorganization after the French Revolution, and the subsequent spread of the Institute there was a growing tendency in institute literature to give priority to the vows of reli-

gion, and to the evangelical counsels from which they were supposedly derived, rather than to the special vows derived from the vision of the Founder and the origins of the Institute. The result was the development in the Institute of a kind of monastic spirituality, a preference for an unhistorical and a priori definition of religious life, together with an assimilation into the Institute of the casuistry that had been elaborated by the moral theologians and canonists around the obligations of the vows. The culmination of this movement can be seen in the 1950 publication by the Institute of the *Short Treatise on the Religious State*.

6.3. With the insistence by Vatican II that religious institutes adapt and renew themselves on the basis of the Gospel, the charism of the Founder, and the signs of the times, there was a new and powerful motive to examine afresh the vision of the Founder in relation to the Gospel and contemporary needs. This was the task of the 39th General Chapter of the Institute, held in two sessions in 1966 and 1967, and designated officially as the renewal Chapter called for by the decrees of the implementation of Vatican II. In the process of revising the Rule, the Chapter affirmed the priority of religious consecration over the vows that express it. Rather than viewing them primarily as source of moral and juridical obligations, the Chapter emphasized that vows are a response on the part of the Brother to a special call from God, an expression of the self-gift of the Brother in daily community life, and a guarantee of the permanence of this self-gift within the Institute.

6.3.1. The renewal Chapter of 1967 gave particular attention to the special vows. In the minds of some, there was reason to eliminate them. With the worldwide spread of the Institute and the complex problems of financing the schools, the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously had given rise to an embarrassing series of legalistic interpretations, adaptations, and dispensations. The vow of stability was considered by some to be superfluous and to add nothing specific to the commitment implied in the other vows. As the discussion progressed, however, the Chapter became sensitive to the importance of the special vows at the origins of the Institute and the manner in which these vows ex-

pressed the originality of the Founder's creation and the unique mission of the Institute. Accordingly, it was decided, rather than eliminate these vows, to renew them and to redesignate them. The vow of teaching the poor gratuitously became a vow to serve the poor through education, the vow of stability became a vow of fidelity to the Institute to be made only at the time of perpetual profession.

6.3.2. In 1986, when the Rule had to be submitted for definitive approval by church authority, the 41st General Chapter opted to bring the designation of the special vows even closer to the vows

made by the earliest Brothers. The vow of stability was reinstated, with the articles of the Rule integrating the element of fidelity with stability. The mission vow was expanded to include the traditional and fundamental notion of association under the title of a vow of association for the educational service of the poor (1987 Rule, 24, 25).

¹ Although the vow formula after 1726 always referred explicitly to the fact that the vows were made "according to the Bull...", the editions of the Rule prior to 1852, and the vow formulas in use until 1927 designated the fifth vow as "teaching gratuitously". The expression "teaching the *poor* gratuitously" was used in the Rule after 1852 and in the vow formula of 1947.

Complementary themes:

Chastity; Consecration; Counsels; Mission; Obedience; Poverty.

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Bro. Luke SALM

65. THE WORLD AND RELATIONS WITH THE WORLD

Summary:

1. Lexicography and semantics. - 2. The world as the creative and redemptive work of God. -3. "Have nothing to do with the world". 3.1. What is the "world"? 3.2. "Who is like God?". -The absoluteness or centrality of God. 3.3. "Those who live according to the spirit of the world". 3.4. The Brother and the world. 3.4.1. The call to abandon the world - the option and the reality; its meaning, motives and advantages. 3.4.2. A ministerial perspective and the world. 3.4.3. To be worthy ministers of the Gospel and not of the world. 3.5. The pupil in the Christian school and in the world. 3.5.1. A positive perspective. 3.5.2. To live "in" the world without being "of" the world. 3.5.3. Citizens of the world from a Christian perspective. - 4. The experience of the first Brothers with regard to the world. 4.1. Immersed in the world and yet distant from it at the same time. 4.2. A focus of persecution for some of those in the world. 4.3. The attraction of the spirit of the world. - 5. Contempt for the world in the time of De La Salle. 5.1. A constant feature. 5.2. De La Salle's concern and a modern perspective.

1. LEXICOGRAPHY AND SEMANTICS

1.1. "In this context the word which De La Salle makes most use of in his written work is the word "world" (cf. VL "monde") which is used 782 times throughout his writings without counting other words which are similar in meaning, such as "mondain" (26 times), "mondanite" (1) or "sicle" (97). With this frequency of usage it occupies the 34th position in the list of the words most used by De La Salle and the 22nd position if only nouns and adjectives are counted. It is to be found in almost all of his written works with the following frequency: Da 84 times; Db 60; DC 64; E 5; EM 38; GA 39; I 37; L 18; MD 109; MF 200; MH 4; MR 16; PA 36; R 33; RB 32; RC 6; RD 1.

1.2. He does not use the "world" univocally and hence one can find different meanings attributed to it; for example:

A) As a simple *element in a linguistic expression* as, for example, in: "The effect and the merits... of Jesus Christ are far from being overshadowed and by no manner of means ("ou le moins du monde") are they diminished by our offences" (Da 326).

B) It carries the sense of "everybody" (all, or all the people, all the inhabitants of the earth) in the French expression "tout le monde", as in the following examples: "The Pharisees seduce every body" (Da 40); Jesus "... invites all to offer the

holy sacrifice of the Mass" ("il invite tout le monde" (Dc 63); "... I will act in such a way that everything will turn out well and everybody ("tout le monde") will be happy" (L 40,4); "everybody ("tout le monde") has defects which they take wherever they go" (MD 74,2); "Jesus withheld his exterior offering until he could make it on the tree of the Cross in the sight of all ("a la vue de tout le monde") (MF 104,2). The word is used some 75 times in this way.

C) In De La Salle's language the word "world" also carries the meaning of *all that God has created*. There are passages in which the word "world" is used with reference to the cosmos (a word which he never uses) in the sense of the totality of space which embraces the creative work of God. At other times it is used specifically in the sense of the "earth", the immediate geographical location inhabited by people and where their multifarious activities unfold.

The cosmic meaning of "world" appears particularly in the catechetical works of De La Salle such as "The Duties of a Christian" (Da, Db, Dc), and in the corresponding summaries (GA and PA), in contexts such as creation, the Church, the Providence of God, the end of the world, or judgment. In his other works the use of this cosmic sense of "world" is rare (cf. MD 46,1; MF 175,1) sometimes in the sense of creation, of the end of the world (MF 178,3; R 216,18; RB 131).

D) Sometimes De La Salle uses the term "world" to indicate the existential moment or the here-and-now; it is the existential space which envelops the life of man. Moreover, in many passages it express a contrast, for example, between "this life" and "the other life" or between "here" and "beyond". However, in many of these passages the word can be understood both in the "spatial" sense of "world = earth" and in the temporal sense of "world = the time of human life".

E) The word is also used to describe the type of life lived by those *who are not consecrated to God in priestly or religious life* — that is by those who "live in the world". In contrast to these people, the Brother, among others, "has abandoned the world", "has retired" or "distanced himself

from it in order to consecrate himself entirely to God, forming community with other Brothers to contribute to the salvific plan of God through the ministry of the school. However, the majority of people live their lives in "the world". It is there where they must "know, love and serve God" living the "Gospel maxims" and the "Christian spirit". If the Brother withdraws from the world and forms a community it is precisely in order to return to it since it is the world of his pupils, especially of the poorest who are most in need of salvation, and he returns to it filled with God and with the spirit of faith and zeal thereby making the salvation of God a reality.

