

With this third Number we come to the end of the first year of publication of LASALLIANA. Throughout the year, the team responsible for the publication has been attentive to the reactions of certain readers who have been good enough to pass on their observations to us. We see in this a directive to continue with this work and to make certain adaptations arising from these observations.

The increasing number of subscriptions in each of the three languages is already a source of encouragement. We hope, however, that this increase will continue during 1984-85.

The collaboration of more and more authors is likewise an encouraging sign. Thus LASALLIANA can become an organ of expression for the Brothers within the terms of reference outlined at the beginning of its publication.

To synthesise the reactions received, we may say that they are all positive. Perhaps other reactions, more critical ones, were not sent to us?

The satisfaction expressed referred especially to the following points:

- The choice of headings which allows for a coverage of the life of the Institute as a whole.
- The richness in the content of the texts, even if the interest of each one of them varies according to the taste of the readers.
- The variety of the contributions, especially the contributions made by lay people.
- The brevity and the seriousness of articles adapted for very busy readers, with awareness of the constraints this places on the author.
- The ease with which the sheets can be used for purposes of meetings, seminars and even in the fostering of vocations.
- The practical convenience of the arrangement thanks to the type of codification chosen.
- Thus the readers can gain a better knowledge of the Founder and of the History and Life of the Institute.

Many express their wish for a successful continuation of the publication and to them we extend our thanks. As an answer to this wish we can say that the first number for next year is already well advanced in its preparation.

One Brother suggested that a list of titles that have already appeared should be published. This is an interesting suggestion which has been followed in the present number.

We see these encouragements also as a call to our vigilance and also as an expression of gratitude to our authors of the first numbers, a gratitude which we share completely.

This word of thanks is addressed also to all LASALLIANA readers and especially to those who have shown their interest in the publication by sending us their reactions.

Brother Léon LAURAIRE

NB: This third number marks the end of your first subscription.

You will receive, by separate mail, a subscription form.

The first three numbers can still be had at the ordinary subscription rate. Copies are available in the three languages.

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RHEIMS 1684.
A COMMUNITY FOUNDED
ON PROVIDENCE

"At the end of 1682, it became apparent to M. de La Salle that Providence was calling him to take the schools in charge. And he realized that, having to arrive the first at the exercises he had initiated in his house and give good example to those for whom they were intended, he could not do that and at the same time be assiduous at the offices in choir. This his director could in no way approve for he required him to be most assiduous in his attendance".

These lines are taken from the first biography of the Founder by Brother Bernard. The third biographer, Canon Blain, repeats this more concisely.

"It was apparent to him at the end of 1682, he himself says, that God was calling him to take care of the schools and that, having to be the first at the community exercises, he could not be as assiduous at the office as his director exacted of him".

Most probably both biographers have based themselves on the "mémoire des commencements" written by John Baptist de La Salle many years after the events. Both of them begin in the same way their account of two particularly decisive years in the history of the Community of the Christian Schools: 1683 when Canon de La Salle gives up his canonicate, 1684 when he distributes his personal fortune among the poor.

It was on August 16, 1683, that Abbé Jean Faubert, a priest hitherto unknown, takes his place in the chapter of the cathedral of Rheims instead of Canon John Baptist de La Salle. Such a change did not take place without strong and lengthy opposition from his family, his colleagues, his spiritual director. The Archbishop himself did not give his consent or else resigned himself to it in spite of all he could do to prevent it.

Now that he was more closely associated with the few teachers who lived with him, the abbé De La Salle did not stop there. Very soon he decided to get rid of his personal fortune and to rely henceforth on Providence.

Referring to this the three first biographers mention the Founder's hesitation, hesitation which could have been reinforced by the counsels of his friends who were often well intentioned. If he wanted to get rid of his fortune could not the former canon use it for the benefit of the teachers? Could he not think of "founding" a community of teachers as Nicolas Roland had "founded" the community of the Daughters of the Infant Jesus?

If one has doubts about the dialogue which Blain tries to recall forty years after the events, one can but feel the truth of the prayer which Brother Bernard seems to have taken from the above mentioned memoir.

"My God, I do not know if I have to make a foundation or not. It is not up to me to establish the communities, nor to know how to establish them. It is you, my God, who know how it should be done and will do it as it pleases you. I do not dare to make a foundation because I do not know if it is your will, nor would I make any contribution to founding our houses. If you found them, they will be well founded, if you do not found them they will be without foundation. I pray you, my God, to make known to me your will as regards this".

De La Salle once again perceived the hand of God in the tragic events taking place under his very eyes. 1684 saw a very severe winter and all the historians of the time describe the famine that followed as particularly serious and even murderous. The whole year and the winter which followed saw the poor flocking to the towns from the countryside. They came in great numbers, to Rheims especially, in the hope of finding some relief.

For the second time, La Salle gave up the guardianship of his younger brothers on August 16 of that same year. He left to them the house in the Rue Ste. Marguerite and various properties and incomes that he owned personally. On the orders of his director he kept £200 in order not to tempt God and distributed the remaining cash among the poor. Dom François Hélié Maillefer writes about this as follows:

"This faithful steward was then seen to distribute in an orderly fashion and with discernment the wealth of which he regarded himself as the trustee. He examined the needs of each one in minute detail, provided for their needs, distributed bread and saw that it was distributed to the children in the schools, gathered together every day a large number of poor people whom he fed and sent away overwhelmed with his generosity after giving them sound advice according to their situation.

He did more. He went into the homes to find the poor who were ashamed to lighten their distress and through his frequent alms save them from the shame of poverty.

Those who were witnesses of his generosity were astonished at seeing a man so full of confidence in Divine Providence that he gave no thought to the morrow. Even the Brothers in the schools who helped him to distribute his alms could not refrain from showing their astonishment. He told them with his customary tranquillity that God was a good Father who never deserted those who trusted in Him, that they would never lack anything as long as they tried to please Him."

Rather than estimate the exact value of the alms he distributed in this way — about £40,000 according to Blain — we will examine the significance of this staggering gesture. In 18th century France, more so than in our days, the faithful who wished to perform some good work took care to assure the future by establishing a foundation properly so called. With respect for the memory of his director, Canon Roland, John Baptist took great care to see that the Daughters of the Child Jesus were well provided for, showing that this new community would not have to rely on the generosity of the people of Rheims.

Breaking with tradition, Father Barré in Rouen encouraged the mistresses in the charitable school to rely solely on Providence. It would seem that he induced John Baptist de La Salle to do the same. What is certain is that the priest of Rheims decided definitely and irrevocably on the second of these two attitudes.

It was in vain the archbishop, Charles Maurice Le Tellier, proposed that de La Salle should "found" his community. The former canon was all the more resolute since the all powerful prelate offered his generosity only on condition that the Community of the Christian Schools should remain within the boundaries of his archdiocese.

In 1690, when describing his Community to the ecclesiastical Superiors, De La Salle did not fail to affirm that "this Community is at present established and founded on Providence alone". His choice, taken in 1684, was therefore still valid six years later; it continued to be so during the whole life of the Founder. If he expected the parish priests and the charitable boards to finance the schools they established and asked the Brothers to run, he none the less expected the Community as such to have no other resources than those of Providence.

Brother Maurice HERMANS
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A FEW STATISTICS

The number of manuscript documents written throughout and signed by John Baptist de La Salle, and known to be in existence, amounts to 65 (a total of 97 sheets of paper written on one or both sides). (A) 53 of these documents are letters, all of which except three were addressed to individual Brothers. (B) The remaining 12 are of a legal or administrative nature. In addition to the signed documents there are (C) 8 certainly written by the Founder but not signed by him. (D) 7 documents are known which were not written by De La Salle but to which he added brief marginal comments or amendments or supplementary information: five of these are also signed by him. And, finally, there are (E) 27 known manuscripts to which, in one capacity or another, he added his signature, but nothing more.

An outline survey of each of these categories now follows (in this and further issues of *LASALLIANA*) in the order listed, together with bibliographical references guiding the interested reader to ampler and more detailed information on the points made; the frequently occurring "CL" followed by a number refers to the relevant volume of the indispensable *Cahiers Lasalliens* series.

(A) THE LETTERS

All except two of the 53 known manuscript letters are preserved in the Archives of the Maison Généralice in Rome (AMG). They are stored between sheets of glass in brass frames, and are thus able to be read without the need to handle the fragile leaves: the frames are slotted vertically into grooved shelves in fire-proof, double-locked steel cabinets.

THEIR ADDRESSEES

49 of the 51 letters in the AMG collection are addressed to ten of the Founder's disciples: 19 to Gabriel Drolin, 10 to a Br. Mathias (about whose identity there is disagreement among the experts), 6 to Br. Robert (Denis Maubert), 5 to Br. Hubert (Gilles Gerard), 3 to Br. Denis (Jean Louis Guynand), 2 to Br. Joseph (Jean Le Roux), and 1 each to Br. Anastase (Antoine Paradis), Br. Barthélemy (Joseph Truffet), Br. Paulinus and Br. Severin (the identity of both of whom is uncertain). The remaining two letters in the AMG collection were both addressed to Louis Deshayes, a priest of Rouen who had requested Brothers for a foundation which duly materialised in nearby Darnétal.

THEIR CHRONOLOGY

All of these 51 letters cover a time-span of no more than 16 years and 8 months - from 30 May 1701 to 17 January 1718 (and were written therefore after M. de La Salle had reached the age of fifty). By a curious coincidence the two known manuscript letters *not* in the AMG collection were written, respectively, two weeks earlier and six weeks later than the two dates mentioned. The so-called "Durham Letter", addressed to an unnamed Brother, and found in 1955 in the library of the English Seminary of Ushaw, near Durham, is dated 15 May 1701. It is kept in London at the Provincialate of the district of England, and the story of its serendipitous discovery during the centenary year of the Lasallian presence in England can be read in the April 1956 issue of the *Bulletin des Ecoles Chrétiennes*. The date of the other letter not in AMG is 2 March 1718 (almost exactly a year prior to its writer's death). It was addressed to the Founder's brother, Canon Jean-Louis de La Salle at Rheims. The letter was discovered in 1969 in an "Etude" of M. Claude Thiénot, a Rheims lawyer, by Br. Leon de Marie Aroz who published it, in both fac-simile and printed form and with a commentary of absorbing interest, in CL 39 (1972). By permission of M. Thiénot, this precious manuscript is on display at the Hôtel De La Salle, the Founder's birthplace in Rheims.

A lithographed fac-simile of one early letter exists and was published as long ago as 1908 in the March edition of the *Bulletin des Ecoles Chrétiennes*. This was the Founder's letter to the Mayor and Aldermen of Château-Porcien, written on 20 June 1682 (four days, therefore, before the momentous "exodus" of M. de La Salle — then aged 31 — from the family home in the rue Sainte-Marguerite to the rue Neuve). The original was discovered in January 1843 by the Archbishop of Rheims, Mgr. Gousset, and was retained in the archiepiscopal archives, but an enquiry in 1951 revealed that it was no longer there and that its whereabouts were unknown.

PUBLICATIONS OF THE LETTERS

The AMG manuscript letters have been photographed twice: first in 1948 when the set was made available to districts of the Institute subscribing for one; and secondly, with advanced photographic technique, by Br. Georges Ley of the district of North Belgium.

The contents of the collection may be read in each of the three languages currently in use for the Institute's official publications. They first appeared in French, under the date 26 January 1952, as No. 335 of the Institute's series of *Instructive and Administrative Circulars*. The circular was issued by the Superior General, Br. Athanase Emile, with an Introduction by him, but the edition of the letters it contained was the work of Br. Felix-Paul Vandamme. The latter was at this time already engaged on the preparation of a critical edition of the letters, and was putting the finishing touches to this when death overtook him at the early age of 39. His work, not as definitive as he would have wished to make it, but an invaluable critical edition all the same, especially if consulted in conjunction with his Circular 335 edition, was published by Ligel in 1954, with a characteristically graceful and informative foreword by the Institute's historian, Georges Rigault.

In 1952 Brother Clair Battersby added *De La Salle: Letters and Documents* to his three previous books on the Founder, thus completing a Lasallian tetralogy in English, elegantly produced in uniform format by a leading London publisher, Longmans Green.

And in 1962 the Pontifical Institute of St. Pius X in Salamanca published, as No. 4 in its distinguished "Sinite" series, a Spanish translation of the French critical edition, but adapted and edited in order to take account of new information subsequent to Felix-Paul's production.

THE QUANTITY OF MANUSCRIPT LETTERS

The 53 known manuscript letters represent, it need hardly be said, a mere fraction of the total the Saint must have written. Battersby's suggested figure of 18,000 may, at first sight, seem grossly exaggerated, but he argues it principally on the basis of the known statistics of the Society's personnel in the Founder's lifetime related to the article in the earliest known version of the Brothers' Common Rules (CL 25) requiring them to write individually to the Superior "at the beginning of each month" (and we have the assurance of his biographer and contemporary, Canon Blain (CL 7), that the Founder "was exact in replying to each". But even if we prefer the much more conservative estimate of "two to three thousand" suggested by Felix-Paul, the extant remnant looks pitiful and leaves us wondering what happened to the rest. It is true, of course, that we know of the existence and contents (complete or partial) of other letters of the Founder from his biographer Blain and from other copies preserved in AMG. Felix-Paul included all 35 quotations known from Blain only and 19 known from Blain and other sources. But, as Br. Maurice-Auguste Hermans, General Editor of the *Cahiers Lasalliens*, assures us (CL 10), none of Blain's quotations comes from the manuscript letters known to us — a tantalising fact which leaves us without a point of reference whereby to test the degree of confidence we may feel as to the verbal exactness of his quotations.

