



Bulletin of the Brothers of the Christian Schools N. 232

SIEL - Eight months with Saint John Baptist de La Salle

**BULLETIN OF THE BROTHERS
OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS**
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On the cover: This Bulletin is devoted exclusively to SIEL (International Session for Lasallian Studies). This specially organised session was followed by 47 Brothers from 27 different countries and took place in 1988-89. We invite our Lasallian readers to share in this rich experience.

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Illustrations:

Mostly by Francesco Pescador in ALBI NUOVI,
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ROME, Generalate: the Brothers who followed SIEL 88-89 with Brother Superior.



INTRODUCTION

As the person responsible for keeping the General Council informed about the activities of the Lasallian Studies team, I was asked to write a few words by way of introduction for this issue of the Bulletin and I am very happy to do so. I shall limit myself to a few thoughts about the crucial importance of research on the Founder, his life and his work; as well as on the way the Institute has been faithful to the charism of the Founder in the past and is now being faithful to it in the present.

The achievement of the Lasallian Studies team is already remarkable on account of the number, variety and quality of the works it has inspired. The last General Chapter expressed its well-deserved gratitude to all Lasallian researchers, laying stress in particular on their contribution to the spiritual renewal of the Institute (cf. Circular 422, p. 9). To take simply one example, we need think only of how our present Rule has been enriched by a fuller understanding of the thinking of St. John Baptist de La Salle and of his role as Founder. The memory of the most significant stages in his life as a seeker of God, and reference to his basic spiritual outlook and the teachings contained in his writings, guided the writers of the Rule to make their text "a faithful expression of the charism of St. John Baptist de La Salle and of the tradition of his Institute" (Decree of Approval of our Rule).

The study of the Founder and of the history of the Institute is henceforward a field of investigation within the remit of the Lasallian Studies team. As article 101h of the Rule says: "The Centre of the Institute organises and promotes research projects on the person of the Founder and his thought, the development over the years of the work which he started, and the educational practice and spirituality of the contemporary Institute". If we compare this text with that of the 1958 Chapter, which in reality limited Lasallian Studies to the life and work of the Founder with a view to completing the *Monumenta Lasalliana*, we can see that the horizons it envisages for Lasallian Studies are considerably wider inasmuch as they include the history of the Institute and its living tradition.

In the pages that follow, Brother Michel Sauvage explains how the Lasallian Studies team intends to set about implementing this vast programme in the years to come, while at the same time pursuing the direction of past research. In this connection, it is appropriate to stress at this point what a fortunate idea it was to form the International Council for Lasallian Studies. If we bear in mind where they come from and what their experience is, it is clear that the



An important moment in the history of the Institute: the consecration to Our Lady in the shrine at Liesse.

Brothers called by Brother Superior to be part of this Council will give new impetus to these studies and give them a more international bias. It is especially the manner in which the Lasallian charism has become a part of different cultures and churches that should, as a result, be better seen and studied. The contribution of all the Regions of the Institute, especially of those of the southern hemisphere, will be important. Quite apart from that, it is much needed.

I think that there are at least three conditions that need to exist if Lasallian Studies are to grow and flourish, and if they are to produce the spiritual fruit one should expect of them.

The first is the appearance of a new generation of researchers in our ranks. These Brothers will have to replace "these valiant pioneers" to whom the members of the 1986 Chapter paid well-deserved hom-



Brothers Gabriel and Gerard Drolin leave for Rome in 1701. The Lasallian Institute becomes international.

age, and to whom we owe so much. It is, of course, desirable that this new generation of researchers should be representative of the Institute world-wide. If the latter is to promote, as Circular 422 says (p. 9), the training of new specialists “not only at the centre of the Institute but also at the Regional and District levels”, there must, first of all, be Brothers willing to undertake this apostolate and this service of research in such fields as history, pedagogy, spirituality and catechesis, and what is more, Brothers with the appropriate training, experience, competence and inclination. Their contribution will be indispensable in helping to discern and diversify the community contribution “to the unique mission of the Institute within the Church” (R. 16).

The second condition I should like to mention is the training of Brothers to popularise the results of research. These Brothers would have to know the life and work of the Founder well, so as to be able to

spread his spiritual teachings and especially “his thinking about the ministry of Christian education” (Circ. 422, p. 10). There are at least three reasons for this. First of all to help Brothers and communities to pursue, with ever-increasing determination, the process of conversion and constant growth in faith called for by the Chapter and Rule. We are well aware that this involves also a return to the Founder. Secondly to meet the needs of Brothers in initial formation so as to help them “enter progressively into the fundamental spiritual outlook of a disciple of Saint John Baptist de La Salle” (R. 90). And finally, to meet the needs of lay people who wish to know our Founder, to live according to his spirit and who consider “their profession as a ministry”. To find Brothers to popularise Lasallian thinking is one of the challenges we must face if we are to respond to the needs of the Institute at this moment in its history. To train them for this work and to prepare them for their apostolate is one of the aims of the two International Sessions for Lasallian Studies envisaged in proposition 4 which was adopted by the 1986 General Chapter. The first of these sessions came to an end last May. This issue of the Bulletin gives some idea of the research that took place. It is good to know that some of those who took part are already sharing the fruit of their labours with their Region or District.

The third condition which will increase the influence and usefulness of Lasallian Studies concerns us all. For, all the research of the specialists and the efforts of Brothers to disseminate material will prove useless unless we take the means to familiarise ourselves with the teachings of John Baptist de La Salle, by reading his writings and other works which help us to know him better, as also the most important texts produced by the Institute. Among these latter, we hardly need reminding, the Rule occupies a privileged position.

Nowadays, we have at our disposal a variety of suitable means “to deepen (our) knowledge of the Founder” (R. 4). It is up to us to discover these means and to use them. For now, more than ever before perhaps, the Institute, in the person of each of its members, must have recourse to the very sources of Lasallian inspiration for its nourishment. By doing so we will give Lasallian Studies their true meaning. They have no real reason for existing except insofar as they help us each day to become sons of St. John Baptist de La Salle to a greater extent, and experts in the apostolate we are called to pursue in the Church, even as he did, by helping the young people of today find salvation.

Brother Pierre Josse
General Councillor

THE RENEWAL OF LASALLIAN STUDIES

Brother Michel SAUVAGE

The 41st General Chapter decided that during the intercapitular period the central administration of the Institute would organise “two long sessions on St. John Baptist de La Salle and the Lasallian tradition” (Proposition 4, Circular 422, p. 10).

This decision was not expected. It can be explained, however, by the need felt throughout the Institute “to form Brothers... to be at the service of Brothers and lay people” so that they can “multiply the centres for diffusion of Lasallian thinking on the ministry of Christian education” (Prop. 4, Circ. 422).

SIEL - THE MEETING POINT OF LASALLIAN STUDIES AND THE DIFFUSION OF THE MESSAGE OF THE FOUNDER

This same Proposition 4 assigns also the following aim to SIEL: “to continue the work undertaken within the framework of Lasallian Studies”. There is no mention here of training or bringing together researchers. If, in fact, the session gave rise to or strengthened any such vocation, so much the better. But this was not the principal aim assigned to it by the General Chapter.

When Proposition 4 spoke of “continuing the work undertaken within the framework of Lasallian Studies” it was drawing attention to two points:

— Lasallian research must seek to influence the life of the Institute and contribute to the renewal of its apostolate. In fact, the first session of SIEL was an opportunity for Brothers to discuss their work. These Brothers, because of various circumstances in their life or quite often because they had been asked to do so by the Institute, had been led to undertake research in one area or other of Lasallian studies. As unit followed unit, Sielists came to know many Lasallian “experts” from a variety of cultures - experts in history, biography, catechesis, pedagogy and “spirituality”.

— The aim indicated by the Chapter Proposition — “to continue the work undertaken within the framework of Lasallian studies” — can be understood in a different way. Proposition 4 stresses the DIFFUSION of the Lasallian message. However, the reasons given focus attention on RESEARCH, by referring to the recent past and pointing to the future.

THE RENEWAL OF LASALLIAN STUDIES SINCE 1956

The Chapter Proposition underscores heavily the fact that for the last thirty years it has been the perseverance and a remarkable professional competence “of an entire team of ‘Lasallian researchers’”

An important step in the life of the Founder: he distributes his wealth to the poor so as to be able to commit himself completely to the work of education with his first Brothers.





The charity of Lasallians is expressed through Christian education: this is their gift to young people and the Church.

that has made possible the contribution of Lasallian studies "to the spiritual renovation of the Institute".

Lasallian studies, of course, go back to the origins of the Institute. We have only to think of the monumental work of Georges Rigault, the "General History of the Institute", in 9 volumes, which appeared between 1937 and 1955; and of the fact that, as early as 1934, the Italian Brothers launched their "Rivista lasalliana", whose contribution has been so important.

The work of Brother Maurice Auguste

1956, however, was a decisive year for the launch of Lasallian studies. The General Chapter adopted all the proposals made by Brother Maurice Auguste in a long memorandum. He called for a *schedule* of Lasallian publications to be drawn up, and a *Lasallian team* to be formed.

Originally, Brother Maurice came to Rome in 1946 for the Second Novitiate. The following year, he became sub-Director of the Second Novitiate, and in this role was required to give talks on the *Rule* and the *Method of Mental Prayer*. He felt the lack of serious studies in this field. He was delighted and stimulated when Fr. Andre Rayez' article entitled "*Etudes Lasalliennes*" (Lasallian Studies), appeared in 1952 in the *Revue d'ascetique et de mystique*. In his article, this priest proposed a whole programme of work and publication dealing with sources, biographers, background and the influence of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

Immediately after the Chapter, Brother Maurice was appointed Head of Lasallian Studies, a job he kept till his death in July 1987. He got down to work straightaway. His work was not restricted to the publication of the *Cahiers Lasalliens*. However, as

we speak of the work done in the last thirty years, the collection of *Cahiers* can serve as a point of reference.

This collection represents a large part of the ambitious programme that was initially planned:

"To publish *studies, texts and documents* relating to the Holy Founder, or concerning the early years of the history of our Institute".

The *text* of the writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle has been published (C.L. 12-25). The same is true for the first two volumes of the first edition of the Life of M. de La Salle, by Blain. The biographical sketch by Brother Bernard, and the two successive versions of the Life written by Maillefer had existed only in manuscript form. Their publication in print made them more widely accessible. In this way, the work of the first three biographers was made public (C.L. 4, 6, 7, 8), and two indexes (C.L. 9, 10) make their reading and comparison so much easier.