F) Finally, in his writings, the "world" signifies a combination of attitudes, mentalities and behaviour which are *in opposition to those of the Gospel*. For De La Salle, these attitudes, mentalities and behaviour were not abstractions — they were operative in the "people of the world" who were obdurate and blind with regard to God since they were preoccupied with the vanities and the superficialities of the world. These were people who "lived according to the spirit of the world". One should note that, for De La Salle, the most disturbing aspect of this spirit was that it was active, influential and combative. It was expressed primarily in the lives of those dominated by it in the form of attitudes and behaviour which were in opposition to the Gospel and to the following of Jesus. Moreover, it operated as a principle of evil with regard to others and, as such, it was a principle which was alive and active — it was an environment of sin in which criteria and values have been corrupted by the spirit of the world and its maxims. De La Salle alludes to this when he speaks of concupiscence — the world, the devil and the flesh — and forcefully invites one to distance oneself from it and to refrain from regular contact with those who live these values in order to guard against its influence. However, it is not sufficient simply to guard against its influence — one must actively adopt a counter attitude by living Gospel values and acting consistently with them as well as having a horror and contempt for the world. One must live this way in spite of the opposition and the struggles which worldly people unfailingly create for those who seek to challenge

their worldly manner of interpreting life. The assimilation of a way of living "according to the new man" in Christ is a fundamental task of the Christian school. The Brother carries this out by means of appropriate teaching but it is also important that, in an exemplary manner, he lives and witnesses to what "a disciple of Jesus" should be and that he exercises the functions of his ministry zealously thereby touching the hearts of his pupils.

2. THE WORLD AS THE CREATIVE AND REDEMPTIVE WORK OF GOD

2.1. The world is, above all, the creation of God and the work of his omnipotence. It has been created by the Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit (Db 25). While he could have created it in a moment, God took his time — six days — so as to create his creatures with order and wisdom (Da 19; Db 26; GA 320) ... "What do we normally call all that God has created? It is called the world" (Db 25; GA 320). The creation of the world marks the *beginning of time* (Db 25 +). The angels and man appear in this creative work of God as the highest form of creatures and the most worthy of respect (Da 19). Man is a rational being made up of body and soul, created in the image of God and, as such, his principal task lies in knowing and loving God (Da 19). God created the world *for his own glory and to make his omnipotence known*. This might appear to portray a God who is autonomous, distant and totally "other" but, in the vision of De La Salle, this is balanced by another perspective which is that God also created the world *out of love for his creatures* (Db 26).

2.2. There are many references which enable us to capture *the perspective of hope* through which De La Salle contemplated the cosmos and the world:

2.2.1. While our eyes are only capable of capturing the sensible, alone through which they do not see, God is present in everything in its nature giving it its being and substance (Da 16; Db 26). God sees everything and he knows exactly what happens in the world (Da 16) so that nothing escapes his vision or his loving concern (cf. EM 6 +; 12+; CAMPOS, M.-SAUVAGE, M., CL, 50; pp. 199 +;

224 +). The protection of God hovers over all people. From the beginning of the world until its end each person has been given the protection of an angel (Da 21) and, consequently, they are wisely guided and directed by God who is infinitely wise and also infinitely good; he wishes that all people be saved and know the truth (DA 316).

2.2.2. It was *sin* which brought unhappiness to man, putting him beyond grace and beyond the love of God which is true happiness, as well as sowing the seeds of further unhappiness in man through the consequences, pains and miseries of sin (Da 19.23.163). The consequences of sin were the corruption of nature and the inclination to sin which erased almost all the life-giving characteristics which were rooted in the commandments in man's heart (Da 104).

2.2.3. The centring and *the happiness of man* lies in his orientation towards God (da 19) who is the goal of his restlessness (St Augustine, Confessions 1.1.1: MF 125,3). This fundamental orientation has been placed in the heart of man since the beginning of the world (Da 104).

2.2.4. The coming of Jesus Christ has meant that the world *rediscovered the way of its salvation in the reordering of the salvific and redemptive plan of God* (Da 25). Basing himself on the Gospel of John, De La Salle makes many references to Jesus as the "light of the world" (cf. Jn 1; 3,19; 8,12; 9,5; 12,4,6...). In his catechetical works he never misses an opportunity to enable the young Christian in the school to grasp the rich symbolism underlying, for example, the triangular wax candle (Dc 61), or of the Paschal candle which is lit on Holy Saturday (Da 62), or the use of candles during the Benedictus, the Magnificat or the Nunc Dimittis (Dc 63+), or the candles used in the procession on the feast of the Presentation (Dc 152). They are symbols of Jesus Christ who is the "light of the world".

"- Why is there a new fire and completely new light in the Church on Holy Saturday?

- To indicate to us that the Light of the Church, Jesus Christ, which had been extinguished from our eyes with his death on Good Friday, has been relit and has begun again to shine brilliantly in his resurrection.

- Why is the light of Christ represented in the putting on of the Church lights and in the lighting of the candles?

- It is to indicate us: 1. That Jesus Christ is the only source of all light which illumines all who come into the world. 2. That we must not turn to any other light than to the light of Jesus which must guide us on our way to heaven.

- Why a triangular form of candle used and what is the meaning of its three sides?

- This candle represents the three persons in God from whom the light of Jesus emerges and which he communicates to all who live in the world.

- What must the faithful who assist at the Office of Holy Saturday do while the triangular candle is lit and while the Paschal candle is being blessed?

- They must do three things: 1. Recognise that Jesus Christ is their true light. 2. Adore him as such. 3. Dispose themselves to receive him and to follow him in all their actions" (Dc 61 +; cf. also I 95,266).

This same starting-point of the Johannine image of Christ as the Light of the world is used by De La Salle in some of his meditations (for example, in Md 44,1; MF 164,1; 192,2) but this is not to create the impression of personal redemption or salvation exclusive to the Brother. His is not an abstract doctrine but rather it is fruit of joyful experience as much for himself as for his disciples (cf. AEP, 61-63):

"God, who diffuses the fragrance of his teaching in the world through human ministers, and who commanded: "Enlighten the darkness", is the one who has kindled a light in the hearts (2 Co 4,6) of those whom He chose to announce his word to children in order to enlighten them by making the glory of God known to them..." (MR 193,1).

"You must constantly ask Jesus Christ that all the instruction which you give to them is inspired by his Spirit and made efficacious by Him in such a way that just as it is He who enlightens all men who come into this world (Jn 1,9) so He will also be the one who enlightens the spirit of Your disciples and encourages them to love and put into practice all that you teach them" (MR 195,3).

(We have preferred the symbolic image of the light of the world to other images of Jesus Christ such as mediator between God and man, or as Redeemer and Saviour of the world. In any event these may be seen in Da 46,62; DC 188 +, 195; EM 75, 92; I 48, 66, 267, 268).

2.2.5. Various expressions used by De La Salle with reference to the world as creation and redemption have a special resonance in Lasallian teaching. Such expressions, which may appear more doctrinal and removed from experience or which reflect aspects of God appropriate to his divine essence, emerge with the vividness of experience in other Lasallian contexts. In these latter expressions one senses the God of salvation who is present and active in history. Thus, for example;

1. *"God who creates his creatures with order and wisdom..."* and with time (Da 19; Db 26; GA 320); God who wisely guides and directs creatures (GA 316). Very similar expressions are used by De La Salle in the "Memoir of the Beginnings" with reference to the action of God in his own foundational history:

"God, who guides all things gently and with wisdom and who is not accustomed to force the will of man, wishing that I give myself entirely to the work of the schools, did so in a very imperceptible manner and over a short period of time in such a way that one commitment led me to another without my having foreseen it at the beginning..." (BER 33; MAC 10; MAR 14; cf. AEP 19-20; CAMPOS, M., *The Gospel Journey...* 1, 96-108).