THE LOST LETTERS

Can we hope that more of the many lost originals will come to light? From Circular 335 we learn that 34 autograph letters were available for despatch to Rome in December 1845 when the Founder's cause of beatification was approaching the stage of the study of his writings. Since that date, therefore (bearing in mind the loss of the Château-Porcien letter), 20 more have been discovered — an average of approximately one every seven years, which would make the next discovery overdue by eight years! However, the first of the new discoveries accounted for a single batch of 10 letters (those addressed to Mathias) found in a loft of the presbytery of Pernes (Vaucluse) at some unspecified date between 1850 and 1856. Following that, single finds were made or notified successively in 1860, 1871, post-1871, pre-1888, about 1900, ditto, 1915, about 1920, 1955 and 1969. The usual gap between the discoveries has therefore been about a dozen years but since there has been one gap of 35 years, perhaps our next discovery is not overdue after all. What chance is there of finding a treasure-trove of several letters together? The late Fr. André Rayez S.J., in a celebrated article entitled "Etudes Lasalliennes" in the January-March 1952 issue of the *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, did not exclude the possibility: "I remain convinced," he wrote, "that there are texts still to be gathered together or discovered, as, for example, the letters... It would be a rare stroke of good fortune to find some packets of these..." And the Institute's leading discoverer of Lasallian documents, Léon Aroz, is likewise hopeful. Commenting on the 1955 and 1969 finds, he adds: "Others, no doubt, await the lucky touch of some researcher." (CL 40,1)

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THE SCHOOL CLIENTELE OF THE LASALLIAN SCHOOLS AT THEIR BEGINNINGS

The term "clientele", today used in business, meant in those days the group of people, most often poor, who enjoyed the protection and services of a "maître ès loi" or a "patron" who could defend their interests. It was inevitable that gratitude should give rise to duties on the part of this "clientele". The relation between "maître" and "client" was not that between master and servant or today's employer and workman or employee. It was certainly different to that which St. John Baptist de La Salle required between the teachers and those whom he called their "disciples" rather than pupils, but it was very akin since it was a relationship based on a service freely given, freely sought, and gratuitous.

In the 18th century schools were not much sought after by the poor because the instruction given seemed:

- rather useless for essentially manual trades;
- too long to acquire when one had to earn one's living at an early age;
- unattainable if one had to pay or if long journeys were required from the country to the nearest built up area;
- segregationist, the poor being separated from the rich in schools which were free or in separate schools.

The employment of teacher in the elementary school was considered as a means of earning one's daily bread by those whom Canon Blain called "mercenary teachers", that is the writing masters and the masters of boarding establishments and the "small schools" (Petites écoles) who were organized in powerful trade unions having scant tolerance for any rivals. In spite of the law which obliged them to receive the poor gratuitously, they paid little attention to it. Diminishing the number of their non fee paying pupils seemed to them to be the way of improving the teaching given to the fee payers; refusal to accept ill-clothed children who were often absent for family reasons seemed to them to be a service rendered to the others, a service which the better-off families willingly remunerated.

ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE COMES TO FILL THE VACUUM

Not a school vacuum, for schools existed:

★ Colleges run by congregations or religious orders (Oratorians, Jesuits, Doctrinarians...) and colleges dependent on the towns or universities. But they hardly prepared for any other than a gentleman's career and were not adapted to the needs of the working classes, even when it was the rule that day students paid nothing, as with the Jesuits.

★ Elementary and middle schools run by the "Boarding masters and those of the Little schools" and by the "writing masters". They were relatively numerous since they admitted only a few children and were jealous of any concurrence. In Paris the local government had to intervene and forbid the opening of new ones at less than 200 metres the one from the other. But the poor were repulsed and hardly took the risk.

★ Charitable schools run by the parishes or by general hospitals for the children who were most deprived. But this gratuity entailed the trustees refusing to admit children not in need. The result was

real social segregation. It was humiliating. Families who were not destitute avoided them. They preferred to pay the teachers, being ready to shorten their children's education when funds ran out.

But a vacuum as regards teachers' training establishments for:

★ The writing masters, experts in account writing, trained their own helpers or apprentices.

★ The teachers of the Little schools and the charitable schools had the benefit in Paris and certain big towns like Lyon (with Demia) of four annual meetings directed by the Education Officer or High Chancellor, who was the diocesan Director of the schools for the working classes. That was about all.

They also were trained by a practical apprenticeship being in contact with the pupils and an older teacher.

★ The project of creating "teachers' seminaries" proposed by Chennevières and Demia was not realised till after those founded by Saint John Baptist de La Salle. Demia, moreover, in a printed notice and in an unpublished personal memorandum (an edition is now being prepared) refers to an example established before 1688 in Rheims by the Founder of the *Brothers of the Christian Schools*. He asked the authorities to facilitate the creation of similar training centres in Lyon and every French diocese.

THE FIRST OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE'S PUPILS WERE EDUCATED BY APPRENTICE TEACHERS ENGAGED IN THE WORKING CLASS SCHOOLS

★ In Rheims, Nyel recruited teachers to open a number of schools in the town and in the region. St. John Baptist de La Salle took them into his home to train them to a more ordered life: the habit of prayer, the use of free time to study the catechism and to prepare the lessons to be given, healthy recreation by excursions together.

★ As the numbers of the teachers increased, new recruits stayed for a while in the Rue de Courtrai to see first how this new community of the *Brothers of the Christian Schools* lived and to be initiated into the teaching methods. This was, then, a kind of novitiate-normal school which it is difficult to define exactly.

★ In succession to the uneducated people who at first came to Nyel there now came new personnel who had attended the colleges and sometimes had even acquired a good Latin culture as was the case with Gabriel Drolin and Henri Lheureux. Creative reflection was now superimposed on the *integral pragmatism* of the teaching methods previously used. The theological and spiritual training given by J.B. de La Salle, doctor in theology, completes the formation of those who are preparing to become *Brothers of the Christian Schools*.

★ To meet the needs of the countryside, La Salle establishes also the *Seminary for country teachers*. After four years of reflection, it became an established fact in Rheims in 1687 or perhaps already in 1686 in part of the present house of the Brothers in the Rue de Courtrai. The Founder defined by deed that such a teachers' seminary was an integral part of the duties which could devolve on the Brothers but also that these country teachers, qualified to spend some time in the *Brothers'* schools, did not belong to the Lasallian congregation whose rules provided for life in common as a constant support. The country teachers could live on their own and help the parish priests who had no curates. They were not forbidden the priesthood; it was compatible with their functions (example Antoine Forget who trained in Paris for six months under St. John Baptist de La Salle's direction and left for Canada to run the school of the Sulpicians).

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THE DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN (1):
A WORK CHARACTERISTIC
OF DE LA SALLE

What would Don Quixote have been without Cervantes? What would Cervantes be without Don Quixote? In the great masterpieces of human genius author and work are one. The work is a portrait of the author and in it he continues to live and speak to mankind.

For the seeker, who wishes to discover the personality of the author, the surest way and the most rewarding sources of study are to be found in his representative works, whatever their nature. For this reason and because I consider the treatise on "The Duties of A Christian" one of the best works that have come from the pen of de La Salle, I believe I can find in it the characteristic traits of the rich and many faceted personality of the man from Rheims. I shall confine myself, intentionally, to showing how "The Duties of A Christian" throws into relief the triple dimension of de La Salle as Founder, Theologian and Catechist.

1. THE FOUNDER

Charism attains its full dimension in the Founders of Congregations. Each Founder exemplifies in a concrete manner one of the many functions in the Mystical Body. For de La Salle it was to be "the christian education of poor children through the school". Providence led him gently and progressively to the difficult but effective task of redemption of ignorant and abandoned children.

The path of renunciation was signposted by painful episodes from the moment he took over the direction of his infant foundation: the heart-rending break with his family; the "nonsense" of distributing his goods to the poor when both he and the Brothers were starving; the "burning of his boats" when he resigned his canonry...

Nevertheless, all this, however heroic, did not exhaust the charism of the Founder of the Christian Schools. His sons, the Brothers, and their pupils needed to nourish their spirit, strengthen their will, warm their hearts and enlighten their faith. It was for this reason and with this aim that the Founder, without having had even a remote preparation for such work, became by necessity and by his charism of founder, a schoolmaster and pedagogue who deserved to have his name inscribed in the history of universal education.

His biographers show him to us at different moments in his intense and busy life, sometimes replacing a Brother in the classroom for a catechism lesson, at other times writing treatises on pedagogy, catechetics and asceticism for the use of the Brothers. "After having established all the practices and customs of the community (1695-1698) he turned his attention to providing it with works useful to the Brothers and their schools... catechisms of several kinds, simple for the pupils, more advanced and of greater depth for the Brothers, and all accompanied by moral precepts and pious practices. These are the sources from which the masters of the Christian Schools draw their enlightenment in order to explain the great mysteries of religion" (Blain).

Maillefer, a relative of the saint, also affirms that he composed "several works of piety as well for the instruction of the pupils as for the use of the Brothers who were in charge of them."

To which work is he referring? By that time (1714) almost all the writings of the saint had been published, including "The Duties of A Christian".

Blain goes into detail: "After having established all the practices and customs of the community he turned his attention to providing it with works useful to the Brothers and their schools... catechisms of several kinds..." Surely one of those catechisms was "The Duties of A Christian". What is more, the charism of the Founder reaches out beyond the religious family circle to other educators, to their pupils and to the faithful in general. The author of the preface to the edition of 1727 writes, "This catechism, full of solid and holy instruction, has been composed by its pious author for the benefit of persons engaged in teaching those who are sunk in deep ignorance of the mysteries of our holy religion." The vicar general of the diocese of Rouen, in his approval of the "The Duties of A Christian" in 1796, declares, "This work seems to us to be well adapted to the instruction of children and useful to the masters who teach them as well as to all sorts of people."

Whether de La Salle intended it or not, the fact remains that "The Duties of A Christian" provided the Brothers, lay teachers and catechists, for over a hundred years, with a solid and efficacious aid and at the same time served as a teaching manual of the faith for hundreds of thousands of French children. That was a product of the charism of de La Salle the Founder.

2. THE CATECHIST

The catechetical role of de La Salle is a consequence of his charism as Founder. It is in the seminary of Saint Sulpice that we must look for his catechetical formation. There he learned from the lips of remarkable catechists (Tronson... and especially Baüyn) the pedagogy of practical catechesis. Besides the weekly conference Baüyn gave an additional one each month which the seminarists were free to attend. This conference was devoted exclusively to practical catechetics: one of the most experienced catechists explained the catechism in the presence of the students. Could this have been the origin of our catechism of "formation"?

It was said of him, "A man so zealous for the salvation and sanctification of children inspired a similar zeal in many priests who passed through his hands. The most illustrious of these were de La Salle and Grignon de Montfort".

The biographer, Maillefer, describes the Founder and Superior of the Brothers thus: "He passed from row to row, instructing the children in the principles of the Christian life, speaking to them gently and inspiring in them docility, attention and modesty by

his affability. His reproofs, when necessary, produced fruit in the hearts of these young boys and a change in their conduct and manners soon became apparent. In a word he became a child among children. He enlightened their minds, touched their hearts, gave them the witness of his example and led them gently and spontaneously to a Christian "metanoia".

Could any catechetical method be better?

THE "PARENTAGE" OF "THE DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN"

Blain presents an image of the catechist of Rheims writing "catechisms of various kinds, simple for the children, more advanced and of greater depth for the Brothers". This statement makes it possible for us to speak of "parentage" of "The Duties of A Christian" in which all the sections have common characteristics. Here are some of them:

UNITY

Unity defines a family. In that of "The Duties" all its members share the same spiritual heritage. The style and vocabulary, taking account of the demands of adaptation, are transmitted from one to the other, as is shown by internal criticism.

HIERARCHY

Family bonds and relationships differ with the members of a generation. In "The Duties", from the first part, which contains nearly five hundred pages, to the "*Profession of Ten Articles of Faith which the Christian must know and believe*", in one page, there is a grading of contents and methods to suit those for whom they are intended in conformity with the aim of each treatise. What is remarkable is their interdependence and mutual resemblance.

ESSENTIAL MEANING

As the members of a family grow away from their roots secondary traits tend to disappear but basic traits remain. Here again, de La Salle stands out as an eminent theologian and catechist in his own time and by his vision of the future. In the "*Little Summary*" often used in the catechisms on the *Principal Mysteries*, the Commandments of God and of the Church are merely listed but in several questions the themes of Christ, the Church, the Sacraments, particularly Penance and the Eucharist, are studied. He summarises himself but retains the essentials of the Christian message. De La Salle is more a catechist and theologian than a moralist.

WORKS COMPLEMENTARY TO "THE DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN"

De La Salle says with the Apostle St. James, that faith without good works is dead; that we must practise the maxims of the Gospel; that we must live according to its teaching etc. For this purpose we have another catechetical work from the pen of de La Salle as a complement to "The Duties". It is sufficient to mention the chapter headings since we take it for granted that the reader knows the contents of the manual and the persons for whom it was intended: "Instructions and Prayers for Holy Mass", "Method of Preparing for a good Confession", "Instructions and Prayers for Holy Communion", "The Public Worship which Christians must give to God", "Exercises of Piety and Spiritual Canticles".

Even reading the titles of these works is enough to fill us with admiration, respect and gratitude.

HOLY SCRIPTURE IN "THE DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN"

Revelation and Tradition constitute the leit motif of "The Duties". De La Salle is a master of Sacred Scripture. He venerates the Sacred Books and considers them as his first and principal rule of life... It is not surprising then that he uses them with consummate skill. In "The Duties" he employs them in various ways. Sometimes, but rarely, the scripture text appears verbatim, as when he lists the Commandments of Divine Law and reproduces the words of the institution of the Eucharist... Often he suits the biblical quotation to the text of "The Duties" as for example on the very first page which begins: "Jesus Christ saying in the Gospel that eternal life consists in knowing the one true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent on earth..."

In the evangelical introduction to the Decalogue we read: "Charity comprises two things: love of God and love of our neighbour. This is what Jesus Christ means when He says that there are really only two Commandments which comprise the whole Law. At other times he is content to say succinctly: "As the wise man says"; "as Jesus Christ says in the Gospel..." Many pages look like a scriptural arabesque but without the slightest allusion to the text or authors from which passages are taken. The chapters on the Life, Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus are masterpieces of adaptation.

In the Lasallian catechism there are numerous pages where passages of Scripture are so employed that they give the impression of being the author's own thoughts. The ideas and biblical expression combine so naturally that they become beliefs and precepts for both the author and the reader of "The Duties of A Christian". If you omitted the passages referred to, many pages of the work would have no meaning. What would be left of the treatise "De Deo"? of the creation of the angels? More importantly, what would be left of the Mystery of Redemption?