The *documents* also have increased in number thanks to the flair and relentless efforts of an exceptionally gifted researcher, Brother Leon de Marie Aroz. By unearthing and publishing (C.L. 26-42) documents buried in the Archives, he has already helped to recreate for us the true human face of De La Salle, which had long remained overshadowed by a halo imposed on him by his most verbose hagiographer.

By comparison with the volume of work represented by these two sections, that of the *studies* may seem somewhat small. Basically, its contribution consists of two theses, covering two different areas,

Lasallian education is at the same time group education and education of the individual. The Conduct of Schools is a proof of the extent to which each pupil, with his own temperament and attitudes, should be taken into account.



which have both helped to show our Lasallian origins in a new light.

In his doctoral thesis in Canon Law, Brother Maurice Auguste examined "The Institute in its search for canonical status from its beginnings to the Bull of Benedict XIII (1725)". It was published in the *Cahiers Lasalliens* (No. 11), and complements his previous work, "The vows of the Brothers of the Christian School before the Bull of Approbation of the Institute" (C.L. 1-3).

Based on recent historical research, Brother Miguel Campos' doctoral thesis in theology offers a new interpretation of "The evangelical journey of John Baptist de La Salle" and of his "Meditations for the Time of Retreat" (C.L. 45-46).

It has to be said also that many important contributions to Lasallian studies have appeared outside of the *Cahiers Lasalliens* whose scope had been severely limited. There is for example, the very important historical work of Brother Yves Poutet, and contributions such as "Catechesis and the Laity", the whole range of works published in Spanish by the Brothers of the Pius Xth Institute in Salamanca, and especially the work of Brother Saturnino Gallego, whose research was recently published in two volumes by the BAC publishers.

And strangely enough, this is also the case of the "Lasallian Vocabulary", an enormous undertaking begun by Brother Maurice around 1964.

Remaining problems

It cannot be said, however, that all the tasks allotted in 1956 have been completed. Some important things have not been done. I will mention four:

— In Brother Maurice's thinking, the texts and even the studies that were published in the *Cahiers Lasalliens* were to serve as the basis, on the one hand, for a *critical edition* of the biography of John Baptist de La Salle, and on the other, for the production of critical editions of his writings. In both these areas almost nothing has been done.

— The question of translations has not been solved yet. Here too, much work has been done or started, as in the United States. More often than not, however, it is clear there is no overall policy where translations are concerned.

— Another serious shortcoming is that the results of research work do not have sufficient impact on the Lasallian message that is being transmitted.

— However, the most serious weakness in Lasallian Studies over the last few years has been without doubt the shortage of manpower. This shortage is the root cause of all our problems. The 1956 Chap-



John Baptist de La Salle studied the best examples of educational practice in his day, and accepted the advice of leading practitioners. The illustration shows him in conversation with Fr. Barre.

ter asked for action to be taken with regard to two aspects of Lasallian studies - publications and the formation of a research team. For the most part, the first aspect has been adequately dealt with, but the second has never been really tackled seriously.

Of course, all in all, there have been a fair number of researchers around, but it has never been possible to form them into a well-knit group, working as a team, to implement a long-term programme, following an overall policy. For the last fifteen years or so, however, no new researchers seem to have come forward. A first reason, of course, is that no one joins the Brothers to do Lasallian research. Brothers are keener to live the Brothers' life than to concern themselves with redefining it and plumbing its depths, and there is nothing surprising about that.

All the same, the Institute as a whole must be in a position "to speak of the enthusiasm which inspires it and of the hope that gives it life". Consequently, there must be Brothers prepared to devote themselves to this kind of study to back up the active work of the rest of the Institute.

Contribution of Lasallian studies to the renewal of the Institute

Let us not, however, get things out of perspective. If we go back thirty years, we have to acknowledge with gratitude the considerable contribution made by Lasallian studies to the renewal of the Institute. The Chapter proposition quite rightly makes the point.

FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR LASALLIAN STUDIES

Without this renewal of Lasallian Studies, an undertaking such as SIEL could never have been contemplated. The experts who came to speak this year, and the study facilities that were available are all, in one way or another, the result of the work that has been going on in the Institute for the last thirty years. This work must continue. At the request of Brother Superior John Johnston, the Director of Lasallian Studies, appointed in 1987, submitted to the General Council a report which attempts to lay down a few guidelines for the future.

Giving Lasallian Studies a new lease of life

It would be impossible to give here even a summary of this report. I should like to restrict myself, therefore, to drawing attention to three main ways forward which, without wishing to sound too pretentious, I should like to call a Lasallian studies policy.

* The first point concerns *Lasallian research* itself. Of course, not all the programme drawn up in 1956 has been completed, and so there is work still to be finished like, for example, the critical edition of the life of the Founder and of his writings.

However, in the light of the vast amount of valuable primary research that has been done, what we would like to emphasise now is *the expansion of various aspects of research*.

— *The expansion of the content*, as stipulated in art. 101h of the Rule:

“The Centre of the Institute organises and promotes research projects on the person of



Fr. Barre was an austere religious: he urged De La Salle to devote himself completely to Christian education, and this led him to abandon wealth, career and family.

For twenty years now, in response to the appeal of the Council, the Institute has bravely pursued its own renewal — not without some hiccoughs, it must be said. But it has done so with determination and perseverance, and often against all hope.

Lasallian studies have contributed to the renewal of the Institute in at least three ways, by shedding light and providing support.

* First of all, they highlighted *the power of history* in the life, work and teachings of the Founder. By this means they urge us in our turn to accept historical forces in our personal and collective lives.

— Recent Lasallian studies have helped the renewal of the Institute by giving greater importance to *the unifying cohesive power of the Lasallian identity*. They have shown the dynamic unity of fidelity to God's call and the response to the needs of young people; of evangelical ministry and exercising a profession; of personal responsibility and the community programme. De La Salle calls us to mystical realism.

— Finally, in recent years, Lasallian studies have contributed to renewal by stressing that *genuine fidelity to the Founder is a creative force*. They have helped to make clear the distinction between the aims of the Institute and the means taken to achieve those aims; and between the spirit of the Founder and the means he chose to express that spirit.

However important the 1966-67 Chapter may have been in the history of the Institute, that of 1956 was much more “radical” in the etymological sense of the word. For it was the 1956 Chapter that invited the Institute to re-establish contact with its roots and the dynamic force that brought it into being. By doing so, it laid the foundations without which the post-conciliar renewal of the Institute would never have been possible.

Another one of De La Salle's advisers and teachers was Nicholas Roland, a priest from the Diocese of Rheims and Founder of the Sisters of the Child Jesus. He died at the age of 37 and entrusted his work to De La Salle.





What characterised De La Salle and the first Brothers was that they devoted themselves to the Christian education of children who were deprived of this basic advantage mostly because of the poverty of their parents.

the Founder and his thought, the development over the years of the work which he started, and the educational practice and spirituality of the contemporary Institute”.

And so, for example, we will be publishing Ri-gault’s manuscript volume on the history of the Institute in France between 1904 and 1914.

— *The expansion of methods*, using what can be called the “action research” technique. This involves juxtaposing the teachings of the Founder and specific examples of work being done by the Institute at the present time. The purpose of this is to see more clearly what in present-day practice is inspired by the Founder, but also what new light it throws on that inspiration.

The thinking on which this expansion is based is both obvious and simple: if the inspiration of the Founder is valid today, it cannot be studied with St. John Baptist de La Salle as the only starting point. Lasallian Studies must, of course, continue their serious approach to the sources, but at the same time an effort must be made to be in close contact with the life of the Institute as it is lived in the world today.

* This brings us to our *second point* which is of the utmost importance. The *creation of a LASALLIAN TEAM* and the recruitment and follow-up of new researchers are of crucial importance for the future of Lasallian studies and their dissemination. This also is a considerable challenge for an Institute with diminishing numbers and whose average age is rising.

As a matter of priority, steps should be taken to train Brothers belonging to cultures whose contact with the Institute is of more recent date, as in the

case of Africa, Latin America and Asia. Much has been said about inculturation, and quite rightly so. However, for genuine inculturation of the Lasallian charism to take place in these regions,

— it must be quite clearly the work of the indigenous Brothers;

— these indigenous Brothers must have had the opportunity to become totally imbued with the teachings of St. La Salle before passing them on in terms of their own culture.

* The *third point* of our Lasallian studies policy is a concern for *strengthening the link between Lasallian research and its dissemination*. This implies, in particular, constant consultation between those in charge of Lasallian Studies on the one hand, and those responsible for initial and continuing formation, and for running Lasallian centres on the other. Implied also is greater concern for having a coherent policy with regard to translation in consultation with the regions involved. A consequence of this should

Being with the pupils from morning till night so as to teach them the fundamentals of the Gospel is a form of Christian life and the daily commitment of the Brothers.



be a more systematic approach to the question of the dissemination of new Lasallian publications throughout the Institute.

The International Council for Lasallian Studies (CIEL)

The decision to create it was taken by Brother Superior and his Council on June 16th 1988, in conjunction with the approval of the Report on Lasallian Studies. Its role will be to help those responsible for Lasallian Studies to implement the policy outlined in the Report and ratified by the General Council. It is made up of 7 Brothers:

— three of these are from either the Region of *Africa* (Marcellin Rakotofiringa from Madagascar), *Latin America* (Edgar Hengemule from Brazil), or *Asia* (Raphael Bassett from Australia).

— the four others belong to other Regions: Bernardo Villar (*Spain*), Leon Lauraire (*France*), Secondino Scaglione (*Italy*) and Joseph Schmidt (*USA*).

The Founder is the author of many pedagogical, ascetic and spiritual works.



CIEL had its first meeting in Rome from June 1st - 8th 1989. The Lasallian Studies team attended the meeting, as did Brother Pierre Josse, who is responsible for this area within the General Council. What CIEL proposed was in line with the three points mentioned earlier:

— A scheme to put all the writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle on *computer disk* would be studied;

— With regard to *publications*, CIEL wanted the *Cahiers Lasalliens* to continue within their terms of reference. It asked for other publications to be produced as part of a new series. These publications, while differing in content and readership, would all concentrate more on the dissemination of the Lasallian "message".