2. *"God who is infinitely good wished that all be saved and brought to the knowledge of the truth"*. In the context of the creative work of God this affirmation is presented without qualification. MR 193,1 attempts to flesh out a practically identical text drawn in part from 1 Tim 2,4: "... God is so good that, once having created man, he desired that all should come to the knowledge of the truth..." (193,1); "... Not only does God wish that all come to the knowledge of truth; he also wishes that all be saved" (MR 193,3). De La Salle leads one to see how the providence of God has manifested itself in the creation of the Christian schools as a remedy for the abandonment of many children (MR 193,2; 194,1; RC 1,4-6).

3. *"... they will have an angel to protect them"* (Da 21). De La Salle transfers the angelic symbolism to the educator of youth and applies a ministerial function to it: "...Those chosen by Providence to educate children must exercise the function of Guardian Angels with them in their work..."

(MR 197) while the subsequent meditation has, as its title, "... How the educator of youth exercises the function of Guardian Angel" (MR 198).

3. "... HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE WORLD" (I 82)

3.1. What is the "world"? De La Salle defines his understanding of it in the "Duties of a Christian" (CL 20) which was directed more at catechists and other adults (CL 20, 111, n. 1) and which is paralleled in two other smaller works produced in the form of questions and answers directed more specifically at pupils (GA, PA: CL 23). The definition of "world" appears in the context of the Sacrament of Confirmation which "confers the fullness of the Holy Spirit" (Da 231) and "gives sufficient strength in order to overcome anything opposed to our salvation" (Da 233). However, it happens that even though we are trying to live faithfully, "the bad Christians among whom we live" continually endeavour to make us "renounce Jesus Christ by all means..." which not even the tyrants who persecuted the early Christians did (Da 233). The "three enemies" that are opposed to our salvation are the devil, the world and the flesh..." (Da 233).

"By the "world" is meant those people who live according to the spirit of the world as well as everything that is in people that might lead them into sin along with the desire we have to be in the world, living its attractions and vanities" (Da 234). It is clear that De La Salle is not philosophising on the cosmos nor considering the realities of the world. His concern is salvation and attachment to Jesus Christ. Thus, in this context, the meaning of "world" is anything which is opposed to our salvation. One notes, too, that the "world" is not an abstract entity but rather that it refers to something very concrete, tangible and experiential. It refers to flesh and blood people who live in a particular manner as well as to that which may lead us into sin and the desire within us which leads us into the pursuit of worldly appearances, attractions and vanities.

3.2. "Who is like God?" (the absoluteness or centrality of God)

3.2.1. indicates that man is "in this world to love God" (Da 96) and that "salvation is the most important preoccupation we have in this world" (Da 284) since "God has brought us into this world for no other purpose than that we save our selves" (Da 431; EM 112 +).

The "first and principal occupation must be to know and love God since that is why we are in the world" (Da 21); "... all that Christians must do in this world to ensure their salvation can be reduced to loving God..." (Da 90). It is "important to love God with one's whole heart... without giving space to anything else..." (Da 94); "... one must not divide one's heart between God and the world, between God and creatures... (He) cannot tolerate it... Obviously, we are permitted to love creatures and things in the world but only in relation to God..." (Da 94).

3.2.2. This conceptual framework plays a dominant role in De La Salle's teaching. It is present with the same force whether dealing with the pupil in the school, whom he wishes to correctly set on the path of life, or with the Brother living in community who is consecrated to the God of salvation from whom he has received the mission to bring the Christian spirit to life. To present his thought more clearly De La Salle makes use of the language of opposition and confrontation; thus we find many examples such as interior/exterior, heaven/earth, world/God, spiritual/human, earth-creatures-things of the world/God. The effect is to create the impression that, within De La Salle a basic dualism operated with respect to reality along with a profound pessimism with regard to the world and to man. It is very probable that this is not what De La Salle intended to convey even if our modern sensibility perceives it as such;

"We must love God, says Our Lord, with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength. To love God with all our heart is to love him with all our affection, without any reserve and without having a place in our heart for anything else other than God who must entirely possess

it... We cannot seek, then, to divide our heart between God and the world and to give our heart to God and to creatures; this division will cause injury to God who cannot tolerate it. Obviously, we are permitted to love creatures and things in the world but only in relation to God; it is not then a question of loving the creature but rather of loving God in the creature" (Da 94; cf. also Da 74. 95 +).

3.2.3. This language of irreconcilability is frequent in De La Salle: for example,

"God and the world, the spirit of God and the spirit of the world, are not reconcilable, as Jesus Christ says in the Gospel (Mt 6,24); in consequence he adds that if one possesses one of these the other cannot be possessed: (MF 174,3). "Communicating with the world leads one eventually to take on its spirit which is opposed to the spirit of Jesus Christ and, since both cannot exist in a soul at the same time, one loses the power of the spirit of Jesus Christ in filling oneself with the worldly spirit" (MF 182,1).

"At the same time we ask this Saint (St Michael the Archangel) to inspire us with a horror of the world - which seeks to supplant God in our hearts -and to rid our minds of all worldly ideas by making use of those fulminating words which he uttered in the battle against Lucifer: 'Who is like God?'" (MF 125,2).

"If you are truly of God you will be enemies of the world — and the world will be your enemy because you are of God" (MD 41,2). Examples such as these could be multiplied.

3.2.4. Apart from this central nucleus De La Salle makes use of many derivations of a practical order; for example, "...under the influence of things of this world according to which they are exteriorly...", "esteem them for what they are in God" (EM 13); "... Don't preoccupy yourself with pleasing those in the world and don't leave anything undone to please them..." (MD 75,2); "... to overcome all earthly considerations so as to consecrate yourself to God"; "... complete detachment from the things of the earth... since they are nothing and God is everything" (MF 125,2.3); "... empty the heart of the earthly..." (MF 171,1); "... far from grieving about it (the persecution of the devil and the world) be thankful that you are at war with them..." (MF 182,2); "... even consider yourselves as dead to the world... and don't have any communication with it..."; "... treat it, then as it is (as an enemy); abhor contact with it and do

not allow it the least access..." (MD 41,2); "... love poverty and live detached from everything" (MF 173,2); "... you should certainly consider it a great happiness to have left the world... do not fall back into becoming fond of what you once left" (MF 174,2.3).

On more than one occasion one notices De La Salle's tendency to adopt literally what he calls "Gospel maxims". Thus, for example, "no one can serve two masters" (Mt 6,24), or "rejoice, then, when the world hates you" (Mt 5,11 +), or "if you wish to be perfect leave everything you have" (Mt 19,21).

3.3. "Those who live according to the spirit of the world"

3.3.1. One of the elements in De La Salle's definition of the world is "those who live according to the spirit of the world" (Da 234). "Les gens du monde" and "les gens du siècle" are much-used expressions by De La Salle — occasionally in his catechetical and pedagogical writing but much more in his spiritual-ministerial writing. At times he uses expressions such as "bad Christians", "world lings" and "libertines" without attempting to nuance their meanings which would be brought out by a more detailed study of their contexts. These expressions refer to people who, in their daily lives, think, decide and act "according to the spirit of the world".