With the skill of an artist matching his colours, de La Salle moves from one evangelist to another to paint the multi-coloured life of the Word Incarnate, dead and risen again.

The alpha and omega of "The Duties" are expressed in two passages which make direct allusion to the Holy Gospel. We shall finish our reflections with them. The catechism opens with these words which are a programme in themselves: "Jesus Christ says in the Holy Gospel that eternal life consists in knowing the one true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent on earth. All that a Christian should strive for in this life is to know God in Himself and in all that He has made, and the Son of God made man and all He has done for our salvation, that is to say, the *Gospel*."

When de La Salle puts the last touches to the dome of the classical edifice of "The Duties of A Christian" he places there the living stone of the Word: "The principal effect that these prayers should produce in us is to lead us to *practise the maxims of the Holy Gospel*. It is also the greatest benefit we can draw from the knowledge (cf Prologue) of the Sacred Mysteries and the teaching of the Church."

3. THE THEOLOGIAN

For the composition of the nearly two thousand pages which make up his catechisms de La Salle needed tranquillity and time. His life as Founder and superior of the Brothers afforded him no such tranquillity and time. He was compelled to draw on treatises in use at the time and to adapt them to his purpose. In the choice he made and in his adaptations we can see both his sensibility as a catechist and his competence as a theologian. Let us examine briefly how he, a doctor in theology, drew his inspiration from these sources and at times surpassed them in his catechetical treatises. Let it suffice here to refer to four of his sources: Holy Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, Claude Joly and Jacques Le Coreur. We shall deal with the first two later on.

CLAUDE JOLY

"The Duties of A Christian" of de La Salle follows so closely the catechism of the Bishop of Agen that we find the following evidence given at the time of the beatification of the educator from Rheims "Another edition, in continuous style, which we found in the same library and which bears the name de La Salle was printed in Rheims in 1779, that is, sixty years after his death. This book, in its contents, is similar to that of Monseigneur Joly. How did the Venerable Servant of God come to resemble so closely the Bishop of Agen? On the other hand, the author of the first life of the Venerable does not mention this book."

A close comparison between the bishop's catechism and that of the priest leads us to the following observation: John Baptist de La Salle used the work of Joly particularly in the composition of the part of his book dealing with moral principles.

In the treatise "De Praeceptis", the commandments of God and of the Church, only eleven pages out of fifty-nine in "The Duties of A Christian" do not show a visible influence. There are, also, long paragraphs where the correspondence is almost verbatim. The chapters on Sin and the Virtues corroborate the resemblance between the two works. Only FIVE pages out of FIFTY-ONE do not bear the mark of Joly.

The influence of the Bishop of Agen in the treatise "De Sacramentis" is minimal, but once the subject of moral is touched upon, as for instance, in the conditions for making a good confession, the authority of Claude Joly is clearly evident.

The reason why the author of "The Duties of A Christian" followed so faithfully, and on the subject of moral, exclusively, the work of the bishop, is revealed by his own conduct. On numerous occasions he advised his followers not to get involved in deciding whether a sin was mortal or venial. The most they could tell their pupils was that it was serious.

Apart from the chapters which we have qualified as moral there is little to indicate the influence of Claude Joly. Of the THIRTY-FIVE pages taken up with other treatises, ELEVEN, most in the section "De Sacramentis", borrow only definitions, while the other TWENTY-FOUR draw from the source with great moderation.

JACQUES LE COREUR

Is the name Jacques Le Coreur, priest, doctor of theology and confessor in the parish of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois, that of the author of "*The Principal Duties of A Christian*"? Some evidence suggests that it is: In any case the catechism was written for use in the missions that the author gave to people who had made their First Communion. This explains why it contains four hundred and sixty pages and deals here and there with matters of casuistry.

The roles of Joly and Le Coreur in the work of de La Salle are complementary. The influence of Joly is most evident in the *section dealing with moral*, that of Le Coreur in "De Sacramentis", particularly. The contributions of the latter are more evenly spread throughout "The Duties of A Christian".

The first section of Chapter IV of "The Duties of A Christian" shows evidence of "*Principal Duties of A Christian*" in the more difficult areas of theology. The inspiration of Le Coreur is felt in two places only in the chapter "De Ecclesia" and then only in matters of theology.

The missionary priest rarely makes his influence felt in the treatise "De Praeceptis" and when he does it is only to provide a definition or a doctrinal passage of little importance.

It is in the seven sections on the Capital or Deadly Sins that the complementary roles of Joly and Le Coreur become more evident. De La Salle borrows verbatim from both for almost the whole of his catechism. Naturally the passages taken from one source and reproduced in "The Duties of A Christian" do not appear in the other. The only coincidence of both is found in the section dealing with *other sins*, a sequel to the Capital Sins.

In the treatise "De Sacramentis", the influence of the catechist from Amiens on the Saint of Rheims is most evident. As we cannot follow them step by step we must be content with the following observations:

a) Le Coreur's authority is always evident in arguable cases or in matters of casuistry as for example, "If the damned retain or do not retain the sacramental character and why; who can communicate under both species? and why the ordinary faithful may not do so; when the priest may and should refuse absolution..."

b) For the ceremonies in connection with reception of the sacraments in general and in particular for Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage and especially for Penance and Holy Orders.

c) For definitions of the sacraments in general. The definitions of Confirmation, the Eucharist, under various appellations, and Holy Orders are taken verbatim from Le Coreur.

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In the second number of *Lasalliana* (paper 02-A-12) I gave a general account of "The Management of Christian Schools" in order to situate the work in the context of the 17th-18th centuries, at the beginning of the Institute.

Those few pages underlined the importance and interest of the text but without showing with precision the richness of its contents. That richness will be better shown by a more detailed study of some aspects of the work.

The first part will consist of a detailed account of the conditions under which the first Brothers or schoolmasters worked as regards time, accommodation and programmes. It is possible to reconstruct these elements fairly accurately from references scattered throughout the "Manuscript of 1706" and the "Edition of 1720" of "The Management of Schools". These two texts can be read simultaneously in the *Cahiers Lasalliens*, No. 24.

LARGE MIXED ABILITY CLASSES

The number of boys in a class was at least 50 and often more. The scarcity of schools, the rising demand of the urban working classes for education from the mid-seventeenth century and the undoubted success of the Brothers' schools were some of the reasons for the large classes.

More than by their numbers the pupils were characterised by their differences of background, origin and age. In that era compulsory school attendance was unknown and there was no fixed legal age for beginning or ending one's school career. Enrolment of a child in a school and the length of time he spent there were matters for the parents. The problem of when a boy left school is often referred to in different ways in the "Management" and you can guess that it was a source of constant worry to de La Salle and the Brothers who naturally considered that early leaving meant an incomplete and unsatisfactory education. From other indications in the "Management" and particularly from those referring to writing, which was taught after the age of ten and preferably before twelve, it can be deduced that the majority of pupils were between ten and twelve with extreme cases ranging from six to fifteen or over.

CRAMPED, AUSTERE BUILDINGS

Though we complain today of the lack of teaching space, particularly in the inner cities, nevertheless, we have buildings which are purpose built and sufficiently large and functional. This was not always the case in the early days of the Institute. The schools were usually ordinary houses adapted to the needs of teaching. The floor space considered suitable, as mentioned in the edition of 1720, varied from 25 to 35 square metres for the younger children and from 35 to 43 square metres for senior pupils.

When you consider the number of boys in a class you can form an idea of the space available to each pupil!

Within this space the furnishings were rudimentary: benches and boards or tables for lessons. There was little individual equipment beyond the bare necessities for writing, a reading book for the senior pupils and a catechism. On the subject of equipment you should re-read the last chapter of the edition of 1720.

Of course, such material conditions were not exceptional at the time. They were the lot of most schools for the working classes but they help us to realize to what extent the skill and authority of the teacher had to make up for the lack of teaching equipment.

AN OVERLOADED TIME-TABLE

"The Management of Christian Schools" does not provide a time-table properly so called for the whole day or the whole week but in reading from chapter to chapter especially of the first part we can glean enough fragmentary information to reconstruct an approximate time-table for the master.

The programming of certain activities such as spelling and Latin remains rather imprecise but the following approximation will give a good idea of what was done and when.

Time-table for an ordinary week

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7,30	Study of Catechism	Study of Catechism	Study of Catechism		Study of Catechism	Study of Catechism	
8,00	Prayer /Breakfast Writing	Prayer /Breakfast Writing	Prayer /Breakfast Writing	Customary school holiday except when a least occurs during the week	Prayer /Breakfast Writing	Prayer /Breakfast Writing	
9,00	Reading	Reading	Reading		Reading	Reading	
10,00	Prayer Reflection	Prayer Reflection	Prayer Reflection		Prayer Reflection	Prayer Reflection	PRAYER
11,30	MASS	MASS	MASS		MASS	MASS	MASS
13,00	Study	Study	Study		Study	Study	CATECHISM
13,30	Reading in registers	Arithmetic	Reading in registers		Arithmetic	Reading	VESPERS
15,00	Writing	Writing	Catechism (1 hour)		Writing	Writing	
16,00	Catechism Prayer Exam. of Conscience	Catechism Prayer Exam. of Conscience	Prayer Exam. of Conscience		Catechism Prayer Exam. of Conscience	Catechism Prayer Exam. of Conscience	

The rigidity of such a time-table is more apparent than real. Many imponderable elements forced the schools to be more flexible: the customs of the parish, the number of pupils in the class, the natural rhythm of the seasons as well as fairs and other events of the local calendar.

The essential thing is to estimate the workload that this imposed on the Brothers or masters. In practice, each teacher spent approximately forty hours a week with the same pupils. This certainly allowed him to get to know each one personally and thoroughly.

We must add that the school year was also long: except for a few holidays scattered throughout the year and especially at Easter, the school holidays consisted of the month of September. We have then, to reckon with a school year of at least 46 or 47 weeks which was quite a lot when compared to the present school year in most countries. (It was approximately 280 days)

These figures help us to understand the references to fatigue and overwork, even to the illnesses of teachers and the consequent interruption in the school's work.

* * *

The organization of the school time-table illustrates one of the major and constant concerns of the Institute: to educate children one must be with them. "Children being under the care of teachers from morning to evening, they can teach them to live well".

This accords with the general concept of formation current in the eighteenth century: the child is an apprentice who must learn from a "master", as in all other trades.

It explains also why the terms "model" and "good example" are so important and so often used in the "Management" as means of formation. The master is the one who must always provide models and examples in school activities as in his own behaviour.

Because children, especially "children of artisans and the poor" as de La Salle so often recalls, do not find such models at home, it is essential to send them to a Christian school and to keep them there as long as possible.

* * *

School conditions as we know them, particularly in secondary schools and centres of higher education, are very different from those described in the "Management of Christian Schools". That does not absolve us, as individuals or groups, from asking ourselves the following questions:

- 1) "To live with the young in order to educate them". Is that important today?
- 2) Have we calculated the total number of hours we spend with our pupils? What conclusions do we draw from this?
- 3) Does this time help us to get to know them and help them in their development and growth?
- 4) What can we change in the internal organization of the school or in our own conduct to improve the situation?
- 5) If we do not know our pupils what meaning can we give to our vocation of Christian educators?

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One of the first essentials for the first Brothers with their large and heterogeneous classes was the organization of the time table and the programmes. The aim of the "Management" was precisely to propose actual methods of organization based on successful experimentation to inexperienced young teachers.

The following chart enables one to understand better how the different kinds of lessons were introduced and distributed and, therefore to give an idea of the normal school career of the pupil. It is immediately evident that the disciplines are introduced progressively one after the other while the new pupil devoted the greater part of his time to reading and the various religious exercises prescribed for the school.

PLAN FOR SCHOOL COURSES

Plan of School courses in the conduct of Schools

<p>1) READING LESSONS</p> <p>1. Alphabetical chart</p> <p>2. Spelling chart: beginners</p> <p>3. Spelling Book: moderate advanced beginners</p> <p>4. First book: moderate advanced beginners</p> <p>5. Second book: moderate advanced beginners</p> <p>6. Third Book: moderate advanced beginners</p> <p>7. The Psalms: moderate advance beginners</p> <p>8. Politeness: moderate advanced beginners</p> <p>9. Handwriting: moderate advanced</p>	<p>2) LATIN</p> <p>beginners advanced</p>	<p>3) WRITING</p> <p>Round Inclined</p> <p>1st Order 1st Order</p> <p>2nd Order 2nd Order</p> <p>3rd Order 3rd Order</p> <p>4th Order 4th Order</p> <p>5th Order 5th Order</p> <p>6th Order</p> <p>7th Order</p> <p>8th Order</p>	<p>4) ARITHMETIC</p> <p>Addition</p> <p>Subtraction</p> <p>Multiplication</p> <p>Division</p>	<p>5) SPELLING</p>
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N.B. *In reading*: "All pupils, at all stages, except those reading from the charts, will be divided into three sections: 1st beginners, 2nd moderate, and 3rd advanced and perfect in that lesson."

"There will however be only two sections in 'Politeness'. The first will be those who make errors in reading it, the second those who make none". "All the pupils in the three sections on the lessons will however read together without discrimination or discernment, as the teacher will tell them".

READING was, therefore, the first initiation into school life. And the Management of Schools in no way differs from the customary practice in 17th century France. Some primary schools, indeed, offered only this teaching. Others added arithmetic but rarely handwriting which was the monopoly of the "writing masters", and this explains the difficulties M. De La Salle had with this corporation.

LATIN. "The book in which they will learn to read is the book of Psalms; only those will be admitted to this lesson who can read French perfectly". This sentence recalls the important revolution which De La Salle introduced into the schools by having the child learn to read in his mother tongue.

WRITING. Because of the instruments in use at that time, this art demanded a long and difficult apprenticeship. "The children must be able to read perfectly in French as well as in Latin before beginning to write". "Arrangements will be made so that children do not learn to write before the age of 10". "If however a child should have reached the age of 12 without having started to write, he can start writing lessons before learning to read Latin providing he read French well and correctly.