As a consequence, between now and 1993, there would be published a *History of the Institute in Summary Form* and a collection of *essays* on aspects of *Lasallian spirituality*. In addition, CIEL made a certain number of recommendations concerning the *translation* of the writings of the Founder and of studies of his work.

— CIEL sought also practical ways of making possible the implementation of proposition 4 of the last General Chapter, which asked the Institute to find successors for "this first generation of 'researchers'" which had "deserved well of the Institute", with a view to promoting "new specialists on the Founder, not only at the Centre of the Institute but also at District and Regional levels".

The last but one paragraph of the *Declaration* can serve as a *Conclusion*. It recalls very opportunely the need for fidelity to both the Founder and the present-day world.

Societies, like individuals, grow old and die once the habits inherited from the past outweigh the will to renewal. It is not easy to balance fidelity to the institutions that sparked our origins and the requirements of life today. The destiny of the Institute is in the hands of the Brothers. They must not expect those in authority to give ready-made solutions to the new problems that come from a world in evolution. It is up to each Brother in the presence of God to start out along the path of spiritual conversion and determine to have a personal share in the great community work of renewal and adaptation. This is the price each must pay if the threat of stagnation is to be warded off and the Institute is to live in youth and vigour.

THE JOYS OF DISCOVERY

by Brother Yves Poutet

Interviewer: *I really don't understand the pleasure you get from rummaging around old papers, sorting through antiquarian bookshop catalogues, and poring over lawyers' minute books or inventories in archives.*

Brother Poutet: But I don't get any pleasure out of it at all — I'm not a masochist! What is exciting is actually finding something.

Interviewer: *Don't you think being a researcher is too much of a strain on the heart? Is it worth giving up your holidays for that?*

B.P: I don't give up anything at all. Like people on holiday, I go in search of the unknown, of fortunate encounters with pleasant countrysides or understanding friends.

Interviewer: *What do you call a fortunate encounter?*

B.P: A fortunate encounter is the reward for weeks or years of research. Sometimes it's totally unexpected; at other times it's the result of meticulous investigation. And when it happens, you feel you're going to burst with joy. The more unexpected the result, the greater the joy. Sometimes you think the day will never come, and then suddenly, against all logic, everything falls into place.

Interviewer: *So there's no method in your research?*

B.P: I wouldn't exactly say that. You see, for centuries now, researchers chasing after some diploma or tied down to an editor's deadline, have concentrated their attention on material likely to give

The early years of De La Salle's adult life was a time when he gradually discovered God's plan for him. The eighteen months he spent in Paris in the seminary of St. Sulpice and Sorbonne University gave him an insight into the lifestyle of parents and children in the French capital.



In Rheims, John Baptist de La Salle became involved in education in various ways: he taught his younger brothers, took over responsibility for the work begun by Canon Roland, and looked after the schools started by Nyel. And then God led him to found the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

immediate results. And so I said to myself that, if I wanted to find something new, I'd have to try somewhere else, somewhere where everybody thought there was nothing to find. The result is that I go systematically through all unclassified dossiers and those that have been filed as being apparently useless for extending our knowledge of St. La Salle and the development of his work.

Interviewer: *Can you give me an example?*

B.P: Certainly. There exist fifteen or so large in folio volumes containing a record of the correspondence of the Sulpicians Tronson and Leschassier who had close relations with St. John Baptist de La Salle. I read through everything and often took notes. And





The Lasallian approach to education gives the impression of being harsh, but the Founder frequently stresses the importance of showing «tenderness» to children who need guidance and help in order to become good Christians and enjoy human dignity.

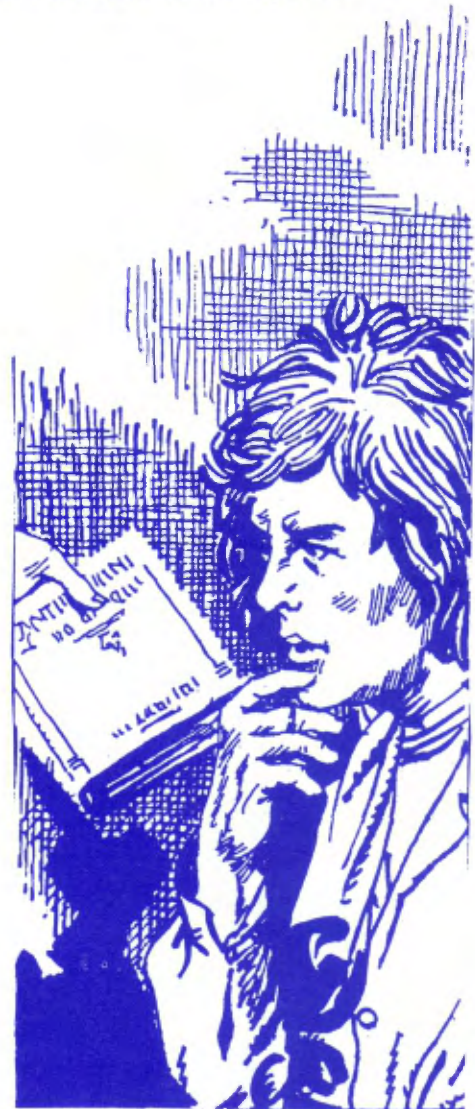
then one day I came across a reference to a certain Antoine Forget who was due to go to Canada. Blain mentions Canada in his life of De La Salle, and so I drop everything to follow this lead, and a whole new story comes to light. Forget was a cleric entrusted by De La Salle to Nicolas Vuyart to be trained “in six months” in his seminary for country schoolmasters. Once in Montreal in a Sulpician school, he insists on using Lasallian teaching methods. He catches tuberculosis and returns to France for the sake of the climate and to rest. This information led me to Ville-neuve-St-Georges, near Paris. The parish priest said he didn’t have any archives. I insisted and went up into the loft which was full of dust and cases and trunks of no apparent interest. I was given permission to open them up, and there there was a large parish register which mentioned Forget as having passed through, as well as his appointment, once he was cured, as bursar of the seminary at Angers. When something like that happens you’re obviously very happy. However, your happiness is complete only when it can be shared and your findings reach as swiftly as possible the people who can make use of them (Cf. *Revue d’Histoire ecclesiastique* de Louvain 1964; *Revue d’Histoire de l’Eglise de France* 1963, Les voeux des frères “Charon”; *Bulletin du Comite des etudes* (St. Sulpice) 1961; C.L. 48, 1988).

Interviewer: *You did all that for just one name?*

B.P: Not quite. There was another name, that of Crosne, which was worth having a closer look at although it didn’t figure in any works on St. La Salle. Crosne is a very small village near Paris. The manuscript mentioned that De La Salle refused to send a Brother to Crosne, and so I went to see the parish priest. The original church is still there, and the present-day presbytery (I am speaking of 1968) used to belong to the Colbert family from whom the Collinet

de La Salle are descended. I took some photos. I learnt from some old papers that the parish priest there between 1675 and 1703 was Francois Boizot, and that between 1703 and 1712 it was a certain Michel Pothe. I discovered also that Brothers there would never have had more that 15 or 20 pupils because, in 1870, the whole school population, including both rich and poor, came to only 24 boys. I made another discovery which up to now has never been published. There was no shortage of teachers in Crosne. The Brothers were asked to come because of the lack of pedagogical and catechetical training of these teachers. Their presence there in 1691 is recorded, as is the fact that a certain Pierre Regnard was headmaster and assistant sacristian. Other names listed are those of Oudet (1702-1703), Denis Remy (1703-1706), Guillaume Partefette (1706-1713), etc. (Reference in *Les origines lasalliennes*, Vol. II, cf. Index).

In the thinking of the Founder, learning the 3 R’s is only the beginning of a much richer and fuller educational experience.





The Founder's chief concern is for children unable to go to school and condemned to be illiterate and excluded from society. His work, however, extends to other types of schooling for young people and adults: evening classes, classes on feastdays, and teacher training.

Interviewer: *And so really, just a single name can start a whole new line of research?*

B.P.: On another occasion, I was searching very carefully through the catalogues of antiquarian bookshops, and I found that a particular book was listed as having belonged to the library of St. La Salle. It looked as if the bookseller had made a mistake. There were so many "De La Salle's" in XVIIth century France! The book in question was the work of Dom Sans de Ste. Catherine. I phoned the bookkeeper to get further details which might furnish some proof. The book had already been sold, but he was prepared to let me consult it for 48 hours. I noted that the book referred to the fact that it had once been owned by a *De La Salle*, but more especially the fact that it was a *Sandon* who pointed this out. Now Sandon, who was a Rouen lawyer, had dealt with St. La Salle's will. What is more, I had been wondering for a long time who the author was of the "Point d'humilite" which St. La Salle recommended his Brothers to read when they were travelling. Well, I had finally discovered the answer: the author was Dom Sans de Ste. Catherine, and the book I held in my hands was *Le point d'humilite*! I made the most of those 48 hours to note down many passages that had a bearing on our own *Lasallian Collection*.

Interviewer: *And you haven't got a copy of the book?*

B.P.: Unfortunately no. I tried to contact the purchaser by writing to him through the bookseller — well, there's professional discretion to take into account — but I received no reply. What is most important is not actually to own the book — you can find it in the public library — but to be able to shed an entirely new light on the reference to the "point d'humilite" to be found in the "Directoire pour les voyages" (Cf. CL. 15, p. 130). I prefer to mention this piece of information straightaway rather than wait for the publication of volume III of the *Origines Lasalliennes*, devoted to the sources of the Founder's

writings. It's much more exciting to share the news of a discovery than to enjoy it in private.

Interviewer: *Don't you feel any envy or annoyance when some other researcher publishes something you discovered before he did?*

B.P.: I suppose I'm tempted to, but we shouldn't fool ourselves. When it comes to history, we never actually *discover* anything. What we find out one fine day and call a discovery was known already by innumerable people before we came along; and the heirs and friends of witnesses have never forgotten it over the course of many centuries. We should keep things in perspective. In this connection, I remember something that Fr. Noye, the St. Sulpice archivist, said to me. I had been aware of a text for a long time, and I was on the point of publishing it as a new discovery, when some other researcher, having only just come across it, published it, claiming he had discovered it. Well, Fr. Noye said to me: "You should be happy. Your research opens new avenues of learning. Truth makes progress — it's wonderful". Basically, that's what it's all about: real happiness is to get to know, not to *discover* small items of knowledge no one knew about.