In schematic form the words "spirit" or "maxims" approximate to-day to what would be called "criteria", "values", "value judgements", or "hierarchy of values". All of these constitute the "attitudes" or the "mentality" which is the base from which a person thinks, acts, prioritizes and organizes life. These criteria are expressed in behaviour, or in "practices" or "conduct" in De La Salle's terminology. According to De La Salle, the world is divided into those who live their lives according to the spirit of the Gospel (which is the Christian spirit) and those who live according to the spirit of the world.

3.3.2. What characterizes the world and those who live according to its spirit?

- Ignorance of Jesus Christ, the mystery of salvation (MF 165,1; 194,2); a lack of insight and

ability with regard to what refers to God and his service (MD 32,1); a very imperfect knowledge of God which leads one not to think about God, not to speak of him nor to appreciate him being spoken of, to pray haphazardly (MD 41,3); the impossibility of those given to concupiscence to receive the Spirit of God (MD 42,1; MD 44,3).

- The cult of the external, of appearances, of the superficial (EM 105; MD 34,13; MD 75,2; MF 85,1).

- The love of riches (MF 143,2).

- A life of complacency in which the senses are gratified (MD 41,3).

- A world of sins covered at times by a tissue of wisdom but blind to the criteria of God and in which maxims are professed and lived which are opposed to those taught by the Spirit of God to holy souls (MR 194,2; Da 168,16; MD 44,3; Db 164,16).

- Close association with the devil (MD 41,1; DC 75-83).

- Love of those who love the world and have the same habits (MD 41,3; MF 182,2).

- Declared opposition to Jesus Christ (MF 182,3); hatred of the servants of God; scorn, oppression, injuries, slander with regard to them (MD 75,2; MD 41,1. 2. 3.).

- It could be described as a "corrupt world" (MF 182,1).

Consequently, it is not surprising that De La Salle says that "the habits and views of the people of the world are diametrically opposed to those which you (the Brothers) must adopt" (MD 75,2) and that, after interpreting the world from this perspective, he describes it at a stroke as "a stormy sea" (MF 164,1) and reiterates his invitations to distance oneself from it and from its evil out of fear of being corrupted by the worldly spirit.

3.3.3. *But is the whole of society like this?* De La Salle does not nuance his affirmations too much with the result that they sound rather too generalized. He is concerned to describe a particular type against which he wants to put one on guard; and it is as much for Brother as for pupils since it involves attitudes which are clearly anti-Gospel. He is not attempting to sketch a sociological study. He is more interested in discerning and describing "spi-

rits" than in quantifying percentages. His desire is that "the new man" be a reality in the heart of the Brother and that the "Christian spirit" strengthens and grows in the heart of the pupil for it is then that the saving plan of God, which is the key objective in Lasallian teaching, is realized.

As nuancing elements to this overly-negative impression one could cite as examples, his repeated allusions to what characterizes the "good Christian" which appears in question-and-answer form in the "Duties of a Christian" in such questions as "... How should a good Christian behave during Christmas?..." or during "carnival" or in "Lent". De La Salle was very concerned that the exemplary character of the teacher be a first-class educational influence and he was, without doubt, aiming these questions at concrete situations and people who were animated by the "Christian spirit" and who were as real as those people who allowed themselves to be led by the spirit of the world. One could also mention, in the same context, the admiration which De La Salle had for those who in their childhood benefited from a strong Christian education. When we bear in mind the situation of those far from salvation, which was to be the origin of the Christian schools, we can be sure that the admiration alluded to did not simply remain confined to the biographies of sanctity (cf. MF 98,1; MF 122,1; MF 177,1; MF 189,2; MF 186,1). It would also be important to refer to the effects of the Christian schools about which De La Salle comments in MR 207,2. 3 and MR 208.

3.4. The Brother and the world

3.4.1. *The call to abandon the world - the option and the reality: its meaning, motives and advantages.*

A. To "leave" or to "abandon" the world, to "withdraw" or "separate oneself from the world, are expressions which De La Salle uses in the main to describe a particular situation. It was language current in his time to indicate the option for the religious or priestly life. De La Salle also applies it many times to the lives of the saints or to the life of the Brother in general. At times, too, these expressions carry spiritual or ascetical overtones proposed as tasks to be accomplished.

B. De La Salle views the life of the Brother as a total unity in which personal salvation and the exercise of the ministry of salvation with those who have been confided to their care are the tasks that are incumbent on him in this life. At times the two aspects are presented as inseparable as, for example, in "... Do not make any distinction..." (R 184,4) (cf. GALLEGO S., Vol 2, 27-32) while, at other times, he focuses on one or other aspect with the consequent danger that the total picture is not seen. This is even more frequent with regard to the theme of the "world" with the result that the risk of dissociation or distortion is all the more real. However, his teaching considered as a whole is actually integrated and coherent with a unity that is captured in the following quotation:

"...You have received special graces from God when he led you out of the world and called you to a ministry which has as its sole concern the salvation of souls. Have you consecrated yourselves to God in such a way that you have renounced everything and think of nothing but Him and the duties of your employment. Ensure that this is what you do from now on so as to be properly disposed to duly exercise such a holy ministry" (MF 146,3).

De La Salle emphasizes that the "option of leaving the world" is the result of a call from God and that the Brother "leaves" the world (in the sense of entering a community) not in the sense of a personal retreat, or for purely ascetical motives, but rather to consecrate himself entirely to God in a ministry which has as its sole concern the salvation of souls. Thus the meaning of total renunciation lies in the centrality of God and of this ministry and it is the way of disposing oneself to properly exercise this holy ministry (cf. also MF 191,2).

C. The Brother opts to "abandon" the world and this is one of the given realities of his life. Obedience is also one of the characteristics of his life and it distinguishes him from those who live in the world and enjoy their liberty (MD 7,3). Those who live in community "find themselves in the boat with Jesus and his disciples" (MD 10,1). They opt to live in "lowliness", which is characteristic of their profession and employment, and are conscious that they are humble Brothers, "little known or recognized by people of the world" (MF 86,2). They wear a distinctive habit which enables

seculars to see them as people separated and withdrawn from the world (MH 40).

Consequently, when De La Salle speaks of "separation" from, or "abandonment", of the world he is not indicating to the Brother anything other than the state which they have embraced. These expressions always indicate the nature of the life chosen rather than being an invitation to something different, even when the starting point of these invitations are the biographies of the saints whose style of life have little in common with that of the Brother.

D. In different contexts De La Salle distinguishes the motives which underlie the Brothers' type of life and which explain his "abandonment of the world". Thus, it is explained in terms of the following of Jesus, of total consecration to God, of spiritual preparation for ministry, or from ascetical motivations. The particular emphasis depends on the context in question but one needs to see them as constituting an inseparable unity:

They left the world to follow Jesus and to submit themselves to his direction and to form part of the group of his followers (MD 10,1; MD 59,1); to consecrate themselves to God and to possess his divine Spirit in abundance (MD 42,2; MD 58,1); to lead a life beyond the natural and above human inclinations and to work for the salvation of one's neighbour (MD 58,3; MF 191,1); to die completely to one's passions (MD 76,3); to renounce and to die to what those in the world practise (MD 77,1); to fill oneself with the Spirit of God and of zeal which is necessary to work effectively for the salvation of souls — things which are not found in the world (MF 189,2); "... God has taken you out of the world with the aim of disposing you to acquire the virtue which you require for the faithful undertaking of your employment and to educate many children in the Christian spirit" (MF 131,1).