ARITHMETIC. Arithmetic will be taught only to those who have started on the fourth stage of writing in the round and the second inclined and it will be the Director or the Inspector who appoints them to these lessons as well as to the others.

SPELLING. The teacher of handwriting will take care to teach spelling to those in the seventh stage of writing in the round and the fourth inclined, and the Inspector of Schools will pay attention to this.

SIMULTANEOUS TEACHING BUT DIFFERENTIATED

Such an organisation of the time table enables classes of homogeneous groups of pupils to be constituted for each of the subjects taught.

Within these groups there was real mobility each month when the changes of "Orders" or "Lessons" were made.

A class must therefore be seen not as a group of pupils doing the same work together but as a collection of distinct groups coexisting together and working simultaneously for secular subjects. The class became as one for catechism, prayers and religious offices. These groups were differentiated by the level of knowledge acquired and by the individual rhythm of progress.

The varying number of pupils in the classes and in the groups, differences in age, and sometimes dates of admission to the school were so many factors leading to suppleness and diversity in these groupings.

If we are to compare this kind of class with what we know of modern teaching practice we must refer to what is known as "subject level homogeneous groups" to be seen in some schools. We can thus note the modernity of some of the concepts put forward in the *Conduct of Schools*.

THE TWOFOLD OBJECTIVE OF ORDER AND EFFICIENCY

Strictness in progress and in the division of the children into the different Orders and Lessons allowed order to be established in the classroom. With the large numbers of pupils involved this was a necessity. It was also, no doubt, a means of avoiding having to have recourse to the "corrections" in use in the schools of the times and to which the Management refers at some length.

Order also allowed efficiency to be attained in a simultaneous teaching practice which was relatively recent in the 18th century in primary schools and which the Brothers tried to systematize from the very beginning. This is illustrated by a passage from a recent book. "General History of Teaching and Education in France" (Paris 1981):

"Besides the priority given to French, which was more or less exclusive, other pedagogical innovations explain the success and efficacy of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Established in towns and always in groups of two or three, they are thus able to divide their pupils into classes and different groups according to their level. The homogeneity thus obtained enabled the individual method to be dispensed with by occupying all the children in a group in the same activity. This "simultaneous" method experimented with in the 16th century had already developed in the 17th century in the east of France where in the schools of Pierre FOURIER there were three levels in reading: that of the alphabet, that of the printed book, and a higher level where the pupils learnt to read manuscript registers... But it was with the Brothers of the Christian schools that the method was systematically applied at all levels of apprenticeship to the rudiments". (*Various authors*, Vol. II, pp. 440-441)

* * *

Besides efficiency and order, this organization shows that attention is paid to the person of the child for it allows his abilities and progress to be taken into account. It is a personalized approach to teaching.

Assuring order and efficiency is also a means of showing the respect one has for the child and especially for the poor who have no time to lose in inefficient schools.

Differences in age also permitted the employment of mutual aid among the pupils. Generally speaking one can see a tentative effort at mutual teaching.

It is not perhaps the actual methods of organization in which we are interested today, but we can look into the essential and lasting educational orientations they imply.

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FIFTY YEARS OF THE "RIVISTA LASALLIANA"

At fifty years of age a man's life reaches its highest point of maturity. For a review, fifty years represent the work of four generations of editors. This is the case with "Rivista Lasalliana", a quarterly review of pedagogical formation and information published by the Brothers of the Christian Schools of Italy.

ITS ORIGINS

Brother Goffredo Savoré founded the "Rivista Lasalliana" in Turin in 1934. He was then fifty years of age and at the height of his activities as educator, writer and scholar. He gathered round him a group of Brothers in their thirties as collaborators and editors of the review. The "Rivista Lasalliana" should, therefore, be considered in the context of the District which produced it. Seen thus, it was a communal effort and a high point in the cultural history of the Province.

ITS AIMS

The basic plan which set out the aims of the "Rivista Lasalliana" and directed it on its way, not always without difficulties and obstacles, served as a guide in the choice of subjects treated and gave pride of place to Lasallian studies and articles of a pedagogic and educative nature.

You can read the guiding principles in the articles of foundation of 1934. "The aim of the 'Rivista Lasalliana' is to serve as a review of religious and professional formation for the Brothers. This objective is to be attained by a thorough study of the life and teaching of St. John Baptist de La Salle, of the life and work of the Institute and of the teaching of the Church, especially in the field of asceticism. Among the means to be employed is a deeper study, in the light of modern experience, of the principles, methods and factors which influenced the pedagogy of de La Salle and his disciples with a view to avoiding being trapped in an unthinking routine."

ITS CONTENT

It has always specialised in Lasallian themes, treated in their broadest sense. Consequently it publishes articles on pedagogy, philosophy, moral theology and asceticism under their historical, theoretical and practical aspects. It pays particular attention to the study of the traditions and methods, both organizational and didactic, of our Institute with a view to their formative value.

Studies and articles fall under the following general headings:

- Lasallian Studies.
- Lasallian Literature.
- Lasallian Texts.
- Ascetical and Mystical Writings.
- Catechetics.

- Methodology and Teaching.
- Pedagogy and Philosophy.
- Review of books published in the Institute or works relating to it.

COLLABORATION

At first collaboration was limited to what the Brothers themselves could provide but was gradually extended to the Lasallian educative community by inviting contributions from lay teachers, parents and university professors who shared the Lasallian outlook. This collaboration produced richer and deeper insights into Lasallian culture and the review became the "property" of the entire educative community.

This collaboration should not be limited to the review but should become an integral part of the professional responsibility of teachers and educators in all our institutions.

DIFFUSION

Very soon the "Rivista Lasalliana" went beyond the confines of Lasallian institutions and found its way into religious, pedagogic and educative centres as well as into the faculties of religious studies and pedagogy of Italian and foreign universities, libraries and the publishing houses of similar reviews (Approximately fifty, thanks to the exchange system between reviews).

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

In recent years the need has become acute to keep pace with contemporary realities which speak a new language and talk in terms of a new culture produced and conditioned by modern technological progress. This "aggiornamento" must be achieved without betraying the principles on which the review was founded. With this in mind the review, formerly reserved to the Brothers, has enlarged the circle of its readers to include lay teachers, lay educationalists and pedagogical research workers. It tries to present the pedagogical insights and spiritual teaching of de La Salle in a manner which appeals to modern readers.

The language used has, consequently, to be adapted to the experience of modern society without regard to distinctions of class or culture. Basing itself on this principle the review has taken on a more flexible character, better adapted to concrete reality.

In keeping with this new outlook it invites competent contributors to write on.

★ Different experiments in the religious and educational fields as lived at various levels within the framework of the Institute.

★ Education today examined in the light of the teaching of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

★ The creativity shown in educational experiments which requires theoretical structuring.

★ Recent thinking on the organization of teaching within the framework of current pedagogical development.

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03-B-12

SAINT PIUS X INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED CATECHETICAL STUDIES

A SHORT HISTORY

The Saint Pius X Institute for advanced Catechetical Studies was founded by the Congregation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools on 12 October 1955. The Sacred Congregation Religious approved it and declared it Pontifical on 25 March 1960.

Under the patronage of His Holiness Pope Paul VI, the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities raised its academic status by incorporating it into the Pontifical University of Salamanca on 18th April, 1965, and declaring it part of the theological faculty, under the title of The Pontifical Institute of Religious Sciences, with power to award the Baccalaureate and Licenciante of the Institute. In 1965 a Board of Governors was formed composed of Visitors who had student Brothers at the centre.

By the decree "Sacrae Catecheseos" of 18 April 1965, the Institute was incorporated in the Theological Faculty under the title of "The Saint Pius X Institute for Advanced Catechetical Studies" and subjected to the statutes of the said faculty besides its own statutes.

The academic year 1977-78 saw it transferred to its new site in Madrid, a move which had become necessary for various reasons. The negotiations with the ecclesiastical hierarchy for this move had painful results. It was granted on condition that the courses were reduced and the Baccalaureate or basic course in Theology were suppressed and the centre limited to the second grade: licenciante in two years.

THE INSTITUTE'S OBJECTIVES

From the beginning the Institute proposed objectives which are still valid today. a) The training of experts in the Catechetical Sciences. b) Producing people qualified to educate in the faith in state and private schools at all levels. c) The training of research workers in the disciplines more directly connected with Catechesis and Education. To attain these objectives, the Institute includes fundamental and scientific studies of the Human Sciences, of Theology and of Catechetics which are necessary for teachers of the faith in all places where the Church is to be found.

THE BROTHERS' CONSIDERABLE EFFORTS

From the very beginning, the Saint Pius X Institute has required a great effort on the part of the Spanish Brothers. On speaking of effort, the question of expense immediately springs to mind, but one must also consider the great strain of providing a group of Brothers for the running and for the academic responsibility of the centre.

Many a time it has been asked whether the effort was worth while. Economically no. But yes in all other respects. Many are the Brothers who have studied at Saint Pius X and whose pastoral and catechetical activities are significant in their respective regions. Numerous also are the members of other religious orders who have passed through our classes. And perhaps we have obtained other benefits none the less real for being less evident such as new thinking on the theological studies of the Brothers, a re-evaluation of our mission as educators in the faith, a revitalization of our own catechetical and pastoral charism, etc.

We complain about the present situation because there are not many young Brothers studying at the Institute. Times of crisis are not inducive to large numbers. In spite of everything, the quantity and, above all, the quality of the Brothers is quite representative and their option for catechetics and pastoral work is unmistakable and specifically Lasallian.

The Brothers of C.E.L. (Spanish Lasallian Centre) follow a course of both theology and catechetics. This is an additional motive for hope and a renewed consciousness of our efficacy.

THE ACADEMIC AND CREATIVE ASPECT

In this Institute, besides the academic courses, we direct our attention definitely towards creativity. Our vitality as an Institute depends on our creativity. Realising this, we take account of the catechetical needs of the moment so as to provide suitable answers. It is thus that various courses have been inaugurated: courses for the qualification of teachers of religion, correspondence courses in theology and Catechetics, school for the training of parish catechists, summer courses, various sessions throughout the year, etc...

We try, through our review "SINITE" as well as through the other publications of Saint Pius X Press, to make a modest contribution to a service of catechetical and pastoral reflection and action.

All this means that the spirit of this educational community of professors is always open to current catechetical thought, to the directives of the authorities and, above all, to the needs of those who devote themselves to one or other form of catechesis. Besides this, I think that the long years of work of the Saint Pius X Institute have contributed to creative thinking as regards catechetics, have taken the lead in the doctrinal and practical aspects of catechetics. Having considered anthropological catechetics and catechesis of experience, we have written books of religion on these as a basis, and provided catechetical directives for the education of children and young people in the faith.

The problems we have to face and the uncertainties which disturb us are numerous. But what is clear to us is our mission within the Church, the fact that we are able to meet the urgent need of training catechists, of educators in the faith, of leaders in the evangelizing action of the Church. We are committed to it and we hope that many others will undertake this task with enthusiasm.

Bro. José María MARTINEZ BELTRAN
Marquez de Mondejar, 32 - MADRID 28



THE LASALLIAN STUDY CIRCLE DISTRICT OF OTTAWA

03-B-13

The Lasallian Study Circle (Centre d'Etudes Lasalliennes, C.E.L.) of the District of Ottawa is the result of a resolution proposed at the last district chapter which asked the Brother Visitor and his Council to organise a renewal course for the Brothers, who so wished, based on a rediscovery of the Founder and his letters.

The first year, 1982-83, sixteen Brothers took part in C.E.L. In 1983-84 the number has risen to twenty. Likewise a number of young men who are more or less interested in the religious life joined the circle.

The C.E.L. calendar provides for six meetings during the school year, one Sunday a month from November to May. The Circle terminates its activities usually about the 15th of May when we celebrate the feast of St. John Baptist de La Salle over here.

Each session of the Circle follows the following pattern: the explanation of some Lasallian theme, 30 minutes; group discussion for 30 minutes followed sometimes by a plenary session. All the meetings end with a prayer followed by a reflection and a Celebration of the Word, about 20 minutes, and a community meal.

One Brother was responsible for introducing the subject during the first session. Three confreres took on this responsibility during the second.

The following are the subjects studied during the first year:

- 1) The Crises in the Life of De La Salle.
- 2) The Lasallian Vocation: Tending to Perfection through fidelity.
- 3) The Brother's Ministry as De La Salle Saw it.
- 4) The Spirit of Faith according to De La Salle.
- 5) The Founder's Place in my Religious Life Today.

During the discussions, the participants explored the following themes:

★ Discovering De La Salle's attitude when faced with a crisis. What personal application can we derive therefrom?

★ Try to discover what our fidelity should be, based on the "Considerations about our State and Employment".

★ Rediscovering what Saint John Baptist de La Salle says about our ministry in Meditations nos. 93, 193, 195 and 201.

★ Discussion about the Founder's teaching regarding the spirit of faith. How do we practice this today?

This year the members of C.E.L. have all agreed to make a study of the LASALLIAN PEDAGOGICAL PROJECT as the general theme under the following aspects.

- 1) The Place of the School in the Lasallian Project.
- 2) The Specific Object of the Lasallian Project: THE FREE SCHOOL.
- 3) De La Salle as the Trainer of Educators. How De La Salle Trained the First Brothers.
- 4) The Broad Outlines of De La Salle's Training of the First Brothers: Dialogue - Community - Commitment.

- 5) De La Salle and the discernment of Vocations.
- 6) De La Salle's Writings.

Such is a brief outline of the very modest effort in our district to nourish the devotion and interest of the Brothers in the Founder on the one hand, and, on the other, to shed Lasallian light on our apostolic life today.

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THE APOSTOLATE OF URBAN YOUTH IN AFRICA

Brother Vincent Rabemahafaly, Secretary to "African Encounter and Collaboration", continues to deal here with the problem of youth which is one of the principal preoccupations of the Church in Africa. R.C.A. is an organization for collaboration between the Conference of African Bishops and the Superiors General of Congregations working in Africa. The last number of "Lasalliana" contained an article on the Apostolate of Rural Youth. This is the other half of the picture, the Apostolate of Urban Youth.