Interviewer: *Can you give me some examples?*

B.P.: Yes, certainly. On one occasion, I was taking part in a congress at St. Cyr on Mme de Maintenon and I heard a certain Mme Ranum, a professor from the United States, speak on Loulie, the musician. She had listened with interest to what I'd had to say about St. La Salle in relation to Mme de Maintenon, and she told me that two of Fr. Barre's teachers, and therefore friends of Adrien Nyel, were running a school in Joinville near Paris in 1682. She had required prior permission before publication. I was much happier to learn all this from her than I would have been discovering it for myself in those archives. The happiness at discovering something as part of a team is tenfold greater because sharing increases rather than diminishes it. It's a bit like the multiplication of the loaves.

And here's another example, but with the process reversed to some extent. Thanks to an archivist, I had access to some documents which, at the time, were still unlisted and unclassified. We decided we would publish jointly Demia's small diary we had discovered. Publication was delayed for a good ten years because of the difficulty of deciphering it due to the use of innumerable abbreviations even of proper names, and for other urgent reasons. In the meantime, however, a professor Gutton came to hear of the document and used it for his thesis on hospitals and the poor. Today, thanks to the help of

the Sisters of St. Charles de Lyon, we have reached the final stage before publication.

Interviewer: *If I understand you correctly, the wider the dissemination and the greater its usefulness, the greater the happiness?*

B.P: Exactly! That's why exchanging documents when you're working as a team makes everyone happy. All this presumes that at the outset each one announces what topic he's researching, and doesn't encroach on other people's work. Each one's research gains from open discussion. Each one is enriched by the common pool of knowledge. The immense joy at having increased one's grasp of the truth is evident in everybody's face and spills out beyond the confines of the research team.

Brother Yves Poutet

The education the young John Baptist de La Salle received in the Hotel de la Cloche, surrounded by the love and affection of his parents and grandparents, left its mark on the future Founder.



Louis de La Salle and Nicole Moet have the merit of having encouraged their eldest son to enter the priesthood and consecrate his life to God.

MAKING WORK COMPLETED DURING SIEL AVAILABLE TO EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITIES

The work done by the Brothers who followed the 1989 session of SIEL is on the whole very rich in content, and the deep reflection and research it supposes deserves to be made available to Lasallian educational communities. A clear plan is needed to ensure this work is distributed and reaches all our establishments.

In the Education Mission Secretariat we envisage two ways in which this can be done:

— A first way is to publish some of this work, or an accurate summary of its contents in *LASALLIANA*. A working party can organise this. Some subjects are particularly suitable for publication in this way. We intend, therefore, to publish some of this work in future issues of *LASALLIANA*.

— A second way would be to publish a series of booklets, each containing the complete text of some piece of research. Another working party could see to this, and publication would not take too long as the most arduous part of the process — the writing of the texts — is already completed. The series could be added to in the future by members of other sessions of SIEL, or by other persons.

Once published, this work could serve to help many of our educational communities to extend their knowledge of the Founder, his work, his spirituality, as well as of the Institute, our educational apostolate, Lasallian pedagogy, etc. This series would certainly complement very well and in a more accessible form the research contained in the *Cahiers Lasalliens*. The Education Mission Secretariat is at present studying ways of making this contribution to Lasallian ongoing formation available to everybody.

Brother Jose Maria Valladolid



John Baptist would not be long in leaving behind the aristocratic atmosphere of the family home to plunge into another sort of life that was tumultuous and full of conflict. How was he to direct the youthful energy of so many outcast children to the pursuit of higher ideals?

* "Translation into Spanish of Duties I and research into references mentioned in the text". The aim is to produce a volume in which the sources used can be easily found and checked in the texts used by the Founder.

This work aims to take research into the sources of Duties I (cf. Magaz and Roche) a step further, so that later critical studies of the book can be undertaken, and so that it can serve as a model for renewal by applying what De La Salle calls for: that children "may live in a Christian manner" thanks to a knowledge of the mysteries and the maxims of the Gospel.

Brother Jose Diez de Medina (Bolivia)

* "Association at the beginning" is the title of my work for the end of SIEL. My work attempts to examine our vow of association, its origin in our history, its significance and its consequences. At the same time I try to show how it was practised and understood by De La Salle and the first Brothers, so as to help us to live according to its spirit nowadays as inheritors of a living tradition.

I wrote my work with the Brothers in mind and for them. I hope it will offer some food for thought about the force of association in our Institute which is leading us to extend it to include lay people who are interested. It seeks to be an answer and to contribute to the rediscovery of the value of this vow which is a characteristic element of our history and consequently an integral part of our identity.

Brother Juan Fernando Garcia Budinich (Chile)

* "Creative responses of the Lasallian school".

Lasallian thinking is a permanent invitation to be creative. In his days, St. John Baptist de La Salle created structures and devised methods which made schools accessible to the poor. To the teaching of catechism he added that of other useful subjects and so provided the poor pupils with a wider education. That is why he wrote to his Brothers: "You act as mediators in their regard, God making use of you to teach them the means of salvation" (Med. 56, 3). In Colombia today, thousands of people are unable to satisfy their basic need for food, clothing and shelter. Creativity must make the Lasallian school a place of salvation by making one of its aims to use theoretical knowledge to find solutions for these basic needs; by teaching children how to think; by stimulating them to be permanently creative;

and in all this the yardstick of the pupils' contribution should be the extent to which they meet basic human needs. Apart from this, the Lasallian school must train people to pray, to be involved in the evangelisation of the place where they live, and to promote justice and peace. Like this, it will produce people who are qualified and who are good citizens and committed Christians.

Finally, in the course of my work, and basing myself on a variety of Lasallian texts, I suggested some answers to the problems facing Lasallian schools in the years leading up to 2000.

Brother Jose Arcadio Bolivar (Bogota)

* From the very start of SIEL, I felt myself drawn to undertake a comprehensive study of St. La Salle as a master of the spiritual life. This corresponded with the content and aims of Unit 5 which we worked on in March. The title I finally adopted for the work I did in those last five weeks is "The Lasallian community, a community of prayer", and it should be seen as a statement of fact.

I began by asking myself a series of questions which in some sort justify the hypothesis contained in my title. Lasallian prayer exists because De La Salle, letting himself be guided by God, brought together a number of men with whom he began to live in *evangelical brotherhood*. "Together and by association", they discovered that *their mission* was to care for children and young people who were far from salvation. Finally, so as to be able to live as Brothers and *be faithful* to their mission, they committed themselves to live by faith, and they formed a community of prayer. It is a process in which everything fits: it is obvious the three elements were all present at the same time. Our problem is that we start from the wrong end, and that is why we find it so difficult to renew our prayer life as we are asked to.

My aims were as follows: (1) Personal renewal and conversion; (2) To study and develop De La Salle's thinking on prayer (EMO); (3) To discover how community prayer can be renewed. (4) How to communicate my work on this topic to Brothers, subjects in formation and lay people.

I organised my work in five chapters: (1) Historical survey: spirituality - schools and methods of prayer. (2) Life of St. La Salle and development of the Institute up to the present time. (3) The personality of the Founder. (4) Lasallian prayer and the Method of Mental Prayer. (5) A community that prays is a sign of vitality.

While I was not able to finish this work in the time available, I am firmly resolved to complete it later. Since the book is open-ended by nature, it will always be possible to insert new pages. It is a sort of manual full of familiar things. Apart from dealing with theoretical aspects, it aims also to be of practical use to its readers.

Brother Eutemio Sanchez (Andalusia)

* *Since from a doctrinal point of view we are well-provided as an Institute; and having reached the point of*



As John Baptist taught his younger brothers, he recalled the days when he was a pupil, he reflected upon his experiences, and assessed them in the light of the society around him. It was not long before he began to explore new ways and became the prophet of a new type of human and Christian education.

I made a thorough revision of the only English translation of Maïllefer's "Vie de Monsieur J.B. de La Salle" (1963). Inaccurate and misleading translations needed correction; paraphrasing had to be eliminated; the 17th century meaning of certain words had to be reinstated; and a more faithful rendering of the spirit and letter of the Maïllefer text was sought. To assist the reader, about 250 footnotes, all researched in the Cahiers Lasalliens and referenced to them, were included. The references to the Cahiers, about 30 in number, could prove useful to researchers and those seeking further information. An introduction gives biographical data on Maïllefer; points out the contribution and limitations of the work; and suggests principles of interpretation.

2. Five members of the English-speaking group worked together to prepare "dossiers" on various topics. These dossiers include outlines for presentations as well as background material. The following topics were the subject of dossiers: Community and Association; DLS, a Multi-faceted Man; Did You Know? (unusual facts); DLS, Man of the Beatitudes; Teacher/Pupil relations in the MTR; DLS, Man of Scripture; Lasallian School Characteristics; Gratuity; Artisans and the Poor; Spirit of Faith; 1987 Rule; Profile of Institute History; Early Biographers; and a Lasallian Credo.

Brother Donald Mouton, New Orleans/Santa Fe

✱ I worked with four other Brothers, preparing "dossiers" and outlines of materials dealing with our Founder; his times; our Institute; and aspects of our lives together as Brothers in community and as professional educators. We intended the packs we produced to serve as a basis for programmes, discussions, and other experiences once we return to our respective Districts. Apart from the value of reviewing and absorbing ever more deeply the wealth of information already received, it provided me also with the opportunity to share and receive the richness of perspective and knowledge possessed by my fellow-Brothers.

Brother John Guasconi, LINE

✱ "Your Humble and Obedient Servant, De La Salle».

The Founder's thoughts on obedience are some of his most difficult to approach today, and I wondered how things had actually worked in practice. What was community life like in the early days? How human were the relationships? Were there any blindly obedient automata? I chose to look at this topic and compare and contrast the Founder's formal explanations of obedience with what actually went on in his own life and in community. I set obedience in the context of the style of authority and community at the time, as it never exists outside of this framework. My study led me through the Collection, the Meditations, the Letters, Memoirs, Rules and the biographies. Life, I discovered, was not as black and white as one might have imagined, and De La Salle himself had his own dilemmas when it came to practising obedience amid the complexities of daily life.