E. *Invitation to thanksgiving* – *Advantages*

De La Salle devotes much effort to enable the Brother to reflectively understand how reasonable and advantageous it is to "withdraw" from the world and he indicates this with the help of numerous examples. It is as if he were saying: "...We have chosen the best type of life in which to exercise the ministry of salvation which God has confided to us". Thus, for example, the Brother lives in

community protected from the waves provoked by the stormy sea of the world, that is, protected from the many occasions in the world of offending God (MD 10,1; EM 46 + ; MF 89,1); it is a happiness for you to live apart from the world (MD 50,1) numbered among the followers of Jesus (MF 78,1; MF 100,1; MF 174,2); it is "...one of the greatest graces which you have received in your whole life" (MF 182,1) "... the day on which your earthly happiness began" (MF 191,1); one obtains great facility for the practice of virtue and works of piety are practised naturally (MF 98,1); it brings one to self-knowledge which is indispensable for overcoming oneself and for rooting out passions and one's own inclinations (MF 97,2); in an unimaginable way Jesus Christ will love those who have left all for him and will bestow many graces on them as much for themselves as for others. Having their hearts empty of earthly things God will fill them with his Holy Spirit (MF 167,2; MF 171,1. 2; MF 189,2).

3.4.2. *The ministerial perspective and the world*

A. *An essential perspective*

The ministerial perspective is essential for properly situating and understanding what De La Salle has to say about the world and the Brother since it would be to distort his thought if his teaching were considered purely from an ascetical perspective and disconnected from this ministerial function. De La Salle's perspective is that his teaching is inseparable from the salvific ministry and, consequently, he is not simply concerned with "personal salvation". Every aspect of the Brother's life — his vocation, his experience of the centrality and absoluteness of God, his own sanctification, the meaning of his life - has a ministerial dimension since it stems in some way from his ministerial activity. When De La Salle speaks to the Brother of this abandonment-withdrawal-separation from the world he is not describing the life of a monk or of one who lives alone not even when his reflections stem from a contemplation quite distinct from those of the Brother. Thus, the sense of "not-being-of-the world" is part of the ministry of the Brother:

"Adore God's fatherly providence towards you in leading you out of the world with the aim of disposing you to acquire the virtue which you require for

the faithful fulfilment of your employment and for educating many children in the Christian spirit. Are you responding to God's plans for you? Are you attempting to be so sanctified in your state that you dispose yourselves to sanctify those who have been entrusted to you?" (MF 131,1; cf. also MF 182,3; MD 58,3).

The Brother distances himself from the world to read and to listen to the Sacred Scriptures and to learn from them the way of salvation and the holy maxims which he is obliged to practise and to teach to others by his profession (MF 100,1). Withdrawal from the world produces abundant fruit in souls and attracts abundant graces from God for the good of others (MF 136,1) and it also allows one to be filled by divine love and by the Spirit of God (MF 171,2) as well as by the spirit of faith and of zeal (MF 189,2).

B. *In the world to save it*

The Brother is **in the world in order to save it**, as the following quotations indicate: "...The profession which you exercise obliges you to frequent the world daily..." (MD 69,3); "...your employment involves a certain degree of contact with people outside..." (MF 98,2); the Brother is obliged to leave his "retreat" in order to work in the world (MD 6,2).

To oppose the world is a specific aspect of ministry which has specific objectives: in order to gain influence in the hearts of pupils at the expense of the "world"; to bring Jesus Christ to life in their hearts; to obtain for them the Christian spirit; to teach them the Gospel maxims and to lead them to practise them. One can see examples of this perspective in the following key texts;

"...God has provided... teachers for children... not only so as not to tolerate... but also to lead them through the dangers of the world..." (MR 197,3). "...You must pay particular attention to educating them in the Christian spirit which gives them the wisdom of God which is beyond the reach of the princes of this world and which is in open opposition to the spirit and wisdom of the world towards which you must inspire them with a great aversion..." (MR 194,2; cf. also MR 196,2; MD 6,2; MD 44,3).

From community to the "world" - from the "world" to community?

A reading of the Lasallian texts often suggests

the image of a "going-and-coming" from the community to the world with a return to the community once the ministerial work has been accomplished. In its essence the thought of De La Salle is very biblical — (see VTB, "Monde III 1, Séparés du monde, témoins du Christ face au monde") but at times his language carries excessive tones of rigorism and of protectionism which gives rise to a suggestion of dualism (cf. MF 127,2; MF 179,1; MD 6,2).

C. *The world will persecute you*

This biblical perspective (cf. VTB, *ibid*) also often appears in Lasallian teaching and also carries ministerial overtones;

"... Such is the way (cf. Jn 16,2; Jn 17,4) you can expect to be treated while living according to the spirit of your Institute and working to accomplish the good of your neighbour..." (MD 41,1; MF 182,2. 3; MF 136,3; MF 166,3).

3.4.3. *To be worthy ministers of the Gospel and not of the world*

The vocation of the Brother involves withdrawal from the world. However, external or physical withdrawal is not sufficient in itself since interior renunciation is also required which implies having "contempt" for it or having an "aversion" for it. What De La Salle demands is consistency and does so in a language which is generally very specific and, at times, very rigorous;

A. *Total opposition* (cf. 3.2.3; 3.3.1; 3.3.2)

There is a very strong biblical resonance to this (cf. VTB, "Monde" III.1): "... the habits and views of people in the world are diametrically opposed to those which you must adopt". Consequently, one must not seek to please them in any way (MD 75,2) but rather one must treat the world as an enemy (MD 41,2) opposing it and its maxims (MF 182,1) as well as having "contempt" and an "aversion" for it (cf. Da, DC, EM, MD, MF and R for that terminology).

B. *Additional aspects*

- in imitation of Jesus Christ and the saints one has an aversion and contempt for all that the "blind" world values and energetically pursues—vanities, pleasures, transitory greatness, goods -

(EM 120 + ; cf. MF 96,2; R 123.11);

- banish from the mind all worldly ideas (MF 125,2; MF 129,1), as well as the worldly spirit and customs (L 16,10.13);

- abhor going into the world and limit contact with it to what is strictly necessary since "contact with the world leads to accepting its spirit" (MF 182,1; cf. L 17,18; 27,9; 31,8 to Gabriel Drolin);

- special attention is given to recreation and to conversations:

"... Since they have withdrawn and separated themselves from the world (religious and those who live in community) their conversation should also be completely different from what those in the world are accustomed to. It would be of little use if they have left the world physically if they have not acquired the spirit which is also opposed to it. This must be manifested particularly in conversation" (MD 30,2; cf. R 50-57), "List of topics of conversation for the Brothers during recreation" especially the introduction to the list which contains value judgements which are very illustrative of the thought of the founder).

C. *"Those who do not bend the knee before Baal"* (cf. MD 77,3).

That living "in a community withdrawn from the world" does not have a magic effect on individuals is clearly indicated in titles to meditations such as the following: "About those who, while having left the world to live in community, have not rejected its spirit" (MD 76); "Many are called but few are chosen to live in community" (MD 72); "Those who have lost the spirit of their state and the means they must adopt to recover it" (MD 68); "That sanctity does not consist in the habit but rather in good works" (MD 60); "The most grievous abomination in a holy place is sin and relaxation in communities" (MD 77). There are communities in which "God is faithfully served" (MD 77,1) but De La Salle also speaks of the "relaxation of certain other communities" where God "preserves some of the faithful who do not bow the knee before Baal" (MD 77,3). There are many examples such as this which have much to do with the world and relation to it. De La Salle describes some of the aspects which imply the adoption of the worldly spirit such as the lack of attention to prayer, giving scope to one's inclinations and passions (MD 77,1.2), having no other

concern but for the earthly, that is, for the world and for worldly things (MD 68,2; MD 76,1. 2. 3). De La Salle also calls to constancy and to fervour;

"...You have received special graces from God when he led you out of the world and called you to a ministry which has as its sole concern the salvation of souls. Have you consecrated yourselves to God in such a way that you have rejected everything and think only of Him and of the duties of your employment?..." (MF 146,3; cf. MD 60,1; MD 68,3; MF 78,1; MF 97,1; MF 116,3; MF 123,2; MF 137,1; MF 138,1.2; MF 143,1 and 2; MF 144,1; MF 146,3; MF 167,1.2; MF 174,2.3; MF 176,1. 2 + ; MF 184,3").