I) THE FACTS

First of all there is the huge proportion of young people resulting from a spectacular population explosion. Africa has a young population, being composed, for the most part, of countries with 45 to 50% of the people under 15 years and about 55 to 60% under 25.

Besides the numerical importance of the young there are two additional factors: the rapid urbanization of Africa which sees mushroom cities spring up at an alarming rate and the exodus from rural areas which, together with urbanization, affects mainly the young.

Several causes explain this fact which it would be interesting to study in each sector of the population.

The African urban population is composed of young people. A typical example is Nairobi where 78% of the inhabitants are under 30 and, of these, 30% are between 15 and 20 years of age.

II) CATEGORIES OF YOUNG TOWNDWELLERS

★ Educated young people. This is the largest group comprising pupils of primary and secondary level and the students from whose ranks comes the challenge to established institutions. This group has benefited most from the work of the Church.

★ Young Workers. These are people who can fend for themselves but who are often exploited because they have no work contracts. No trades union looks after their interests. The Church is still seeking a means of helping them.

★ The young unemployed or job seekers. Coming from the villages or "shanty towns" they seek casual work to survive. They are the "Parking Boys" or "Carry your parcel, Ma'm Boys" of the large cities. They are not only left to their wretched lot but are mistrusted because of their misdeeds.

★ Groups of young people brought together by ethnic, cultural or regional ties. These groups play the part of traditional age groups.

★ Young people in public service: army recruits, police recruits, civil servants. We could add to these the younger members of the single political party, a phenomenon common in Africa.

★ Juvenile delinquents. Delinquency among the youth of the rapidly expanding cities is a major problem. Alcoholism, drug abuse and prostitution are on the increase.

QUESTIONS. Are there other such groups of young people in the city or town where your Community is at work? Which group is most at risk and what would you propose to do in order to help its members?

III) ASPIRATIONS AND NEEDS OF URBAN YOUTH

A) Urban youth has many desires and aspirations, not all of equal value.

★ They want to enjoy to the full the benefits of modern civilization. That means a comfortable life symbolised by a well-furnished home, a car and plenty of money and they will go to any lengths to get them. This desire to enjoy the comforts of modern life does not take away, however, a certain nostalgia for traditional society which appears to them a lost paradise and which they would like to see revived. Community spirit is still strong amongst them, and if many students aspire to a respectable position it is because they want to be in a position to help the family and social group.

★ They want to have a profession or a trade in order to find work. Diplomas are often over valued in the struggle for professional status, but it frequently happens that because the school is ill adapted to African needs many young people find themselves without any practical training. The qualified young person knows very well that personal worth is not enough and that he must win the favour of the personnel manager in the traditional manner. Once employed he must turn a blind eye to corruption, otherwise he risks finding himself in the unemployment queue. In the face of such difficulties the young person does not know where to turn.

★ Young people seek justice and freedom. In general, they support the objectives, often praiseworthy enough, of the party in power in their country but feel that in daily life the fine speeches about progress and justice are rarely put into practice. This leads to frustration. It is the students who show most daring in expressing their aspirations for freedom and justice.

★ Openness to and desire for a spiritual dimension. There is in the African soul a strong inclination to mysticism. Large numbers of young Africans belong to the existing religious system with its multiplicity of sects which have sprung up everywhere. To this is added a tendency to go back to ancient traditions and cultural habits.

★ Demand for a Church more congenial to the African soul. Accusing the institutional Church of having compromised with the colonial regimes, some young Africans consider it a factor in their alienation. They do not feel at home in a Church which preaches a morality so foreign to them and so demanding. They would like the Church a little less clerical and much more simple, less associated with the great and more in sympathy with ordinary people...

B) Needs of the young. Parallel with the aspirations of young people there are real needs which a realistic apostolate should try to meet.

The R.C.A. report examines some of these needs. We shall merely mention them:

- need for family solidarity and assistance;
- need for an education which is adapted to the milieu and a preparation for living;
- need for responsible adults who will serve as leaders and examples in social life;
- need to understand the Christian faith better and to express it in terms of their own culture;
- need for a basic ecclesiastical community, a Church of the people of God, more committed to the struggle for justice.

IV) HOW ARE THESE NEEDS TO BE MET?

The answer to this question concerns several sectors of the apostolate. The most relevant of which are:

★ *Catechesis.* Several initiatives have been taken in this field by different local churches. However, it must be admitted that the level of religious knowledge leaves much to be desired. This points to a lack of basic Christian formation and poses the following questions:

What is the content of the catechetical syllabus and who is responsible for drawing it up? What part do parents and former students play in this particular apostolate? Is there coordination or dispersal of efforts among those whose duty it is to educate young people in the faith whether in the school or outside of it?

★ *Education through the school.* There is a need to re-examine the work of the schools in the light of the present crisis in the African educational system. In face of the pressure for diplomas which favours individual development and becomes a divisive factor in society because it encourages an elitist mentality, it might be well to give more thought to the suggestion of a school for collective development. This means:

- taking as objective the advancement of a whole group rather than preparation for diplomas;
- encouraging a sense of community betterment;
- emphasizing the role of parents and community leaders.

★ *Extra-mural education.* There is a lot more that can be done in this field:

— development of all the means of promoting informal education such as: youth movements, discussion groups, social awareness groups, use of radio and television to encourage the emergence of Christian leaders capable of contributing to the betterment of African society;

— more attention to the poor and emarginated: living among them and creating, in collaboration with them, forms of collective education leading to the formation of sharing communities.

Other initiatives have still to be taken in favour of children in unsuitable homes, of the unemployed and of the children who roam the streets of African cities and towns.

The apostolate of African youth as proposed by R.C.A. has a close resemblance to the educational apostolate of St. John Baptist de La Salle who took many steps to meet the needs of urban youth in his own time. Did he not provide a home for the young Irish boys, the sons of those exiled with King James II? Did he not open a Sunday school for young sailors in Calais, a residential school for the sons of middle class parents and another for the "libertins et indociles" whom we would call today juvenile delinquents?

Following in the footsteps of de La Salle his disciples are today trying in different ways to meet the manifold needs of the young people of Africa's towns and cities.

What new initiative can your Community take here and now?

Bro. Vincent RABEMAHAFALY
General Councillor
Via Aurelia, 476 - ROMA

De La Salle College, Santiago (Dominican Republic), has 1350 students, sons of upper and lower middle class families. Cienfuegos is a township of 20,000 inhabitants, for the most part poor and emarginated.

We shall describe here the methods of organization and animation of the project, an account of which appeared in the first number of "Life of the Institute Today", page 58.

I) AIMS OF THE PROJECT

- 1) Direct contact with the poor and their cultural background in order to find out their values, their problems and their expectations so as to share with them our spiritual and cultural heritage.
- 2) Dialogue between our educative community and the people in the slum area in order to analyse the causes and consequences of their poverty and to help to remedy them by initiatives in popular education.
- 3) Evangelization of our educative community through contact with the poor and sensitivity to the demands of justice which must result from such contact.
- 4) Education in social responsibility and Christian commitment to the struggle for justice and the advancement of those on the fringes of society.

II) PREREQUISITES FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE POOR

- 1) Christian motivation: evangelical attitude of openness and availability.
- 2) Basic information on the concrete problems of the township and on the general psychology of the inhabitants.
- 3) Direct contact with the people and cultivation of lasting friendships which will be mutually beneficial on the human and spiritual planes.
- 4) Attention to external factors which could create barriers such as dress, means of transport, language, topics of conversation etc. (There must be no condescension)

III) MAIN LINES OF PASTORAL ACTION

- 1) Awakening of self-awareness among the poor. General uplift through education.
- 2) Organization of the community through the training of leaders particularly among the young.
- 3) Coordination and integration of the activities of the educational, social and religious elements in Cienfuegos.

IV) PASTORAL WORK FOR AND WITH THE PEOPLE OF CIENFUEGOS

1) Facilities already provided:

- ★ A dressmaking shop (1979) with 15 sewing machines, run by a lady volunteer and one instructress.
- ★ A school for typists (1981) with 15 typewriters and an instructress paid by the project organisers.

2) Occasional Activities

- ★ Literacy campaign, provision of books, and medicine for the dispensary.
- ★ Cultural activities by groups of students from the College, such as plays, concerts etc.

3) Help provided for the people's own efforts

- ★ Advisors to help the youth groups.
- ★ Trainers for sports teams and teachers for help with basic education.

V) ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

1) The Pastoral Team

Animation of the project for justice to the poor of Cienfuegos is the work of the Lasallian educative community. To animate means to maintain motivation in the pastoral work, to organise, coordinate and evaluate it on a permanent basis. This is done by a team of three lay people and one Brother who meet weekly and who are financed by the College.

Methods of animation employed in the College include:

- systematic catechesis on justice and commitment to the poor;
- diffusion of information among the educative community by means of college news sheets, circulars, posters and talks;
- organization of class groups such as Justice and Peace etc.

2) Cor Unum

This is a movement organized by the students of the College to arouse interest in and provide funds for the project. There are at present about 500 members among students from 5th year primary to 4th year secondary level. They donate 25 cents each on 25th of every month.

3) Justice and Peace

This is a movement of recent date. It is comprised of young Christians who commit themselves to the promotion of justice in their own lives and in the society in which they live. The movement is not confined to Lasallian circles but the student members provide a guarantee that the project will be maintained when they leave college. They form teams or "communities" in each class. Each member tries to make a concrete contribution to a project for justice. They meet periodically for prayer and reflection under the guidance of a member of the Lasallian educative community (Brother or layman).

Their pastoral activities are aimed at the practice of justice:

- in their personal relations with God and with others;
- in family relations with parents, members of the family and employees and neighbours;
- in school in their relations with teachers, companions, ancillary staff etc.

4) Youth and Cultural Centre - May, 1973

This is a concrete realization of the ideals of the project which began on 22nd December, 1978. It is an external sign of the Lasallian determination to be present among the poor. It is a meeting place for several youth organizations and for adults who find these people anxious and willing to encourage and advise them. There they can form lasting relationships and find means of self-improvement.

The embryonic library has already got all the books required for the Baccalaureat (School Certificate). These were donated by 4th year students of the College.

By means of loud speakers, "Radio Youth" keeps the people of the township informed. Two projects have their headquarters in the centre:

- a) "Women in Action" — a programme for education in health, hygiene, domestic economy etc. conducted by a lady teacher.
- b) "Youth Encounter" — an organization for literacy programmes, help with school work, children's choirs, theatricals etc.

V) DIFFICULTIES

1) People move away from the township. Lack of communication (there is only one telephone). Poor means of transport. Roads are impassible in wet weather. 70% of the people have neither water nor electricity. 60% are illiterate. Promiscuity and its results are widespread.

2) On the part of the institutional Church there is mistrust, gossip... and SILENCE.

3) From outside the township there is pressure from political parties who want to make capital out of the inhuman condition of the people and to manipulate them. There is absolute indifference on the part of the Government to the social problems of Cienfuegos.

VI) RESULTS

We are still sowing... When we discuss the situation among ourselves we feel we are moving in the right direction but...

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YOUTH VILLA: PASTORAL CENTRE

Youth Villa had its origin in the desire of the Brothers of the District of Québec to make a direct contribution to education in the faith especially of young people but also of numbers of adults. It is, in a way, an answer to a simple question: "We can no longer teach school, what are we to do?"

We must point out that in Québec, as in the rest of Canada, control of schools has been out of the hands of religious congregations for the past twenty-five years. The state has established a system of education which is modern, free and open to the whole population from nursery school to university.

Though the public education system is officially Catholic (A bill to be introduced in parliament proposes important changes in this matter) and religion is taught in all state schools, except where the parents demand exemption for their children, the pupils do not always receive a Catholic formation of high quality. This is particularly the case at secondary level, between the ages of 12 and 17, where the students have little opportunity to question and clarify their beliefs and no place for meaningful religious celebration or exchange of opinions, with the help of competent adults, on the problems posed by modern society.

The "Youth Villa" is intended to be just such a place. It is not a perfect answer to the problem but it has been in existence for the past 13 years and is known, appreciated and encouraged by the bishops of our local church. This comprises the residents of the city of Québec and its surroundings, approximately 750,000 people. Though about 12,000 young people and adults come to the Villa every year there are many who have still to get to know it.

It has been in operation since 1971. It replaced an animation centre which the Brothers had established some years before on the grounds and in the building of the former juniorate of Ste. Foy. You could almost say that, without the name, the pastoral centre already existed there, because when the house at Ste. Foy was sold, its pastoral activities continued at the Villa from October, 1971.

The present building had been acquired three years before as a new juniorate but it soon became evident that the juniorate system no longer fulfilled its purpose. It was no better than a good boarding school. It was finally closed in 1971. The pastoral centre occupies the building and gives a new "vocation" to the house.

The Villa, had, therefore, never been a Brothers' school nor a retreat house attached to a school. Besides, the Brothers of the District of Québec have had no schools for the past twenty years. Nor is the Villa a house of formation. Briefly it is this: a place where young people (and sometimes adults) from schools and organizations in the region can come for days, evenings or weekends of reflection. As Brother Bruno Blondeau, its principal founder, wrote, "The pastoral centre is a service offered by the Church to families and schools through the Brothers of the Christian Schools". That objective has not changed though the manner of providing the service may change according to circumstances.

As I mentioned before, the students of all schools (private or public) have religious instruction periods provided for in the school timetable and the services of a pastoral animator (school chaplain). If a teacher decides to ask permission from the school authorities to take a group of pupils to the Villa it is because he personally believes that what they will do there will help them to deepen their faith, to express it or in some cases to rediscover it. All the groups that come during the week are brought by teachers (mostly lay people) who have confidence in us. Without them we would have no direct contact with the school population.

Since 1978 a completely new team animates the centre. For this purpose a Brother was withdrawn from a state school and two lay people employed as animators, partly because there were no Brothers available and partly because we wanted to form a mixed team with different life experiences. If we decided to put so much effort into forming a team of animators it was because a study done by some Brothers connected with the centre had shown that it was necessary if the work was to continue. The Brothers as a whole agreed and it was with their moral support that the new team set to work in September, 1978. The team included a Brother interested in faith education of adults and a Capuchin Father who acted as chaplain to the Community. Since then the team has been expanded to include three Brothers together with, for this year at least, two clerical students who are completing their theological studies at Laval University.