Brother John Deeney, Great Britain

✱ For my personal work during the last weeks of SIEL, I tried to collect some ideas on "internalising the Rule", and on related topics. Having decided on a definitive Rule after 20 years of experimenting, we must now avoid the common illusion that, once the Rule is written, the work is over. The great task of internalising the Rule lies before us. It is of a more intense and crucial nature than formulating it. Article 147 of the Rule invites us to "grasp its richness and its spirit" and make it practical in our daily lives. In other words, we have to transfer the Rule from "tablet to heart". The Lord who told Habakkuk to "write down the vision clearly upon the tablet so that we can read it readily" (*Hab. 2,2*) also told Jeremiah that he himself would plant his Law deep within, "writing it on their hearts" (*Jer. 31,33*). It is by being open to the Spirit that we can succeed in this important task.

Brother Henry Dissanayake, Colombo

An education based on the humanities, tied in with Greek and Latin classics, and shot through with paganism, was not the way ahead. John Baptist offered an alternative approach.



* I decided that for me it would be more profitable to write a few papers on different aspects of the Founder and the Institute, instead of concentrating all my energies on one single theme.

Paper 1: It consists of 30 to 40 stories, incidents and facts concerning our Founder which are a little unusual. It is entitled "Did You Know?" and runs to about 17 typed pages.

Paper 2: It is entitled "De La Salle, the Multi-faceted Man", and covers 16 characteristics of his personality, eg. he is a spiritual, pragmatic, complex, humorous man who trusts in Providence. This paper contains 15 typed pages.

Paper 3: This concerns the letters of St. John Baptist de La Salle, grouped under headings such as: kindness, tenderness; he admonishes and chides; school life; practical advice; hard-hitting, uncompromising; spiritual confessor, etc.

Paper 4: This traces the highlights of the Institute's history from 1719 to 1900: the spectacular rise and catastrophic fall; recovery and missionary expansion.

Brother Michael, Ireland

De La Salle's return to Rheims on the death of his parents diminished his enthusiasm for his studies, and he encountered his first educational problem — bringing up his younger brothers. At the age of 21 he was the head of the family, the administrator of his house and wealth, and a teacher. The situation held no hint of the direction De La Salle's life would subsequently take.



* My personal work comprises two projects. In recent weeks, I have collaborated with four other Brothers in preparation of about 20 dossiers — outlines, source material, bibliographies — on various topics for conferences, workshops for different target groups. Topics which I personally contributed include *The New Rule; Community; La Salle: Man of the Beatitudes; and 17th Century Schools in France.*

Another project completed earlier is entitled "A Lasallian Celebration Liturgy". The central feature of this work is a new Mass, written to be sung either in unison or in three-part harmony with the addition of tenor and bass lines. In addition to the Mass, the Celebration Liturgy includes an Entrance Song, Alleluia, Offertory Covenant Song, Communion Hymn, and Recessional. Although the music is presented in the project as a unified Eucharistic Celebration, some of the hymns may be found suitable also for other liturgical functions.

Brother Vincent Malham, St. Louis

* The title of my major work is "The meaning of the word 'POOR' at the beginning of the Institute and for us Today".

The methodology used is to examine first of all the meaning of the word in 17th century dictionaries; then to look at the word as it is used in the primitive Rule, in some of the writings of the Founder, and in Blain in reference to families whose children attended the first schools. From this starting point, the study examines the meaning of the word as determined by social histories of the period and by researchers. The overall intention of the study is to examine present-day emphasis in Institute literature on the service of the "POOR".

Brother Raphael Bassett, Australia

* "The 'browning' of De La Salle: Inculturation, Liberation, Conversion". These are personal reflections on the relevance and significance of the Lasallian inspiration in the context of third world realities in the Philippine situation.

The work consists of a number of anecdotes. These are complete in themselves and contribute, one would hope, to a culturally balanced understanding of what it means to be truly Filipino and Christian today, while sharing in a living Lasallian heritage which we can rightfully claim as our own.

In one sense, this investigation is almost autobiographical, since the post-World War II period I have chosen for this study covers more or less the years of my personal maturation (1946-86). The two areas of focus, religion and education, are inseparable elements in my life as a Lasallian religious educator, and so cannot help being self-revelatory... for better or for worse!

* My personal project was concerned with the Life of SJB by Maillefer. I contributed also to a series of dossiers prepared by our group in the last period of SIEL.



At the seminary of St. Sulpice, John Baptist came into contact with some great teachers who educated many of the leading members of the French clergy of the 1700's in an atmosphere of intense piety and great austerity. The Christian education of children was a subject that was often discussed.

* My piece of work at the end of SIEL is entitled: "The School as an Educational Environment in the Lasallian Tradition".

The first part deals with the school as St. La Salle envisaged it. It analyses briefly its principal characteristics in six short chapters:

1. The Lasallian school — the mature fruit of an age.
2. Structure in the service of education.
3. Teacher-pupil relationship in education.
4. A school for the pupils.
5. The work of evangelisation in a school.
6. The school — a community effort.

The second part, dealing with the Lasallian School for the present age, takes another look at the basic elements of the Founder's approach, and seeks to discover how they can be put into practice in our own times, as part of a "living tradition" and with "creative fidelity" in a different historical and social context. Naturally the main point of reference was the situation in Italy.

The special aim of this short work was to provide lay teachers working in our schools with an introduction to the principal pedagogical characteristics and distinctive approach of the Lasallian school. As it seeks to serve a practical purpose, its language is clear and informal.

Brother Mario Presciuttini, Rome

* My choice of topic — "Lasallian Poverty in the Service of the Poor" was inspired by a very real situation: the widespread poverty of people in Madagascar. As religious we have freely chosen and vowed to model ourselves on Christ living poor in the service of the poor. As Brothers of the Christian Schools, we read and pray over the life of St. John Baptist de La Salle, our Founder who, having been rich, became poor because he was sensitive to the poverty of the poor of his day. This reading helps us to reflect about our own lives and our commitment to the service of the poor, and gives us an incentive to serve God among the poor of our own day.

Brother Raymond, Madagascar

* The title of my piece of work for the end of SIEL is: "The life of the poor and school in the times and writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle".

The work is subdivided into seven chapters. At the end of each chapter there is a list of documents referred to. These are mostly from the 17th and 18th centuries, and include obviously the writings of the Founder.

The aim of my research was to provide an overall social, cultural and religious picture of the life of the poor, and to describe the state of education at the time of the Founder.

Against this background, I gave an outline of the thinking and writings of St. La Salle so as to be able to highlight his contribution to the poor and the workers, and especially his human and pedagogical contribution to teaching and education.

At the end of this work I have listed references to all the passages in the writings of St. La Salle which refer directly to his understanding of the mission of an educator, and which show the high regard he had for children who, in a century like the 17th, were considered to be of no importance.

Brother Giuseppe d'Oriente

Spiritual direction was held in high esteem at the seminary of St. Sulpice. Throughout his life, John Baptist took care to choose spiritual directors for himself that were holy.





The contrast between riches and poverty, privilege and exploitation, success and failure is something that has always concerned those who are called to serve God and man.

The most radical crises faced by the Institute in the 270 years since De La Salle's death are: the French Revolution, the Suppression of Brother's Schools in France (1904-14), and Aggiornamento in the 1960's.

Among the key factors in each of these were: the quality of leadership, attention to prophetic voices, resilience of community life, openness to being evangelised by events, and the ability to discern the direction of God's action within the historical moment.

Brother Vincent Corkery, Malaysia

* I tried to combine my university degree thesis with a Lasallian theme: the plight of French "poor schools" in the 17th century, and De La Salle's lasting intervention to remedy the situation. De La Salle's work, especially the written part, is discussed in the context of his foundation of a congregation which has stood the test of time. The Brothers' vocation is presented as the Founder's "answer" to the then situation in the French Church and the country at large. Some important aspects of CHILDHOOD are also considered, as also is the shift from work to vocation, and from being a teacher to being a Brother.

Who are they? What do they do? What is the meaning of teaching? These are some of the questions I have tried to answer. My study included also a consideration of the situation in Malta; of how the Brothers first came to the Island; and what their educational work has contributed to Malta and the world at large.

Brother Alfred Spiteri, Malta

* Alphabetical Index of the Lasallian Vocabulary.

The idea of producing an index for the Lasallian Vocabulary came from the realisation that very few Brothers have, in practical terms, access to a list of words used by the Founder. The question of entering this material on

computer disk has still to be thought out, but even now, we think, this index offers a wide range of possible uses. What is available now is an alphabetical list of all the words used by the Founder in his writings and an exact reference showing where it is to be found in the Vocabulary. A simple telephone call, giving the relevant references, will enable anyone doing research to have the pages he is interested in sent to him by FAX. What is possible also is immediate access to references and to the frequency of the use of words.

This is only a part of the work we intend to do in the future. Our intention is to put the whole vocabulary onto computer disks; to check all the references given; to add to this first part an index of names and places; and a very interesting index indicating the meaning attached to words, whether it be spiritual, pedagogical, financial or historical.

We hope that once this work is completed it will speed up consultation and so take some of the strain out of research. **Brothers Jean Pierre Mvumbi and Franco Savoldi**

The youthful years that De La Salle spent as a canon of Rheim Cathedral and as a student, first at the Collegium Bonorum Puerorum Universitatis Remensis, and later at the Sorbonne, were probably among the most peaceful in his life. There followed the austere experience of life in the seminary of St. Sulpice, and soon the death of his parents brought him heavy responsibilities.



END OF SESSION WORK

✧ I thought it better to do two or even three short pieces of work rather than one long one. One of these pieces dealt with community life seen in the first instance through the eyes of the Founder. This was backed up by material from the Meditations and the present Rule. The first Christians are considered to represent the ideal, but so do the first Lasallians up to a certain point. "Union in a community is a precious stone", says the Founder in Meditation 91. This piece of work tries to look closely at both the demands and the benefits of this union which is so essential that "if it is lost, all is lost" (Med. 91).

This Lasallian view of community, while fundamental, can benefit, I think, from the contribution of modern psychology. The work attempts consequently to pinpoint the psychological basis of community. It includes also some of the conclusions of experts who consider the genesis and dynamics of groups as being of fundamental importance. Some of the areas covered include the fundamental needs of a community, the questions of authority, the ideal number in a group and personal relations.