3.5. The pupil in the Christian school and in the world

3.5.1. Positive perspective

- The existence of the Christian school — its nature, objective and work - - has much to do with De La Salle's thinking on the world. With regard to the Christian schools he adopts a positive perspective; "... It is God... in his Providence who has established the Christian schools..."; "... God is so good that... he desires that all come to the knowledge of the truth..."; "... He chose (people) to announce his word to children to enlighten them by making the glory of God known to them..." (MR 193,1 - also title); "... he wishes that all be saved..." (MR 193,2).

- The God who is "so good" is the God of the mystery of salvation which is present in history and in concrete reality. Consequently, De La Salle's personal journey as Founder is closely linked with the events which unfold around him. They are the starting point in the task of discerning the will of God. De La Salle gradually realized that, in the lives of many people, the saving plan of God was far from being realized because the circumstances in which they found themselves left them at the mercy of "the spirit of the world", far from God and lacking knowledge of him. This was a way of living which was in conformity with the maxims of the world and with worldly company. Thus, the Christian school developed precisely as a providential and salvific response to children who were immersed in these worldly experiences; it developed "... to announce his word to children to enlighten them by making the glory of God known to them" (MR 193,1).

- De La Salle makes reference to these experiences in some fundamental texts — such as, for example, MR 193,2; 194,1; RC 1,3-6 — while the personal and charismatic journey of De La Salle profoundly witnessed to the following recommendation which is found in Da 453 +, in the context of "those for whom we should pray":

"... Given that those weakest in virtue, those who value the world and those who live according to its maxims — those who have the greatest necessity of help and least able to obtain it — are also those, according to St Augustine, for whom charity impels us to pray with more insistence and fervour".

- The objectives and the work of the Christian school revolve around the "giving of a Christian education", "to inspire Christian maxims" (RC 1,3), "to educate in the Christian spirit which confers the wisdom of God... which is in direct opposition to the spirit and wisdom of the world for which they must inspire their pupils with great horror" (MR 194,2). In the context of the symbol of the angel, the teacher is "an excellent guide" for the children leading them safely "through the dangers of the world" (MR 197,3; cf. above 3.4.2).

3.5.2. To live in the world without being of the world

De La Salle invites the pupil of the Christian school to embrace the saving plan of God living the Christian spirit by being in the world without being of the world.

To do this;

A. *He taught them what they should believe*: the creative intervention of God, the original state of happiness of the first man, his sin and its consequences, the coming of the Son of God into the world, salvation for all, the gift of the Spirit which inspired the foundation of the Church, the Church "militant" opposing "the world, the flesh and the devil" to secure salvation, the joyful destiny of eternally seeing, loving and being with God (Cf. Db: CL 21).

B. *He taught them what they should do* which is summarized in the love of God and of one's neighbour. De La Salle insists on the total and absolute character of charity or the love of God.

Thus, "... to love God above all things is to love him more than one loves anything and more than all there is in the world" (Db 74). The commandments focus the direction of charity indicating the good that God demands and the sin which must be avoided. One must practise the virtues and to do so one must make use of the necessary means which is the grace of God, which is essential from all points of view. To obtain this it is necessary to make use of the sacraments and of prayer. De La Salle develops this in greater detail in Db. Thus, for example,

- Baptism entails an option for God. It implies a renunciation of the devil and his temptations as well as his pomps — (ie. the maxims and vanities of the world) — and his works (the pleasures of the flesh and of the senses). It involves living as true children of God and not according to the world (Db 164).

- Confirmation makes one a perfect Christian, giving one the strength and the courage in the world to profess the faith and maxims of Jesus Christ by word and deed without any human respect (Db 166+).

- The sacrament of Penance allows the pupil to compare the way he is living his life against his option for God to straighten out his life (Db 180-184).

- The Eucharist provides him with spiritual nourishment and an increase in grace (Db 208+).

- Through prayer he draws on the blessings and the grace of God. It enables him to experience the mercy of God as well as overcoming temptations, detaching himself from the world and uniting himself to God (Db 249+).

The overall tone of Lasallian teaching and catechesis in Da and Db is very positive. It is an invitation to the pupil to live the Christian spirit and to live in the world without being of the world (cf. FERNANDEZ MAGAZ, M., "Un gran catecismo del gran siglo francés: Los deberes del Cristiano de San Juan Bautista de La Salle", Madrid, 1968; cf. also PUNGIER, J., "Jean-Baptiste de La Salle: Le message de son Catéchisme", Rome, 1984).

C. In DC (the third part of the "Duties of the Christian") the Founder reiterates *suggestions* which have much to do with the vision and behaviour of *the pupil in relation to the world*:

- Above all he reiterates the positive and redemptive view of the world (cf. DC pp. 27-20, 57+, 60-64, 69-71, 90+, 93-95, 134+, 151+) even though it is sinful (Dc 72) and that the world

rejected Jesus Christ, the corner stone (Dc 59).

- His catechesis on the liturgical seasons also refers to relations with the world; a rejection of the spirit and the behaviour of the world, including activities which are permitted (Septuagesima: Dc 73+); severe recommendations with regard to carnival weeks — "the Devil's Lent" (Dc 75-84); avoiding bad companions and undertaking mortifications (Lent: Dc 85, 92); aspiring to heaven and to a total abandonment of sin (Easter: Dc 94-95); avoiding the company of the worldly and the libertine; attaching oneself only to God and renouncing the pleasures of the world (Ascension, Pentecost: Dc 97); an attitude of gratitude towards God for the goods of the earth along with a sense of detachment and moderation in their use (Rogation days in September: Dc 106+).

- His catechesis on the many feasts to honour God, the mysteries of Jesus, the Most Blessed Virgin and the Saints gave De La Salle the opportunity to allude to the type of behaviour which, in his judgement, should characterize the life of a pupil of the Christian school. Taken overall it presents a very exacting picture; the pupil should not profane Sunday with games, dances or shows (Dc 129); should not frequent company (Holy Trinity; Dc 232); should love suffering and poverty (Christmas: Dc 142); should circumcise his heart in particular with regard to attachments to the pleasures of the senses (Dc 145); he should undergo a spiritual resurrection involving, among other things, separating himself from the company of those who live according to the vanities and pleasures of the world as well as seeking the things of heaven (Easter: Dc 173); he should have a great contempt for the things of the world as well as renouncing those things which please the senses (All Saints: Dc 216)

- cf. also Dc 148 (Epiphany); Dc 161 (Palm Sunday); Dc 176 (Ascension); Dc 210 (Assumption); Dc 265 (St Matthew); Dc 268 (St Mathias); Dc 293 (St Nicholas); Dc 295 (Patronal feasts).

D. Some of the texts which the pupils had to recite also indicated attitudes which were in opposition to the world; thus, for example, "... I will not blush in observing how the word which you teach us is so opposed to the maxims of the world" (I 78); or ... "I do not wish to offend you even if, through it, I were to gain the whole

world" (1183); or, again, a "... prayer to ask God for a horror of the goods, honours and pleasures of the world..." (I 189-190) — cf. the catechesis on the ordinary as well as the most important means for avoiding sin (I 162, 4° and 5°).