The Brothers' Community at the Villa occupies a considerable part of the building and is composed of a number of Brothers, some of whom are retired. These Brothers, working full-time or part-time provide important support for the animators by looking after the meals, doing repairs, improving the building and grounds, doing the secretarial work and keeping the accounts.

The pastoral centre comprises two sections: an animation team, composed of Brothers, lay people, and a priest and a community of Brothers who look after the material needs of the centre.

Quite recently, December, 1983, the centre published a brochure for the benefit of those who might wish to avail of its services. (These, we must add, are not completely free) The contributions of groups cover about 20% of running costs. The rest is made up by the District.

I shall give below the complete text of the brochure as it describes accurately the present position:

OBJECTIVES. Through its work the centre wishes to contribute to the pastoral work of the Church particularly in the field of the education of the young in the faith.

It provides help for pastoral animators, parents and catechists who ask for its services. It is also open to groups of adults in search of the faith.

ACTIVITIES

- Days of recollection every week for secondary school students.
- Days of intensive preparation for Confirmation.
- Evenings and week-ends for Scripture study groups.
- Meetings of adult groups for study of the faith.
- 24 hours of recollection and silence.
- Animation in schools and parishes.
- Meetings of groups and movements connected with the pastoral ministry.

The animation of the days of recollection is generally done by the centre's animation team which prepares programmes adapted to particular groups.

METHODS. Basing our concept on the fact that young people have the faith and that they want to deepen it and make it grow we offer them themes for reflection and activities suitable to their age. In this way we invite them to receive Jesus Christ as the Good News for people of today.

Means: activities and reflection, workshops and sharing sessions; Celebration of the Word, of Reconciliation and of the Eucharist; Moments of relaxation.

THE ANIMATION TEAM. The work of animation is carried out by a qualified team composed of religious, lay people and a priest. All have been approved by the bishop of the diocese. Several religious provide essential services.

A COMMUNITY. The Brothers of the Christian Schools direct and maintain the institution. It is for them a way of carrying out the work of faith education among the young begun by their founder, St. John Baptist de La Salle.

ENVIRONMENT. Situated on the banks of the Saint Lawrence, half way between Cap-Rouge and Saint Augustin, the Villa provides an ideal environment of beauty and tranquillity conducive to the recollection required for any serious reflection. The site is enchanting at all seasons of the year.

INSPIRING DECOR. The principal meeting place is without doubt the "Jardin". It is, par excellence, a place for interior recollection. It calls for silence. It creates silence. It is decorated with real trees, dried, with their leaves, as well as with some remarkable pieces of sculpture in wood which are thrown into relief by concealed lighting. Off this hall are rooms for small groups, arranged in varied and original ways. One of these rooms, "La Source", is reserved for private prayer. (End of quotation from brochure)

I stressed above that the teachers and school pastoral animators are our only contacts with the school-going population. It is thanks to them that groups of students, both boys and girls, particularly from secondary schools, can come to the centre. That remains true.

As from this year an important group of children will leave the school environment for religious instruction. They are the pupils of the sixth class i.e. children of 11 to 12 years old who are finishing primary school and who are preparing to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. Up to now this preparation was done during school hours.

The parish, through the local committee for preparation for Confirmation, will bring these children to us for days of instruction and reflection on the meaning of Baptism and of the new sacrament they are going to receive. This preparation will occupy the animation team during February, March and part of April. If we devote so much time to it, it is because the demand is so great. Not less than seventy groups of children (40 to 55 at a time) will follow one another at the centre for days or evenings of reflection and instruction. Some parishes ask the school authorities for days off school so that the children can come to the centre from 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. Others, who cannot come during the day, arrange to come between 3.00 p.m. and 9.00 p.m. and often later because the centre is occupied.

Others again come in the evening or on Saturdays because they do not want their children's initiation into sacramental life associated with school. (Everything leads us to believe that this movement will become more popular in the near future.) Who brings these children? It is the parents through a committee established by the parish. The parents must, in effect, take precise and positive action to have their children prepared for the sacraments. They must make application to the parish, bring the child with them when making the application and guarantee a follow-up.

In this way the parents will play a more active role in the preparation of their children for Confirmation. The Villa had already taken the initiative in this matter by insisting that a minimum number of parents accompany the children, at least one parent to eight children. This was, indeed, a happy initiative: it gave parents an opportunity of seeing the kind of catechetical instruction the child received and a chance to experience a day of recollection. ("It was for us a real retreat" they often tell us) And lastly it made us known and appreciated as catechists. (We can barely meet the demand. And that without any advertising.)

This period of intense work with children finishing primary school is all that we can do for them. Our principal work is with young people between the ages of 12 and 17 who, according to what we were recently told by a specialist, are in a "pastoral desert", by which he meant that little was being done for them on the pastoral plane.

Of course the pastoral centre is much more than what I have described above. Let me say in conclusion that its programme is open, flexible and continually adapting itself to the pastoral needs of the young so as to be able to answer to their real needs which cannot be other than spiritual.

Our fidelity to St. John Baptist de La Salle is shown by the interest we take in and the priority we give to the faith education of the young. We carry out our work in a spirit of faith for none of us can cause faith to spring up in the heart of others nor can we measure the fruits of our activities. We work in a spirit of humility because our programmes and methods of today may not be suitable in three to five years' time and knowing, at the same time, that there may be better or more urgent work to be done. Lastly, all our activity is inspired by charity. We try to live charity. It is what we propose to those who are "humble of heart".

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1) FAILURE OF THE "CATECHISM"?

For many long years the immense treasures of CATECHESIS was reduced to the CATECHISM due to historical circumstances, to a book containing a short summary of the Christian doctrine, of the principal truths of the Christian faith, presented in the name of the ecclesiastical authorities, to be memorised by means of question and answer. The term also serves to remind us of a systematic organization and time table aimed at the communication and assimilation of this summary. The whole being destined above all for preparing children to receive the sacraments of Christian initiation.

Catechism thus applied took no account of the social and cultural changes in the world such as the conquests of science, the process of secularization, pluralism, atheism or oecumenism. It consequently took no account either of the changes in the Church itself, of the fact that the structures which produced and crystallized the catechism were those of the Church of the Middle Ages, of the Counter Reformation of the 16th Century or of colonial Christianity. Catechism is not suited to the complex realities of the 20th Century, soon to become the 21st, because its horizons, its content, its methods, its language, and the point of view from which it starts and to which it wishes to arrive are no longer suited to the context of the modern world. Learning by heart a summarized Thomist doctrine of the principal truths of faith does not lead to conversion, does not meet the needs of modern man or present day challenges and does not commit man to the transformation of the world.

The failure of the catechism and the consequent search for the true meaning of catechesis are the result of profound biblical, spiritual, theological and pastoral renewal on the one hand, and, on the other, of the demands resulting from social, economic and cultural changes which affect man and the community in their very being, their way of organizing themselves and of acting, and their destiny.

2) SEARCHING FOR THE MEANING OF CATECHESIS

A knowledge of the first five centuries of Christianity is fundamental for the understanding of the true meaning and significance of catechesis. The circumstances which obliged the Christians to organize themselves clandestinely into communities of faith, of brotherhood and hope, led to the main preoccupation being with adults. Option for Jesus Christ was a gesture of radical human liberty responding to a gratuitous call of God and entailing a recognized risk of martyrdom. The change in life style, from the religious point of view, (abandoning the gods, pagan customs and attaching oneself to Jesus Christ and his plans) led to a social change (the establishment of a different kind of community, giving testimony to Christian values, a challenging of political and religious systems, etc.).

When describing the primitive Christian community, the Acts of the Apostles (Acts, II, 4... IV, 35) enumerates the basic elements of true catechesis. They are the doctrine of the Apostles, prayer, the eucharist, witness to the resurrection, brotherhood which unites the community, the sharing of gifts and possessions, infectious joy. That is to say that CATECHESIS IS A COMMUNITARIAN PROCESS OF CONTINUING EDUCATION, using divers means, WHICH LEADS TO THE CHRISTIAN'S PROGRESSIVE COMING TO MATURITY IN THE FAITH SO THAT WITH JESUS CHRIST HE ASSUMES CO-RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SALVATION OF THE WORLD, AS AN ACTIVE MEMBER, in communion and participation WITH THE COMMUNITY OF THE CHURCH.

Over the last few years the Church has thought long over the need for a new kind of catechesis. The current of biblical, patristic, liturgical, theological, anthropological and pastoral renewal traced out new paths during the first half of the 20th Century and led to the Vatican II Council which brought about important renewal "ad intra" and "ad extra" to the Church. Catechesis did not lag behind on this path. Without overlooking the significant progress in catechetical research and reflection which preceded the Council, especially in international Congresses and Weeks, one must refer in the first place to the Council documents themselves (1962-1965) the international Week in Medellin (1968), the International Catechesis Congress (Rome, 1971), the General Catechesis Directory of the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy (1971), the Synod on "Evangelization" followed by the apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi" (Paul VI, 1974), the Synod on "Catechesis" (1977) with its "Message to

the People of God" followed by the apostolic Exhortation "Catechesi Tradendae" (Jean Paul II, 1979), the Puebla Document (CELAM, 1979), a whole series of declarations by the bishops of different countries on the Renewal of Catechesis following all these proceedings.

3) SOME NECESSARY CHANGES IN CATECHESIS

a) *As regards those who practice it.* It is the Christian community itself which is responsible for the education in the faith of those who compose it.

The *family* is the first community, the little "domestic Church", in which our Lord is imitated and honoured and where Christian values are assimilated in the context of words, gestures and actions and confirmed by the living testimony of the parents. The *Community of the Church* bringing the faithful together in the faith and in action, nourishing them, convincing them, organizing them and pledging them to the service of God and of the community with the aim of transforming the world. The *Catechists* are called and sent by the community to carry the word of God and of the Church, the cooperators with the family: people who participate closely in the life of the community, having an extensive culture and an intense spiritual life. They are the primary witnesses of Our Lord and his message. They lead those who are catechized to participate in the development of the catechesis and in the progress of the community.

b) *As regards those who are the object of catechesis.* This is the Christian throughout his life, especially as an adult, for he has the power to influence decisions in society. Hence, besides the strictly doctrinal ideas of the Church, the adult tries to organize his life, his family, his profession, his participation in the destinies of society: in this respect he challenges the real Church of which he does not always feel himself an integral part, but rather a passive member. It is to this freedom that the renewed catechesis gives priority. While granting its due place to the catechesis of children who are easily malleable because they are receptive but not always capable of discernment, the Church needs to channel the best of its energies in favour of adults and, logically, of young people.

c) *As to its content.* This is the Bible, the great and permanent manual of catechesis, since the whole of Christian Life depends profoundly on the Word of God who summons, judges, challenges and sends (DV 8, 21, 24, 26). The great themes of the Christian faith always remain the same, but they are studied and lived in the framework of the preaching of salvation in the "kerygma" within the community of faith and commitment and in the actual human situations of the present moment. If these conditions are lacking, the content remains within the context of doctrinal "synthesis" without any effect on personal, community and social life.

d) *As to method:* the various psychological and pedagogical methods are useful in the process of education in the faith if they are suitably adapted. They must, however, follow the methodical principles of CHALLENGE or interaction, that is to say: a mutual and efficacious relationship between life with its ever occurring problems and formation in the faith, which provides solutions based on revelation or argues the experiences of life by pointing out directions. Without this actual confrontation between THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE and the FORMULATION OF THE FAITH, conversion or liberating action will be difficult even if the well-tried methods of SEE, JUDGE, ACT are used.

4) WE, LASALLIANS, AND CATECHESIS

Be convinced personally and community wise, about the MESSAGE OF SALVATION (The person of Our Lord, his teaching, his mission) and make it reverberate (catechesis comes from Kate-echeo to make to echo), by making it vibrate till it enters the fibres of our being, converting and transforming us (conversion-metanoia), till it overflows with actual signs of mature faith (community-koinonia, liberating service-diakonia; liturgy, etc.) which is the continuing process of Education in the Faith which renewed Catechesis proposes to bring about. Not only does it radically modify the traditional "catechism" for children, it places every Christian in a continuing situation of being catechised as well as an agent of catechesis and an educator in the faith, because of his place in history and the requirements of the communitarian process.

To be Lasallian is to live in the spirit of faith and apostolic zeal: "Signum Fidei", in brotherhood: "indivisa manent". Therefore, to become this SIGNUM FIDEI, this sign of faith as proposed by De La Salle, every Lasallian must assume for himself and others a radical catechesis: A COMMUNITARIAN EDUCATION IN THE FAITH WHICH IS CONTINUING, PROGRESSIVE, ORGANIC, ORDERED and SYSTEMATIC, always aiming at ever-greater maturity expressed in actual and specific signs of a change in life style, in human relationships, in the construction of society and relationship with God, sights fixed on the plenitude which will be manifested in the Eschatology.

Called by God to a vocation and quite specific mission among the people of God, "CHRISTIAN EDUCATION", the Lasallian is intrinsically a CATECHIST, an AGENT OF EDUCATION IN THE FAITH, through his testimony, his word, his personal and community activity. From this point of view his zeal is creative in opening the paths, by all means possible, to the prophetic SIGN of denunciation and annunciation, taking as reference the inheritance of the Christian faith in confrontation with the social, economic, political, cultural and religious realities which have to be transformed so as to be in harmony with the divine plan of a fraternal, united and just society.

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The purpose of the Gabriel Drolin Association may best be summed up in its own statement of objectives, "In view of the number of young people regarded as failures, the Association has for object the creation and putting into practice of teaching methods designed to reduce backwardness during school and formative years."

The Association began with a meeting between Brother Pierre and the teachers newly assigned to the special classes for reluctant or backward pupils in an area of high rise flats at Garges les Gonesse.

In the course of his twenty-two years' teaching in primary schools in various parts of the region Brother Pierre had been able to consult leading members of the teaching profession. His availability, due to the fact that he was teaching in a private school, led to his accepting a completely new post. He was assigned to the education of children of families of no fixed abode. There he learned from the inside the real problems. Faced with the illiteracy of the children he initiated a program of action to make the parents aware of the need for instruction. His qualities as an educator were given full scope.