I wanted this piece of work to be practical so that it could serve to throw light on some of the problems that arise when a community group is formed.

✧ *Unless one has had some preparation, the first contact with St. John Baptist de La Salle, either through his writings or his first biographers, is somewhat difficult. His style appears austere; his teaching seem to show a haughty disdain for human nature; and his life is depicted as an uninterrupted series of austerities.*

It occurred to me that it would be interesting both for myself and for those I would have occasion to speak to about the Founder of the Brothers, to highlight in his life and writings all that showed the extent to which St. John Baptist de La Salle was an affectionate and tender person — with regard to the Brothers, the poor and especially poor children. The God he discovered and whom he invites us to follow is a God who speaks to the heart, the "God who is felt by the heart", as Pascal would say. Of course, "heart" in the XVIIth century sense was a far cry from the Romantic view of it as the seat of a cloying, dripping sentimentality. In a word, I tried to see the humanity of "our very dear Father" behind the words.

✧ My approach to this piece of work was first to recall briefly the constitutive elements of St. La Salle's inspiration; next, to pick out instances, at very crucial moments in the history of the Institute, when there appears to have been slippage; and finally, to say a few things about possible future developments. This triple approach to my work served to show me that maintaining an equilibrium between charism and institution is always like a high-wire balancing act.

And a tightrope walker who stops midway often becomes an ex-tightrope walker.

✧ "The Charism of a Founder": a thesis at Jesus Magister by Brother Michel Joseph Famree (Lasallianum 6).

When I reread this thesis by a Brother I had lived with in community for some time. I was both fascinated and dissatisfied. The idea for my work came to me by changing one word in the title of his thesis: the charism of THE Founder.

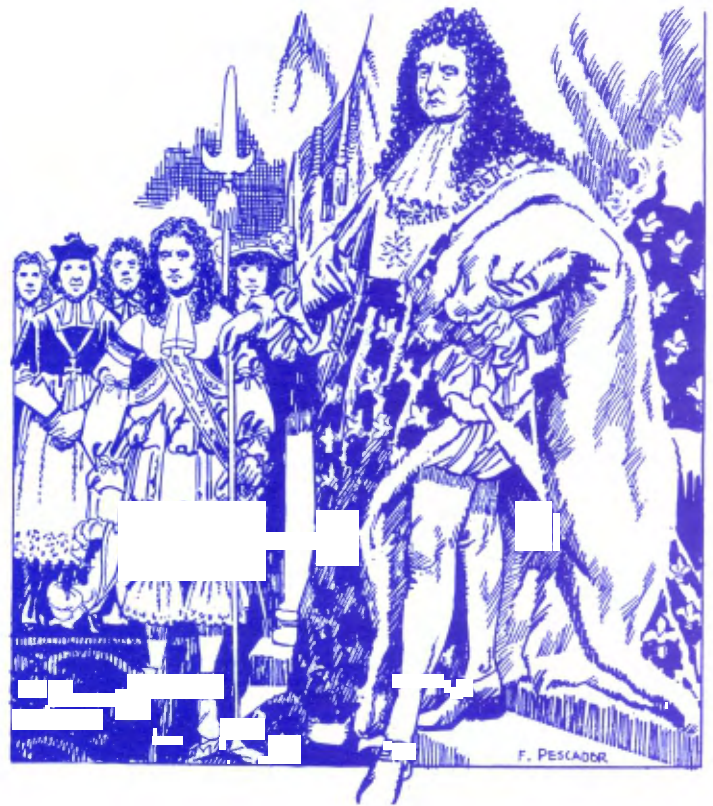
Yet another piece of work! So many very competent historians have already said most of what can be said about the founding work of St. La Salle: religious, educators of the whole person, especially of the poor, pursuing their ministry in community as lay persons. As the session went on, it occurred to me that there was a risk that the institution could destroy the unity of these constitutive elements that made up the Lasallian charism by laying too much stress now on this element and now on another, and so creating an imbalance in the specific identity of the Brother.

✧ A study of our Lasallian tradition for crises can be both refreshing and heartening.

De La Salle, as Founder of a new style of apostolic community, faced a series of crises with characteristic courage, creativity and spiritual vision, so that each crisis became for him an important turning-point for further growth and increased strength.

Meeting beggars who were so numerous in his day must have been a painful experience for the sensitive John Baptist. Seeing among them so many children, many of them exploited by adults, must have contributed greatly to his decision to found poor schools.





Three pictures which summarise an era:

- Wars tore Europe apart throughout much of the Founder's life. Originating in an urge to dominate the continent, they caused indescribable suffering which affected the work of De La Salle and his Brothers. Many of the shortages the Brothers and their pupils had to suffer were the direct result of these wars.
- The splendour of the court of the Sun King, the extraordinary symbol of an absolute and privileged regime, is another picture. The grandeur of buildings and the magnificence of the nobility contrasted starkly with the oppression and exploitation of the poor. Even the hierarchy of the Church was a part of this inhuman situation which came to an end in the violence of the French Revolution.
- What struck De La Salle about the situation was that the children of the artisans and the poor were abandoned to their own fate, and this led him to make some radical decisions: he gave away his wealth, he gave up his prestigious position as canon of the Cathedral of Rheims, and he left his family (which no longer had need of his help). It was a heroic decision to leave behind the privilege and wealth of his social class and go and live with the outcasts of society.



One of the characteristics of De La Salle's work is the existence of the «teachers' community». From the very beginning, his teachers and then even more so «his Brothers» lived in community: they prayed together, prepared their lessons together, made plans together and together they experienced this new approach to education. It would be difficult not to see in all this a prophetic forerunner of our educational communities.

BUILDING UP COMMUNITY A NECESSARY CONDITION FOR VITALITY (BY BROTHER JORGE BONILLA)

This workshop was organised and run by Brother Jorge Bonilla. Brothers taking part included Jose Arcadio Bolivar, Bianor Gallego, Angel Iburguren, Carlos Lainez, Eutimio Sanchez, Pedro Soto and Josep Maria Pons.

As Brothers, we believe that St. La Salle continues to inspire and support us through his writings and the example of his life. That is why, in the course of our meetings, we sought to deepen our understanding of the thinking and spirituality of the Founder by studying three of his works: the "Meditations for Sundays", the Letters and "The Rule of the Brother Director".

In our study of these texts we concentrated on "community" as a central theme, considering this to be a fundamental element of the thinking of St. La Salle. In the pursuit of their apostolate as educators and preachers of the Gospel, the first Brothers were led to associate with one another and to form a community which developed into a new kind of lay religious institute in the Church.

Our study of "community" in these three texts revealed to us various ways which could help us to live our community life more fully and in an exemplary fashion, and to make it a source of vitality for the Institute. We were keenly aware that community achieves its full meaning through the apostolate: that community does not exist for its own sake, but for the sake of the apostolate.

The specific aims of our work on the theme of community were as follows:

- 1. Study the way in which the Founder described the first community in the Institute in his Meditations for Sundays, his Letters and in the Rule of the Brother Director. Study how, why, and with what aim in view he founded it, and at what rate it developed.*
- 2. Make a critical analysis of Lasallian teaching on community in the three texts.*
- 3. Make a study of community life as it is lived now.*

Note what should be reinstated, insisted upon and questioned so that it can bear witness to the Kingdom and be a source of vitality for the Institute.

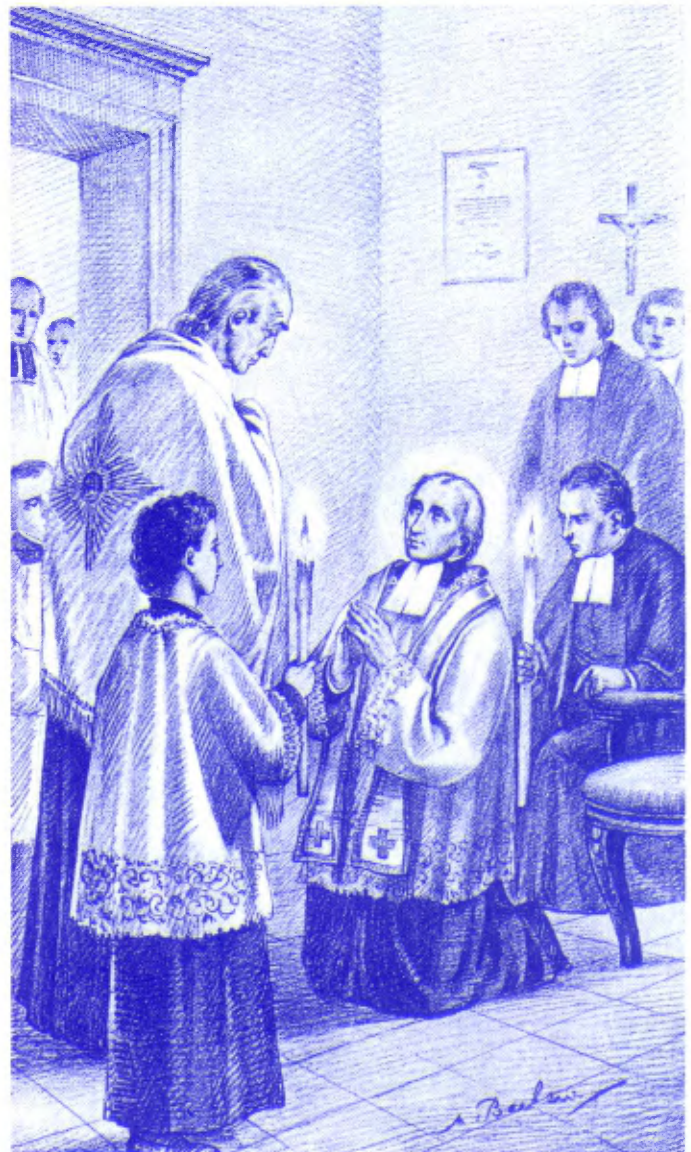
The following factors guided our considerations:

- a) The sociology of the human group.*
- b) The primitive Christian community as described in the Acts of the Apostles.*
- c) The path taken by the Founder in founding the Institute.*

The challenges we discovered as we worked were as follows: rediscover the vital elements lost in the course of our history; strengthen personal relationships; attract new recruits by the quality of our communities; re-examine our community lifestyle.