3.5.3. *The citizen of the world - a Christian perspective*

A. The quotations in the section above indicate the extent to which De La Salle shared a rigorist vision of the world and this could create the impression that the ideal for the pupil of the Christian school would be to live distant from, and unconcerned by, the world. However, in reality, this is not the vision of De La Salle. His schools evolved precisely as a response to his awareness of the situation of the poor. The means of salvation were most distant from the poor parents who had neither the time nor the means to educate their children properly (RC 1,4; MR 193,2; MR 194,1) and it was the Christian school which made these means available through religious and secular education (CE 97, 102). These schools were consistent in the pursuit of true human values (cf. GALLEGO, S., Vol 2, 32; CAMPOS, M., 1, 205-209) which took place in an educational framework within a Christian environment and which had the clear objective of providing a Christian education (RC 1). It was an education which took seriously both the reality of the pupil and the reality of the kingdom of God and there were appropriate means to capture both perspectives. Thus, for example, "secular" education was not a "pretext" to conduct religious teaching or to lead the pupils to the Church:

"... In the Christian schools... throughout the whole day, the pupils learn to read and write as well as learning their religion... they are permanently occupied. In this way they will be prepared for work when their parents so wish it..." (MR 194,1). "... In your employment your zeal for the good of the Church must be accompanied with a zeal for the good of the State. Your pupils are already citizens of the State and they will have to act accordingly some day. You will procure the good of the Church in making them good Christians, docile to the truths of faith and to the maxims of the holy Gospel. You will procure the good of the State in teaching them to read and to write and all that pertains to the present life in your ministry. Piety must be linked to human formation since without the latter your work would be ineffective (MF 160,3; cf. also MF 91,3;

MR 205,3; MR 206,1).

B. The "Management of Schools" and the "Rules of Christian Politeness" are indications of the seriousness with which De La Salle was concerned both with the world and with the reign of God.

Everything that was done in the school from morning until night (CE PI), the means adopted by the teacher to establish and maintain order in the school (CE P2), the tasks involved in the administration of the school and in the formation of the new teachers (CE P3), indicate the extent to which the Christian school concentrated on reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic and the teaching of the catechism as well as indicating the importance given to the learning process, to valuing the person, to the influences which impinged on the pupil, to the human dimension, apparent on numerous occasions, and to a realistic preparation for the future.

Through the "Rules of Christian Politeness" one can see the interest which De La Salle had in promoting well-mannered behaviour in the pupil. The scope is all-embracing treating such aspects as, for example, the body, getting up and going to bed, dressing, meals, entertainments, visits, conversations, relationships, in the street, on journey, and is accompanied with precise details which seek to be up-to-date and adapted to times and places. At the same time the intention is to go beyond motivation proper to a worldly spirit so as to aspire to behaviour inspired by Gospel motives (cf. RB Preface).

4. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FIRST COMMUNITIES OF THE BROTHERS WITH REGARD TO THE WORLD

4.1. At one and the same time immersed in the world and distant from it

The vocation of the Brother evolved slowly and progressively in the same way as De La Salle's own vocation evolved. Both he and the early teachers embarked on a way of life which became gradually more and more inspired by the Gospel (cf. CAMPOS, M., I, 108 + , 154 +).

From the short community experience of Holy Week in 1681, which was prolonged later in the De La Salle family home (GALLEGO, S., Vol. 1, 150), a real experience of community life began to emerge (CAMPOS, M., 1, 113). From that time on, and especially in the house on the Rue Neuve, "... in an area away from the hustle and the concerns of the world..." (Blain, 1, 224), the teacher's house began to "take on the form of a real community" (CAMPOS, M., 1, 113). Already, in embryonic form, it was a style of life which sought to be in harmony with the values and the demands of the Gospel.

From the beginning the "world" was present in De La Salle's option to leave "his" world in order to enter the world of the teachers to live "as one of them" (GALLEGO, S., Vol 1, 157). For the teachers the "world" was present in their option to leave aside desires for social promotion in order to gradually embrace a world of Gospel demands. Together they were to evangelize each other and to gradually create a new way of life which, at one and the same time, was "distant from the world", from worldly criteria, and also "immersed in the real and difficult world" of the poor. It was not a monastic community despite the appearances of fixed timetables, long prayer, involvement in the work of the house, detachment from everything, humility, poor clothing and shoes, fasting — it was their own world (BER 62; GALLEGO, S., Vol 1, 157). It was a community sui generis in the process of mutual evangelization and progressive detachment from worldly criteria and style in order to be more effective instruments of evangelization for the children of the working-class and the poor.

This evangelization involved significant renunciations for De La Salle in the shape of his canonry (GALLEGO, S., Vol 1, 160-165) and his wealth (cf. *ibid.*, 171-176; also a detailed commentary in CAMPOS, M., 1, 119-144), renunciations which reflect his incarnational journey which was a journey of detachment and of salvation of others, completely given over to Christ. For the Brothers it involved a continual purification of their Gospel attitudes on which was to depend the apostolic efficacy of the school. The structure of community life also continued to evolve — it was a community which wished to situate itself in the world in a particular way with the aim of provid-

ing a true Christian education for the children of the working-class and of the poor. It was a style of life which was, at one and the same time, a "being in" the world and a "withdrawal from" it.

The organization of community life, along with reflection on that life and on the demands inherent in it, as well as the discernment of God's will by De La Salle and the Brothers (eg. in the Assemblies) was to crystallize first in regulations and then in Rules to guarantee an effective way of being in the world of the poor as instruments of salvation. These Rules were to promote;

- gratuity which would allow the poor access to the Christian school (RC 1,1)
- the experience of the spirit of the Institute (faith and ardent zeal) "which should be the motive of all their conduct" (RC 2)
- the teaching which they were to give to the pupils and the method of giving it (RC 1. 7. 8. 9)
- close association and a close spirit of community (RC 3)
- mutual union (RC 13) and obedience (RC 12) — a great love of the holy exercise of mental prayer and of holy communion (RC 4).

The regulations, and later the Rules, also indicated the way to "withdraw from the world". In particular, it involved;

- renouncing the "worldly person" and the "spirit of the world" and hence the emphasis on the exercises of humiliation and mortification (RC 5)
- the way of conducting oneself in recreations (RC 6)
- conduct with people outside the community (RC 14) and while on journeys (RC 24)
- the prescriptions with regard to modesty (RC 21).

To our way of thinking today many of these prescriptions would destroy relationships but for De La Salle the emphasis was different. He was concerned to indicate "reserve with people of the world so as not to slip back into the spirit of the world" (RC 16,1).

4.2. An object of persecution for the people of the world

De La Salle often warns his Brothers that they will be the object of persecution for the people of the world (cf. 3.4.2). Behind this is the Johannine teaching on the opposition and rejection by the world of Jesus, the Son of God. However, it is also

a specific allusion to the foundation of the Institute in which a hostile world had persistently and fiercely opposed this "work of God".