He was asked to supervise the introduction of new teaching methods at Garges les Gonesse for a full school year. He was then asked to extend the scope of his action to other areas, hence the formation of the Association.

Let us go back a little. An educational aids system had been provided to help young people and adults. A large team of monitors had been recruited. The sector dealing with itinerants had done some research and introduced new methods.

In the early stages, teaching was based on the practical experiences of daily life not on literary textbooks. After two years' experience each monitor was asked to write a summary of the methods employed with beginners in reading. Little by little an original method was developed and published under the title "At last I can read and write". Requests for training in the system came from outside the area. Teachers and educators became interested and asked us for further publications: a critique of reading methods in common use, an explanation of some of the other means of helping beginners. The booklet "How to learn to read" went through three editions and was used in the national literacy campaign of one foreign country.

Our preoccupations at national level soon led us to call on government departments concerned and our document entitled "A real educational service for itinerants" with its twenty-six proposals helped to make the general public aware of the problem. As a result, official studies were made such as: "Education of the children of Gypsies and Nomads" 1981, and "Sixty Proposals to counteract insecurity and poverty", 1980. These official reports show evidence of the experience we gained during thirteen years of dealing with the problems.

The awareness of the public authorities encouraged us to invest in additional personnel and more mobile classes.

The Association has established several mobile teacher units and has persuaded the authorities to allocate money for the payment of voluntary teachers. At first it was the Brothers who, because of their experience in school, were appointed to these posts. We must now enlarge these teams which set out each morning to teach the children on the city's outskirts who cannot yet attend ordinary schools. The teachers of project "The School Goes To Them" are happy — happy because of the joy of those "kids" who cannot understand why teachers should want a vacation.

The Catholic education authorities are becoming interested in our methods and have given priority to our project, "The School Goes To Them" in their training programme for teachers of itinerants in 1984 and 1985.

In January, 1984, we launched the "Campaign for 1,000 scholarships" in reading, with the help of a teaching aid which has proved very stimulating: "A Reading Licence"... Yes, a folder in three sections with one, two or three stars to encourage the learner-reader to work for a scholarship that entitles him to buy the books of his choice. The campaign organisers are hoping to provide a fund of 500,000 francs.

The learner-readers want more, so other teaching aids are forthcoming. A remarkable method of teaching numeracy has come from an outstanding teacher, Sister Marie de Vendée. Training periods are also provided by our Association.

A system of writing, a method of division, certainly, but above all a dynamic pedagogy — a pedagogy of success... and 40 propositions to be learned (not merely to be read).

In conclusion, let us quote a passage from Jacotot (1836), University Professor who challenged hidebound teachers.

"Look for the poor, the ignorant. Take them from their corners and the ignorant will soon show you that they are the same kind of creature as Lagrange and Pascal and that there is but one and the same human intelligence."

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**PEDAGOGICAL RESEARCH
CARRIED OUT BY THE LASALLIAN
NATIONAL COMMISSION (Brazil)**

The Pastoral and Pedagogical Committee of the District of Porto Alegre had asked the Lasallian National Commission for advice on the practical application of Lasallian pedagogy in the circumstances of today. The first intention of the Committee was to study the characteristic traits of Lasallian pedagogy as experienced by the Brothers, lay teachers and former students of our establishments at national and continental (Latin American) level.

A circular under two headings was sent out:

- 1) What are the traits that characterize Lasallian educative practice?
- 2) Suggestions for the realization of the work proposed.

The circulars were sent to 80 Brothers in the two Brazilian Districts and in Latin America, to 49 teachers in the two Districts and to 5 former students.

On reception of a satisfactory number of answers, the team appointed by the National Commission for the study of Lasallian pedagogy met to study and analyse the answers. It was agreed that, in view of the nature of the answers received, the work should be divided into three parts:

- a) drafting an introduction to the basic objectives of Lasallian education;
- b) elaboration of a series of principles which at the beginning envisaged the following: general principles, community and social principles, educative principles, principles of pedagogical practice and training;
- c) account of educative practices corresponding to each of the above principles.

The results of this work were submitted to a group of Brothers and Lasallian educators as well as to a large number of former students. The group studied the principles proposed, rewrote them and provided a series of educative practices relating to each principle.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Lasallian education is characterized by its Christian outlook and its insistence on an evangelical spirit of fraternity. It proves its loyalty to the Church. It engages in the task of reforming society with a view to bringing about the Kingdom of God.

PRINCIPLES

- 1) Lasallian education aims at the formation of the whole human person considered as the centre of the educative process.
- 2) Lasallian education is education for freedom and undertakes to work towards this end.
- 3) Lasallian educative practice is engaged in continual self renewal in order to meet change.
- 4) Training and development of the critical sense is an essential factor in Lasallian education.
- 5) The Lasallian educative process is one of participation and communication.
- 6) Lasallian educative action is characterized by its care to plan and organize its programmes in accordance with its principles.
- 7) According to de La Salle, the value and dignity of the educator spring from constant effort.

- 8) In Lasallian thought, the educator is a minister of God's Word.
- 9) Solid formation of the educator, evident in his life and work, is indispensable for the work of Lasallian education.
- 10) The Lasallian educator gives priority to the most needy.
- 11) Preference for the poor should be evident in every Lasallian educative initiative.
- 12) Lasallian education makes a synthesis of faith, culture and life.
- 13) The Lasallian educative mission is undertaken as a community effort and gives preference to:
 - a) education in the family setting;
 - b) formation of community leaders;
 - c) attention paid to the school personnel;
 - d) follow-up of former students;
 - e) effective and significant presence of the Brothers;
 - f) integration into the educative community of pupils, parents, educators, management, personnel and former students.
- 14) The Lasallian educative community is open to the wider national and universal communities. Consequently:
 - a) it analyses the reality of which it forms part;
 - b) it confronts it with the ideals of the Gospel;
 - c) it undertakes to transform it.
- 15) The Lasallian educative process is characterized by a spirit of friendship and fraternal esteem between teachers and taught.
- 16) Esteem, understanding and welcome for people are characteristic marks of the Lasallian educative style.
- 17) Attention to the emotional and affective development of students is an important factor in Lasallian education.
- 18) Lasallian education announces Jesus Christ and His message.
- 19) Education in faith is an all-embracing process which involves the participation of the entire educative community.
- 21) Pastoral care of the young and fostering of vocations have a quite exceptional importance in Lasallian educative action.
- 22) The Lasallian school is characterized by the quality of its teaching, its serious formation and the continual renewal of its programmes.
- 23) The teaching and training given in Lasallian schools are aimed at preparing the students for life.
- 24) In the teaching and formation he gives his students the Lasallian educator takes account of individual differences, respects the personal rhythm of each, stimulates and shows appreciation of individual effort, tries to adapt his teaching to the level of each individual and pays special attention to the slow learner.
- 25) The Lasallian educator tries to make learning and training as appealing as possible... His aim is the formation of the individual.
- 26) Art, music and sport are given an important place in the school curriculum.
- 27) Preparation for work and development of the scientific spirit are constants in the Lasallian school programme.

These principles, and suggestions for their application, were sent back for further study, additions and suggestions, to those who had answered the first questions.

A member of the national team was asked to compare these principles with those laid down in the Management of Schools and other Lasallian documents in order to find a sound basis for and enrichment of the principles which are to guide all educative action in Brazil.

They noted deficiencies in popular education which is given priority by the District of Porto Alegre. These deficiencies will be made good after the Latin American meeting in Lima in July, 1984, which has made popular education its theme.

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03-D-05

INTRODUCTION

Thinking about the content of this article I asked myself several times what would interest the readers of LASALLIANA from the pen of a Lasallian who has lived in close contact with the Brothers' Institute for the past fifteen years and who has been responsible for animation at local, national and international level.

I think I can give a satisfactory answer to the question by expressing in the simplest way possible the problems I have come up against in recent years and by reducing them to the one great problem which affects our structures at all levels.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Since the World Congress of Buenos Aires (1972) there has been a real "leap forward" in the quality of our Associations, thanks to the generous action of those responsible who have transformed themselves fundamentally. I can say, without shadow of doubt, that with few exceptions our Associations throughout the world have taken on an effective ecclesial dimension. This is confirmed by the existence of leaders who have put aside questions and problems in order to promote the restructuring, in a Christian sense, of our Associations.

This silent, assiduous action has often passed unnoticed. Our new Associations, struggling with daily problems, attract little attention.

What is lacking, blatantly lacking, in our Associations is the presence of a considerable number of convinced Lasallians, of a number of carefully chosen members who would exercise an apostolic influence. In effect, you can accomplish little with politeness and friendliness which is all we have had up to the present. It is, in fact, absurd to expect a dozen or so people, no matter how well intentioned, to act in the name of thousands of members who are potential animators but who are little concerned about the social, charitable and religious programmes put forward.

Something very different is expected from a Catholic Association in the '80's. But where can we find convinced Lasallians if the Lasallian schools which educated them to university level failed to communicate to them the missionary zeal which should animate every believer. Does the Lasallian project, theme of so many learned congresses, symposia and conferences, really animate the students? Does it produce alumni anxious to respond to the manifold needs and demands of the Catholic laity? How many of them do so? What initiatives have been taken by Lasallian schools to form, in the Lasallian spirit, their lay teachers, their co-workers, their former students who are willing to help and their friends and sympathisers?

These are disturbing questions the answers to which would take us far beyond the limits set for this article.

WHAT CAN BE DONE: THE STUDENTS

They constitute the largest part of the Lasallian Family and are the prime object of the Lasallian Educative Project.

The pupils spend a considerable period of time at the Brothers' schools and by the very fact that they attend Catholic schools they demand something more than mere cultural and scientific formation. This is also what the parents think when they choose for their children a school having specific ecclesial connotations. Whether they did so for convenience or from conviction is secondary to the fact that the Catholic school must not betray the ideals on which it was founded.

This preamble might appear unnecessary, but entire classes of pupils at Lasallian schools do not have a Brother to teach them or have one as a teacher only, not as a Lasallian educator, because of a certain "fear" or reluctance to talk on spiritual themes or of the consecrated life.

Every former student has in his memory and in his heart a special place reserved for one or two Brothers whom he regards as having played an important role in his formation. These Brothers are scarcely ever remembered as teachers, however brilliant, but rather because they found time and ways to talk about life, about its problems and risks, its joys and deceptions and of how to look upon them in the light of Christian faith. That is the first message that the young expect from a religious. That is the path of faith, the development of personality that parents want for their children when they choose a Catholic school.

FORMER STUDENTS

Let us not forget that they are as numerous as the actual students. A document from the Superior General says, with reason, that the participation of former students can develop from politeness and friendliness to forms of active

engagement, both material and spiritual, for the support of the Brothers' work. This is an important principle which risks remaining at the theoretical stage if situations are not created to allow former students, who so wish, to take on precise responsibilities within the framework of the Brothers' institutions. Like all committed Lasallians, like the Brothers themselves, the former students require specialised formation.

Their generosity can be availed of only if the communities of Brothers show themselves willing to accept a precise pastoral programme for lay people, which in present circumstances is an objective to be aimed at and certainly not an actual reality.

We must make special mention of the younger people who finished their studies at a Lasallian school a few years ago, and of those who are now in their final year. This is fertile ground which must be developed each year by Lasallian formation courses organized by the Districts or by the Associations. This would allow us to add, each year, to our Associations, new elements formed and perfected in the Lasallian spirit and would be very different from the haphazard way our Associations have been formed up to the present — with the inevitable results.

We should pay similar attention to the formation of leaders. They cannot be improvised nor can they continue to take responsibilities for which they were not prepared, especially in view of the precise programmes which we want the new Lasallian Associations to put into effect.

THE PARENTS

They are the Brothers' first collaborators while their children are still at school but the situation changes radically when it comes to the wider Lasallian community because parents are generally taken up with their work and their families. Besides, it is difficult for some of them to keep up their interest in the Lasallian world when the children have left school.

Even among this group of lay people there are some who are available and who are acquainted with the founder and his spirituality for reasons which were, perhaps, more practical than idealistic. We must find a place for these Lasallians also and help them on the way to spiritual perfection through a specialised formation.

LAY TEACHERS

For a long time past they have outnumbered Brothers in Lasallian schools but interest in their vocation has changed little. A school can continue to be Lasallian if somebody takes the trouble to provide Lasallian inspiration for the work of these educators. This is generally confined to attendance at a congress or symposium from which they return disappointed because they find the meeting too academic or the themes treated, too theoretic.

Consequently, it is necessary to give thought to the on-going formation of these members who are so important to the educative community, if we want the Brothers' school to remain Lasallian in spite of the continuing diminution in the number of Brothers. In this way the educative possibilities of the school will be increased and it will acquire all the connotations of a Catholic school.

Lay teachers could also become members of *Signum Fidei* or undertake other forms of activity animated by Lasallian spirituality. One could envisage many possibilities for this group of people, certainly, but it is pointless to entertain illusions and to hope that all this will happen spontaneously. It is the fruit produced by a well considered on-going formation.

* * *

How can all this be brought about? Can it be done or is it merely utopian? An old Latin dictum said, "Everyone is the artisan of his own destiny". How does a Community of Brothers set about creating around itself a community of Lasallian lay people thoroughly formed? How does it give them a suitable on-going formation?

It is necessary that:

1) The Community be amenable and if not, it must be made aware so that every attempt at action will not be met with insurmountable and tenacious resistance.

2) A Brother be appointed Assessor or Animator of the Lasallian Family who will take charge of the on-going formation of former students, teachers, parents, *Signum Fidei* and of all those who seek access to the message of the Founder. This Brother will also ensure the integration of these Lasallians in the school and extra-mural structures of the institutions concerned and follow them step by step in their development.