Brother Carlos Lainez

Right up to the end of his life, the Founder lived as a «Brother among his Brothers» in spite of being a priest. On various occasions he tried to give up his position as superior, because he clearly felt that the community of Lasallian religious should be a community of Brothers, all equal and devoted exclusively to the work of education.





The Brothers' Rule has a long history. It remained practically unchanged up to 1966 when, as a result of recommendations by Vatican II, it was extensively revised while remaining faithful to its original inspiration.

THE RULE OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS (BY BROTHER LUKE SALM)

Our group was led by Brother Luke Salm from the District of New York. We were very pleased to benefit from the expertise of this Brother who had been a delegate to three General Chapters. There was an inspirational quality about his contribution: he clearly knew what he was talking about, and this was reflected in the quality of his talks and of our reactions to them. He was conversant with anything and everything of any importance to do with the subject. The central element of our session was the study of the present Rule. We had prepared ourselves for it by studying the main points of previous Rules, as well as the human element in the long and eventful history of the Rule in our Institute. Our work helped us to realise what forces were at work in the Chapter, what was achieved by the Commission on the Rule, how this Commission studied the Rule, and what proposals it made to the Chapter in the name of the Institute. There were three "schools of thought" — English, Spanish and French — each with its own exceptional personalities and different points of view. The way they were able to merge in the present edition of the Rule bears witness to the living presence of the Holy Spirit working together with the members of the Chapter, as well as to the response of all the Brothers there to his influence. The Rule aimed to make a positive contribution to the building up of the modern Brother as a complete person as well as a member of the community. After studying the life and work of our Founder, we, Brothers of the post-Chapter period, have been encouraged to live our daily lives according to the Rule.

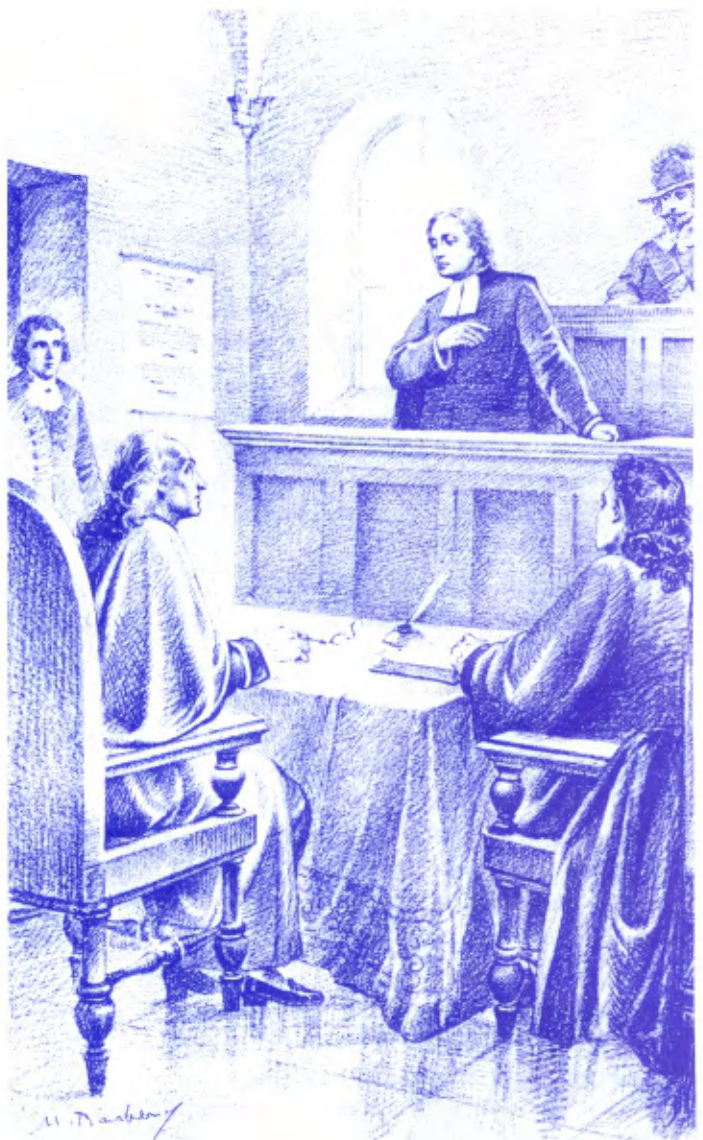
1. As he became aware, by God's grace, of the human and spiritual distress of "the children of the artisans and the poor", John Baptist de La Salle devoted himself to forming schoolmasters totally dedicated to teaching and to Christian education. He brought these teachers to-

gether in a community and subsequently founded with them the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Our many questions and the written work we produced revealed the extent to which the eight members of our group were committed to making the session a success, as well as our resolve to continue our work in the future. Our programme included the following topics: the various Rules from 1718 to 1987, obedience, Holy Scripture, christology, mission, inculturation, the Lasallian community.

One can say that the Rule is a tribute to the professional conscience that characterised the members of the Commission and the Chapter as a whole. This Chapter produced a document that every Brother can identify with in the work of his apostolate, while living his life as a Brother in all its fulness.

The Founder had to contend with much opposition as he defended his ideas on the spiritual life and apostolic work exemplified in his Christian schools. The more obvious examples of opposition are the court cases he had to fight. The most notorious ones were those brought against him by the Writing Masters who felt their monopoly was threatened by the success of the Lasallian schools.





John Baptist de La Salle was a great «traveller». This character trait was probably something that was quite unforeseen. Love of God gave rise to a love for Christian schools, and this led him to found many establishments which required his frequent presence. This constant travelling was very tiring: it was a symbol of another journey which is more difficult to describe.

THE ORIGINAL RULE (BY BROTHER JAUME PUJOL)

The aims of this session, meticulously prepared by Brother Jaume Pujol, were as follows:

- To pick out the spiritual and structural elements that are stressed in the original Rule and in the “Memoir on the Habit”.
- To analyse the way in which these stressed elements were interpreted by succeeding General Chapters.
- To examine the way in which it has been brought up to date and interpreted at the present time, bearing in mind its dissemination.

To achieve the first aim, we analysed in great detail the documents that were most closely linked with the original Rule:

- * The “Memoir on the Habit”.
- * The 1947 Rule which included that of 1718, with adaptations marked by asterisks.
- * The Bull of Approbation of the Institute.
- * The preface to the 1726 Rule which, while not written by the Founder or a Brother, had a profound influence on the interpretation of the Rule.
- * The approbation of the 1947 Rule.

In this way, we were able to pick out the image or model contained in the documents of some of the most fundamental notions: man, community, authority, world, christology, ecclesiology, religious life.

At the same time, we chose a series of “markers” or “core elements” whose evolution we would analyse

throughout the course of Institute history: laity, community, Rule, gratuity, the world, stability, catechism, Christian education, school, mission, work, identity, the poor, association, government, vows.

To attain our second objective we had to work hard, but it was exciting to examine the decisions of 41 General Chapters to see how the various “markers” of the original Rule had been interpreted during the course of Institute history.

Among others things, we noted how all the General Chapters were very concerned about remaining faithful to the Founder; how there was tension at certain moments because of misplaced fidelity which insisted obstinately on maintaining certain original structures which conflicted with the aims of the Institute. We noted also the important role played by the Bull of Approbation whenever changes or adaptations were mooted. Our examination of these texts revealed to us the evolution of the Institute vis-a-vis the original Rule. This evolution began by firm and confident adherence to the Rule approved in 1726. There followed a series of modifications, additions to the original text, and a return to the 1718 Rule at the beginning of this century. This was strictly adhered to but gave rise to increasing opposition, culminating in the tension-filled 1946 General Chapter which was refused permission to revise the Rule. It was only in 1956 that the Rule was returned to the Institute, and was subsequently reworked.

Following this long immersion in the history of the Institute, we went on to study certain modern Church documents on religious life and those drawn up by the 1966 General Chapter.

And finally we reached the two great present-day Institute documents: the Rule and the Declaration. Our examination of these texts showed us how the basic “markers” are expressed in our own times. If there is anything to pick out as being special it is a profound fidelity to the Founder, his Gospel journey, and the aims of the Institute pursued under the inspiration of St. John Baptist de La Salle and in the light of modern day needs.

Brother Antonio Botana

The Brothers' Rule is a spiritual and apostolic document inspired by the life in common of the Founder and the Brothers, the result of both much thought and practical experience, and of their choice to serve God and the poor.





Contact with the material, moral and spiritual poverty of children and their families played a decisive part in deciding the direction taken by the Founder's spiritual journey. As he said towards the end of his life, he would never have undertaken that journey without a special grace from God.

ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE'S
SPIRITUAL JOURNEY
AND THE METHOD OF MENTAL PRAYER
(BY BROTHER MIGUEL CAMPOS)

This was the contribution of Brothers Michel Sauvage and Miguel Campos to Unit 5 with its overall title: "*St. John Baptist de La Salle, Founder and spiritual Guide of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*". We appreciated Brother Miguel's serious approach, the clarity of his exposition — so typical of a researcher — his energy and youthful enthusiasm and his love for our Father, John Baptist de La Salle.

Unit 5 concentrated on two aspects:

- 1 – *The spiritual journey of John Baptist de La Salle.*
- 2 – *The Method of Mental Prayer*

The spiritual journey of the Founder: the spiritual dimensions of the original community, its characteristics.

We reread the Method of Mental Prayer. We reconsidered its significance in a spiritual and historical context, the importance of the presence of God, the invitation to unite ourselves with Jesus' prayer, the consequence of the integration of this prayer in our ministry and spiritual journey.

We juxtaposed this work with other writings by the Founder. Prayer is a part of the plan of salvation and of our daily lives.

This unit was so organised that it enabled us to exchange ideas and involve ourselves in discussions about our spiritual heritage. We were able to reach a clearer understanding of the spiritual writings of John Baptist de La Salle; we discovered his ability to renew and modernise. We felt we were invited to join others wishing to live according to the same spirit, and to apply this spirit to our future work.

We then went on to consider the integration of our personal and community relationship with God with our role as ministers of Jesus Christ among the poor and the outcasts of society. Brother Miguel helped us to look upon the Method of Mental Prayer as a way of life, as a means of helping us to grow in our ministry, in our evangelical service of the poor, in our community life and, finally, in our daily relationship with the Father, through the inspiration of the Spirit and in union with Jesus Christ, our guide.