It would be necessary to read many Lasallian texts referring to this theme in parallel with the negative way in which the "spirit of the world" viewed the good which the Christian school accomplished and, in consequence, the way in which it opposed it with all the means within reach. Underlying these observations of De La Salle is the distant memory of the first opposition which he himself suffered in the bosom of his own family, and from his relatives, when he brought the teachers into his own home (cf. BLAIN 1, 175; BER 42 + ; MAC 19 + ; MAR 29 +) as well as that which arose with regard to the habit of the Brothers, in Rheims (BER 69; BLAIN, Vol 1, 238-240; Vol 2, 255, 380, 403) and in Paris (cf. all on the "Memoir on the Habit" - cf. GALLEGO, S., Vol 1, 221-225). There was also the underlying memory of the repeated surreptitious attacks on the free schools by the Little Schools of Paris in 1690 (cf. GALLEGO, S., Vol 1, 228-230) and in 1698 (ibid., 307 +) while 1704 was the year in which they suffered the violence of the writing masters (ibid. 372-376) which continued in litigation until 1706 (ibid., 408-414; cf. BLAIN, Vol 1, 388; Vol 2, 357). All of this, too, without mentioning other mindless and manipulative opposition directed against the person of De La Salle in 1702 (ibid., 355-370) or which was stirred up against him by the lawsuit with Clement (ibid., 432-36; 468-70; 472; 477-480).

4.3. The attraction of the spirit of the world

"... lest one become imbued with their spirit for which the devil gives most religious a natural inclination, causing them to form attachments when they communicate freely and frequently with such persons..." (RC 16,1).

We noted elsewhere (3.4.3C) that the repeated warning of De La Salle with regard to reserve with the world had much to do with the early experience of the new foundation. Consequently, ascetical recommendations and historical experience most certainly interplayed on each other. It is, perhaps, from this perspective that one can read some of the events narrated by Blain (cf. 2, 478); or the example of the Brother from Versailles, who found

ded the school in 1710, whose heart remained attached to the spirit of the world in his frequent contact with the Court and who left the Institute, (2, 66-69, 306); or the three Brothers from Mende who slipped into a life of ease and sensuality which led them into grave disorders (2, 48 +) from which not even the proximity of De La Salle could divert them — Blain himself has some very harsh words for them (2, 48 +). These events reinforced De La Salle's conviction that "those who adopt the spirit of the world lose the spirit of their state" (BLAIN, 2, 51+). The same theme is reiterated in the biographies in their accounts of De La Salle's advice to his Brothers before he died;

"... If you wish to persevere and to die in your state do not have any contact with people of the world; ... if not... you would grow fond of their way of acting... to please them you fall into infidelity with regard to your rules... you would grow to dislike your state and eventually you would abandon it..." (MAC 162; MAR 296 + ; BLAIN 2, 174).

5. CONTEMPT OF THE WORLD IN THE TIME OF DE LA SALLE

5.1. "Contempt" as a constant feature

In his vision of the world and the relations which one should have with it, De La Salle shows himself to be both severe and rigorist and in this he was responding to the sensibility of his time. According to Cognet, contempt for the world was certainly a constant in the time of De La Salle (cf. COGNET, L., "La spiritualité française au XVII^e siècle, Paris, 1949). It was an era strongly influenced by moral pessimism which sprung from a very negative vision of human nature. It was a theme which was to figure prominently in the controversy provoked by Jansenism in the great debate over grace and human liberty. According to Gallego, "... the anthropology underlying dogma, grace, morality and sacraments of this time... is negative, lamentable; one has to say it, unacceptable"; "the opposition "spirit-flesh", the use of the senses, the theology of pleasure, flight from the world, penance, mortification... are presented in markedly pessimistic and rigorist tones and De La Salle was affected by this..." (GALLEGO, S., Vol 2,

55-57; PUNGIER, J., "Jean-Baptiste de La Salle: le message de son catéchisme", 110-130; «Les Devoirs II, témoins d'une sensibilité religieuse typique du XVII^e siècle française», in VAN LOO, E., "Le mépris du monde chez saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle", 31-50; "L'homme chez SJBS", 74-77; "Enfant de son temps"; in DEVILLE, R., "L'École française de spiritualité", 173-175: "Le pessimisme de l'École française").

5.2. De La Salle's concern and a modern perspective

The theme of the world and relations with it often appears in the works of De La Salle and often does so under the heading of "contempt" for the world. From our cultural perspective, which places such a high value on man and on his capacities and which has led to the development of a theology of earthly realities — to a political theology, to the theology of liberation — it appears that De La Salle's treatment of this theme is too harsh. From our perspective it appears strange, not to say contradictory, that De La Salle places such insistence on withdrawal, separation, renunciation, contempt, aversion, on being at "war" with the world. He himself was so involved in "secular business" - in the context of family responsibilities which he had to take on while still young (and with what distinction! cf. AROZ, CL 28-31.42) following the death of his parents — and in other administrative business such as obtaining legal recognition for the Sisters of the Infant Jesus in Rheims (cf. AROZ, CL 38), the creation and consolidation of the Christian schools in many different places, the defence of the schools against those who opposed them, the establishment on three occasions of a Training College for rural teachers, the foundation of the community of Brothers (a vocation which emerged from concrete necessities at the service of a Christian school for life, a school which was serving society through the service of children of the working-class and the poor). He also had many other administrative activities involving the publication of his writings, contacts with parish priests, bishops, dignitaries, municipalities, parliaments. Yet, despite all this, the observations of De La Salle on the world and relations with it suggest a pessimistic and rigorist

reading of it which almost amounts to a dualistic interpretation of reality.

In his defence one would have to say that the preoccupations underlying his treatment are not ours. We are more concerned with an anthropological or philosophical framework on which man's relationship with the world can be appropriately situated. The works of De La Salle are not philosophical, nor even strictly theological; rather they are catechetical, educational, spiritual and ascetical. Our perspective is more general than his — we are more concerned with "Man" and with the "World" whereas De La Salle was more concerned with "THIS" man and "THIS" world. He was not concerned specifically with "man in himself. When De La Salle speaks of "contempt" of the world he is not adopting a position of speculative disparagement. He focuses on the real world and on the moral order which holds. Thus, he is not reflecting on creation as such but rather on the evil which has tarnished the created. He does not focus on the theme of earthly realities but rather on the way in which they have deviated from the centrality of the will of God and from Gospel maxims. His written work echoes, in an undoubtedly over-emphasized way, the Johannine opposition of "light and darkness" and the Pauline contrast between the "new creature: things of heaven" and "things of earth" as well as the medieval monastic tradition of "contemptus mundi" and the Berullian emphasis on the greatness of God and the radical abnegation of the self or the destruction of the creature.

De La Salle's teaching on the world and relations with it is not just confined to his specific teaching on the theme since it can also be seen in his ministerial perspective as, for example, in the following; that the school functions well, that it forms the "perfect man", that it is a realistic preparation for life, that the pupil lives well and that he studies what will be useful both to himself and to society and the State here below. Thus, it was important for De La Salle that what was being offered in all this was not only a "philosophical perspective", which spoke of transitory man and the spirit of the world, but also a rather more elevated faith-vision of the resurrected man of Easter guided by the Spirit of God.

In this connection, too, it would be worth ap-

plying the opportune observation of Jean Leclercq (referring, in his case, to the spirituality of the Middle Ages); "...The contempt of the world is no more than a part of a whole vision from which it cannot be isolated and in which its true value can be seen" (RAM, 41 (1965) 287). It would also be important

to refer to the "historical dynamism" which the intuitions and the work of De La Salle have contributed to such modern realities as faith in the perfectibility of man (De La Salle would have spoken of the "fruits" of the Christian schools) as well as to the school itself with all its educational dimensions.

Complementary themes:

Artisans; Brother's dress; Christian; Christian teacher; Conversation; Example-Edification; Guardian Angels; Ministry; Renunciation-Detachment; Retreat; Salvation; School; Spirit of Christianity; Spirit of the World.

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