Miguel's self-assured manner — stemming from his competence — his affability, and his straightforward approach which invited discussion, encouraged us to delve with evergrowing enthusiasm into the riches of our tradition, and to find the strength to transform our own spiritual journey today.

The spiritual journey of the Founder is described by his biographers, but it can be followed in a more direct way in his *Meditations and Method of Mental Prayer*.



SEMINAR ON THE MEDITATIONS
FOR FEASTDAYS
(BY BROTHER JEAN GUY RODRIGUE)

During this three-week stage in Unit 5, we had to study a Lasallian text. The eight of us in the group tried first to pick out the main characteristics of the spiritual teaching of John Baptist de La Salle. We then spent some time studying this spirituality to see how it could help us to be Brothers in the present-day world and to come closer to the people we work with.

Brother Jean Guy Rodrigue led the seminar, and was the ideal person to do so, as his extensive work in this area goes to prove. He has in fact just published volume 47 of the *Cahiers Lasalliens*, entitled *A contribution to the study of the sources of the Meditations for the Principal Feasts of the Year*.

Our first task was to pick out the essential elements of St. La Salle's thinking contained in the 108 meditations for feastdays. This was quite an undertaking, seeing the short time at our disposal. Each of us concentrated on a certain number of meditations on Doctors of the Church, Bishops, Founders of Orders, Apostles, etc. When the individual work was completed, we pooled our main conclusions.

We came up with three main elements: GOD, the BROTHER, the MISSION. These are surely the three main points around which De La Salle built his teaching.

In fact, for the Founder, GOD is at the centre of the Brother's apostolic work as he was in that of the Saints he writes about in his meditations.

In his work, the BROTHER is drawn in two directions: towards God who chose him, and towards his mission as an educator of poor children.

The spirit of FAITH and of ZEAL are the essential links binding the Brother to God and to his MISSION. De La Salle does not try to hide the fact that being a teacher car-



The influence of Nicolas Roland as a model of the spiritual life and apostolic work was very great on De La Salle. He was the Founder of the Sisters of the Child Jesus of Rheims and a canon of the cathedral. He chose De La Salle to take over his work for the girls of Rheims.

ried no social status or that the work was difficult. On the other hand, it had to be borne in mind that the Brothers were God's co-workers and even his ministers in their work for the salvation of souls.

What value has the thinking of St. La Salle in his meditations for the Brothers and lay collaborators of the present day? Some aspects of it need to be adapted: for example, the idea of eschewing all contact with the world, and a love of suffering and humility which abase human nature are much less in vogue now than they were in the 17th century.

In a word, this study of the meditations was very enriching for all of us, and we can continue our research in the future by consulting *Cahier Lasallien* n° 47. Thank you Jean Guy!

Brother Lionel Poitras

WORKSHOPS ON THE
MEDITATIONS FOR THE TIME OF RETREAT
(BY BROTHER PAUL MCAULEY)

The two workshops on the "Meditations for the Time of Retreat", in Spanish and in English, were run by Brother Paul McAuley. Those who took part declared themselves most satisfied with the way the work was organised and the results that were obtained. All were delighted with the amount of information that was amassed as well as by its quality. It was agreed that the written work produced by the two groups could have easily formed the basis for more extended study. The work could be used as a starting off point for workshops in the next session of SIEL, or as a basis on which those taking part could build, once back in their own Districts.

The work was organised in such a way that it could be used in retreats or seminars for Brothers or lay teachers. Each group produced a handbook which everyone agreed would be of great help for those responsible for such gatherings. Each workshop group made a detailed study of the structure of the Meditations and produced interesting and complementary diagrams. The results of the work done were put in written and graphical form. There were other aspects of the Meditations that were studied too: the use of Holy Scripture (themes, vocabulary). This unit of the SIEL programme produced very pleasing results.

This «nostalgia» for prayer remained with the Founder all his life and led him often to visit places of retreat and pilgrimage, like Our Lady of Liesse, Our Lady of Virtues, La Grande Chartreuse, Parmenie...



ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE
FOUNDER AND SPIRITUAL GUIDE
OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS
(BY BROTHER MICHEL SAUVAGE)

Whatever we say of Brother Michel's contribution to SIEL, we cannot restrict ourselves simply to a mention of his talks and involvement in unit 5. We have here a man whose whole life is dedicated to the service of the Institute, someone who is possessed by the love of God, our Father. To speak of him is to speak of a whole period in the history of Lasallian studies and of the renewal of the Institute called for by Vatican II.

In this sense, Brother Michel is *the son of a rich tradition*, and it was to this tradition that he introduced us in his opening talk entitled: "1988/89 SIEL at the meeting point of Lasallian studies and the diffusion of the message of the Founder". He recalled how the first Brothers wished to preserve the memory of the life and teachings of St. John Baptist de La Salle and to disseminate it; how, in 1956, there began a systematic study of the spirituality and thinking of the Founder; how the study and diffusion of the works of the Founder were undertaken, in the midst of discussion, planning and guidelines, under the enlightened leadership of Brother Maurice Auguste. His words made us understand the importance of our origins. They helped us also to discover the force of history and the wealth of our living tradition. They encouraged us to base our work on the living and dynamic tradition of the Institute, itself based on a spirituality of "mystical realism" in the person of St. John Baptist de La Salle. In his talk he shared with us his conviction that "there is an urgent need to promote by whatever means possible a dialogue between John Baptist de La Salle and the modern world". This was the challenge facing us; there lay our hope for the future. Our role was to disseminate and research a spirituality which was our own. His talk was striking because of his commitment



Having become a canon at the age of 16, John Baptist spent many hours a day in the Cathedral of Rheims. This early experience of the prayer of the Church marked his youth.

De La Salle was very much a contemplative. At the age of 11 he expressed a wish for consecration and he received the tonsure as a sign of his choice to serve God.



to our founding tradition as well as to a vision of the world of tomorrow. This tradition is both a call from the love of God and a response to it and to his plan of salvation for the world, to the building of his Kingdom and the reign of justice.

In Unit 5, entitled "St. John Baptist de La Salle, Founder and spiritual Guide of the Brothers of the Christian Schools", Brother Michel spoke to us straight from his heart. He was backed up by Brother Miguel who showed how this spirituality was part of a spiritual journey. This spiritual journey is such that it leads us to commit ourselves to offer a response, to associate with others to transform the world. By doing so we respond to a call from the Lord who is active in our lives by his presence, and who shows special love for the poor and the outcasts of society. Such a spiritual journey is anchored in the love of God and is very conscious of the needs of man.

In the lively talk Brother Michel gave us, we saw a Brother whose very life spoke to us, a Brother who challenged us, because of his experience of God, because he spoke with the Lord of history, because of his firm hope and his committed attitude to modern man.

Brother Juan Fernando Garcia Budinich

THE LASALLIAN APPROACH
IN THE HISTORY OF THE INSTITUTE
(BY BROTHER PEDRO GIL)

It is very difficult to summarise Brother Pedro Gil's contribution in a few lines! It is quite obvious his ten talks were not enough to fit everything in about his subject: *The Lasallian approach in the history of the Institute*.

What he wanted to do was to show us how to approach the history of the Institute from a critical point of view. His intention was to make us think and ask questions; to provide us with a method of analysis to help us discern "the signs of the times" in different historical periods; and to give us criteria which would enable us to study concurrently the history and spirituality of the Institute.

Brother Pedro Gil's approach to his task was twofold:

1. A quick run through of the whole history of the Institute one generalate after another. Although this survey was made at a gallop, it infused life into the solemn portrait gallery of Superior Generals in the corridor near the refectories. The SIELists would never look at those portraits again with quite the same eyes!

2. Specific samples from the depths of history of key moments in the life of the Institute:

- An enlightening parallel between two significant periods, 1690-1720 and 1870-1900.
- "The twelve qualities of a good teacher", with a commentary by Brother Agathon; and "Formation programme for novices", drawn up in a masterly manner by his Assistant Brother Pascal. This remarkable text, to all intents and purposes rediscovered by Brother Pedro, had the bad luck to be published on June 6th 1786... three years before the French Revolution, which consigned it to oblivion.
- Ten circulars by Brother Philippe, over the period 1838 to 1849.
- Rigault's tenth volume, still in manuscript form, devoted entirely to the 1904 secularisation in France. It revealed to us the confusion of the Institute in the face of an unusual and unexpected situation... and made us ask ourselves the following questions:
 - * How should we define ourselves in the face of State involvement in education?
 - * How should we understand education?
- What should our position be in the face of secularity?
 - * A rapid analysis of the 1966/67 Declaration.

I think that what is really original about Brother Pedro Gil is that, rather than give us the finished product, he gave us the means to arrive at it. It is up to us now to see what we can do.

THE LASALLIAN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME
ORIGINALLY AND NOW
(BY BROTHER JOAQUIN MORATO)

Brother Joaquin Morato was a member of the team responsible for unit 4 in our SIEL programme. The topic of this unit was the Lasallian educational programme originally and now. Brothers Leon Lauraire and Jean Pungier examined and explained this Lasallian programme as it was originally, and Brother Joaquin described for us an example of how this programme had been adapted to present times, in a specific culture and situation.

As we analysed present-day history, we noted the changes taking place in society today, the reasons for these changes and their consequences. Our analysis showed us a society in which there is a crisis of values. In the light of this, an essential element of Lasallian educational programmes has to be the stress it lays on the need for fundamental and transcendent values. A well-integrated education will enable the young people of today to assimilate certain values that will help them to take their place in a society in which they will have leading roles. It was in terms such as these that Brother Joaquin described for us a programme drawn up by a group of Brothers and lay people, aimed at helping our educational programmes to offer "an education in values".

He ended by giving us another example of how the Lasallian educational programme can be brought up to date, in this case, by a modern adaptation of the rules of courtesy and politeness. He used as his starting point "Si us plau", "Por favor", "S'il vous plait" and "Please"; he spoke of the why, the how, the methods to use; he used audiovisual material; and all this suggested to us how one can adapt the Founder's spiritual and pedagogical teachings to modern times, whatever the culture or situation.

Brother Josep M. Pons

John Baptist clearly saw how important and noble his work for education was. It is enough to read his Meditations to realise this. Several times he tried to hand over the direction of the Institute to someone else so that he could devote himself to a life of contemplation. Each time, however, he accepted to continue giving his support to his Institute.