From these principles it follows that:

a) The Brother will not be "lost" to the school or to the Community. On the contrary, he will bring to the school better qualified helpers and collaborators. It is not a question of freeing a Brother from school but of employing a Brother for the school.

b) The Brother must have special qualities. You cannot impose this work on somebody who does not want it. You must, on the contrary, assist the Brother who, by his natural talents is qualified for the work, by easing a too heavy work load or by relieving him of it completely in the case of large institutions. (This applies also to a large number of potential Lasallian animators.)

c) Following from what has been said above, the choice of the Brother should be as carefully considered as that of a Director or Bursar, given the wide field of his possible activities.

All this is feasible. It is not utopian but it requires precise decisions. These could be taken at Community level but it would be much more significant if they were studied and proposed at the level of Provincial and General Chapters.

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THE IDENTITY OF THE BROTHER OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Paper given by Brother Alain HOURY, Visitor of Paris,
to a Plenary Assembly of the French Episcopate at Lourdes, November 1983

The following text was composed for the Plenary Assembly of the French Episcopate in November 1983 at Lourdes.

The introduction to the study of the dossier "Religious life and the missionary prospects of the Church in France" was to be made by two religious men and two religious women. My contribution, as agreed with the other interested parties, would dwell on the links between the Brothers of the Christian Schools and the profession of the teacher-educator, and on the lay character of our religious life.

The twelve minutes for which the text was written, and distributed to the bishops, were reduced to six and I had to condense it on to both sides of a single sheet.

This kind of text, midway between one giving testimony and a theoretical explanation, because of its brevity, inevitably leads to omissions and rather brief summaries. It is not so much interested in recalling the important points which make for the originality of the Brothers' religious life not only in the Church but also in comparison with most other forms of religious life.

Underlining these differences does not mean being in opposition to them but realizing the gift which is made to us, for the Church and the world, in following St. John Baptist de La Salle.

* * *

Address delivered at the Conference of the French Hierarchy, at Lourdes, November 1983, by Brother Alain Houry, Visitor.

Today here are 1,700 Brothers of the Christian Schools in France. Their median age is 62 years so we are faced with the problem of ageing personnel. I can not continue my present work (e.g. looking after a number of schools for which we have responsibility) if I do not look to the future by involving myself in the ministry of vocations. That requires that I make plainly understood the originality of the religious life of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. For if what we are does not correspond with what we do then it is impossible to understand either the one or the other.

Few religious live their lives so closely associated with a precise task. "The end of the Institute", wrote the Founder, in the original Rule, "is to give a Christian education to children and it is for this purpose that we keep schools."

You see from this that the apostolate of the school (and particularly of the Christian school) is an essential element of our religious life even though the field of apostolic action is much wider.

We believe that in the relationship between teacher and pupil, in the educational process, fundamental principles are involved — the salvation of the young person and the building up of the Church. Our work as teachers and educators is not just a means of sharing in the world of work and justifying ourselves in the eyes of our students. It is in doing this work that we show to young people that through us they can find salvation both temporal and eternal.

To consecrate yourself for life to the education of the young presupposes that you experience God in so doing. This is what inspired the first Brothers to reshape the schools of their time and make them accessible to all. It could be said that the criterion of the authenticity of our experience of God is the progress of our work.

Our work becomes for us the substance of our religious consecration (Declaration 48,2). The spirit of faith and of zeal, characteristic of our institute, leads us to exercise our profession of teacher-educator in a contemplative manner, avoiding any dichotomy between our religious life and our professional life.

"Make no distinction between what concerns your state of life and your sanctification", recommended St. John Baptist de La Salle. For a Brother, his work with young people and his spiritual life are one and the same. This is far removed from the so-called two objectives of the apostolic religious life.

It is important to make people understand that a profession can be a path to perfection.

Our manner of consecrating ourselves to the young implies, for us, a real bond between culture and faith. The Brother dedicates himself to the education of the young and helps them to attain, through culture, their full human

potential (GS 53) (Declaration 13,5). He seeks, with his young disciples, to Christianise the cultural milieu in which they live. He is a teacher who is also a witness — an elder brother who lives with them.

St. John Baptist de La Salle quitted his aristocratic and ecclesiastical milieu to become part of the culture of schoolmasters and their pupils. This is how he and his Brothers "left the world" by accepting fully the Gospel which challenged a system that approved the practical exclusion of so many young people.

Could we do the same thing to-day? I believe that a law which would prevent the Brothers from getting to know the living conditions of their students and from speaking to them as Christians in the course of the day, would scarcely be conducive to the fulfilment of their catechetical ministry. Such would be the case where religion became an optional subject in the school curriculum. The living tradition of the Institute "has always sought to unite closely the work of evangelization and that of civilisation and access to culture (Declaration 40,2). "Our world", said the Chapter of 1966, "needs witness given at the very heart of profane realities and the lives of men, by persons who know and love God as a living person." (Declaration 11,14)

In view of what I have said, you will not be surprised if I now stress the lay character of our Institute. We remain unambiguously lay religious. This was our deliberate choice from the beginning and it was calmly restated, after mature reflection, by the last two General Chapters, held since the Second Vatican Council. In no way do we wish to form part of the hierarchical structure of the people of God.(1) Why? "Community exercises and work in school demand the whole man", said our Founder (Memoir on the Habit).

"The whole man". St. John Baptist de La Salle was concerned all through his life with the problem of the use of time. Because he could not be completely faithful to his duties in the Cathedral Chapter and at the same time see to the consolidation of his first community, he resigned his post as canon of the cathedral of Reims, a post very useful to the Church. He had often to defend the originality of his foundation against those who wanted it incorporated into the juridical and pastoral framework of the time.

As lay religious, we are, in a way, witnesses to a very modern ecclesiology. We have inherited from our history an instinctive distrust of any ministry which proceeds from an a priori position. The manner of my own intervention is an illustration. It arises from the fact that we are called first to live, in order to see later how our life fits in with the pastoral plans of the Church of France. Pastoral care of the young may not, in certain sectors, have always been given due priority but that did not prevent us from feeling ourselves truly part of the Church in our dedication to the young: the call of Christian families was not lacking.

May I, as a religious superior, be permitted to remind our bishops that it is not fitting for a community of Brothers (or Sisters) to be unable to participate in the Eucharist on week days. A parish Mass at 9.00 a.m. is out of the question for those who practise a profession. Proper conditions are required if we are to carry out our pastoral mission.

I must also say a few words on the Brothers' educative service to the poor and on their community life. Community is based on a common mission. Community life means a life of sharing, of prayer and much more besides.

The community can, by its own dynamism, create new forms of service to young people in difficulty. Often the work is similar to that carried out by other agencies. Sometimes we must invent, create and find time to do such work outside our normal work. And if the needs of France are great they must not make us forget the appeal of the young Churches.

It is with this in view that we insist that the formation of every young Brother in France must include a period of, at least, two years in a Third World country. Such an experience of the international character of the Institute (four fifths of the Brothers are not French) and of the extent of the world problems which we face, helps the young Brother to enter more readily into the missionary designs of the Church of France.

However, we do not define ourselves, primarily, by what we do nor by the pastoral services we render. Religious life has its own inherent value and significance as a sign and this implies a fundamental poverty and independence of productive activity. More than in their work, I believe in the silent presence of the Brothers. "God loves you", they seem to say to the young, "and the proof is that we are among you because it is He who has sent us to you."

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(1) Brother Vincent Ayel in the session, "How to initiate into the religious life to-day."

* After the renewal Chapter of 1966-67 two main texts express the Institute's concept of its vocation:
— The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World to-day.
— The Rule and the Constitutions (while awaiting definitive approbation).

THE BROTHERS
IN TURKEY

Since the Brothers first went to Turkey in 1841 to teach the children of poor Christians, their situation as well as that of the Christians living there has changed utterly. The Ottoman Empire, "the sick man of Europe" was replaced after the first World War by a Republic, ultra nationalist and lay. The Brothers' Institute, which at the turn of the century was rapidly increasing in numbers, was able to send, over a period of years, up to three hundred Brothers to Turkey. After the expulsion of the Brothers from France in 1904 establishments such as St. Joseph's at Kadiköy expanded to such an extent that they could employ eighty Brothers. Several dozen schools, mostly primary, were opened throughout the country. These were supported by the secondary schools which included one boarding school.

Following the peace treaties, exchanges of population between the Christians of Anatolia and Muslims living in Europe, and the return of many Europeans to their countries of origin, led to a decline in the number of Christians who now form only 0.4% of the population as against one third under the empire. Muslim children replaced Christian children in our schools which had acquired a reputation for excellence.

Since primary education was nationalized we are left with only three secondary schools which serve the children of well-to-do parents. The Brothers have got older, some have died and others have returned to France to resume their apostolate, interrupted in 1904. The last Brothers to come here were those from Bulgaria when the Communists seized power there in 1948. Since then our numbers have steadily decreased until only twelve remain to run three schools: one in Izmir and two in Istanbul. The boarding department of one of the latter has now been closed and the other handed over to lay teachers.

The Brothers' work is confined to these schools which are dependent on the Ministry of Education for their programmes (Franco-Turkish), their intake (decided by the Ministry of Education on the results of competitive examinations), and for their fees which are their only source of income. Under such constraints the Brothers follow their usual policy of running the schools under the supervision of a Turkish deputy Principal while they take charge of departments or teach certain subjects. By taking on excessive work loads a small number of Brothers is just about able to keep the schools open, but it is obvious that 12 cannot do the work of 80, and locally recruited staff, despite their good will, cannot compare with Christian laymen such as, for example, you find in France.

Other forms of work have been tried in recent years such as that in the Popular Education Centres (a unique creation of Atatürk in the 30's but now closed following the troubles which almost led to civil war in 1980) and in the University of Istanbul (in the advanced school for language teachers). This work, though promising, has been suspended. Last year, for one term, a Brother, together with an Assumptionist Sister, was invited to give a course in French to a group of young teachers in the faculty of Islamic theology — an interesting experiment in a reputedly closed milieu if ever there was one!

These restrictions have discouraged those who are on the spot and dissuaded others from coming here. In 1980 Brother Superior General had to take a firm stand before 500 Brothers meeting at Beauvais to prevent the French Brothers from abandoning completely this sector. On

the contrary, he encouraged them to reinforce the Brothers still in Turkey with these words, "It would be a disgrace to abandon a sector because conditions are difficult. That is precisely where we should be."

If, indeed, one is not discouraged by the lack of immediate and spectacular results and if one believes in sowing in order to reap then it is not difficult to see the importance of such work (that of the Brothers and other foreign religious who work in schools and hospitals and who witness by their faith and service of others to the goodness of Christ).

There is first of all the simple work of the school, valid here as elsewhere, in the development of intelligence, mind and heart, work of the first importance to the numerous young people of a poor country and the basis of its long term development. The work of former students, now in key positions in every sector of the nation's life, gives proof of this. None of them is to be found in the ranks of migrant workers in Europe. On the contrary, their initiative provides work for their fellow countrymen at home.

Then there is the daily silent mixing of Muslim, Jewish and Christian pupils, though the latter are becoming less and less numerous. The bonds of friendship thus created lead naturally to the disappearance of misconceptions and prejudices, source of so much conflict in the Middle East between those who believe in the same God, and prepare minds for a life in common where differences are accepted and respected.

Finally, this work has other moral and spiritual aspects. Our disinterested service causes the Muslims amongst whom we live and work to regard Christians in a more favourable light. In the eyes of most Muslims Christians are the western heirs to the Crusaders, dominating the world by their technology (a technology which Muslims must learn from them), infidels who have betrayed their own religious message and whose morals are degraded like those of the tourists seen naked on the beaches.

When they meet Christians who are genuinely willing to serve them and whose morals are above reproach their suspicions are allayed and give place to respect and sympathy leading to close collaboration in work and eventually to serious dialogue even in matters of religion. This is always on condition that we show a total respect for them as persons and for their faith. Any form of proselytism is quickly detected and instantly rejected. On the other hand, an attitude of genuine love which sees in each person the image God has put there, encourages that person to express himself freely and to speak of problems which worry him and which we, ourselves, could never introduce.

At the beginning and, perhaps, for a very long time, "we must not so much *talk* about Jesus as *be* Jesus present in the midst of them" according to the well-known formula based on the mystery of Christ's life in Nazareth: thirty years of prayer, silence and ordinary life to prepare for three years of public ministry. This is true, no doubt, of many kinds of evangelization but is absolutely necessary in a Muslim milieu. Thirteen centuries of stormy relations between Muslim and Christian and the multiple snares posed by inherited ideas and vocabulary such as "Trinity", "Son of God", "Prophet", "Transmission and alteration of the Scriptures"... have created a veritable mine-field. It is a wise precaution, before entering into serious dialogue, to be aware of our lack of vocabulary to express our concept of God.

It rarely happens, though it is becoming more frequent, outside our schools, that certain people pursue to the end their quest of Christ. Then the problem of helping such people arises. This is a very delicate matter because of the difference of mentality, the hostility of the milieu and the traditional reluctance of Christian communities to accept them. This is part of the unforeseeable that cannot be written into a work contract and that requires great discretion. But we can all try when we know that, in any case, God has gone before us and invites us to follow in His footsteps.

"Follow me... you will see greater marvels yet" (John 1,50).

Bro. Robert JEAN

03-E-08

PRAYER

It is you, Lord, who made me a human being. You did so that I might know and love you. Everything around us is meant to serve us and to bring us closer to one another and to you. But we are slow to understand your goodness and wisdom and slower still to do what you require of us. Yet in spite of our reluctance, our blindness and our rebellion you multiply your appeals, your gestures of pardon and encouragement... Praised be you Lord, for what you have done for us.

I believe, Lord, that it was you who asked me to change communities in 1970. I came to Beauvais where I was welcomed by nine Brothers who worked in an agricultural college. At the beginning it took me some time to grasp what was expected of me in the formation of students who had come here to follow a five year course in engineering. So, although I was a teacher in the school I had, myself, to learn like everyone else who changes occupation. I had to try to establish relations with the other teachers. I consulted books and tried to be attentive to the reactions of the students. You, Lord, kept me from being discouraged while I learned from others. Thanks, Lord, for the prayers and advice of those who helped me. Pardon my stubbornness and rash judgement of others.

There's another thing I want to recall, Lord. It was the suppression of compulsory religious instruction for the boys of the first cycle. The need I had to learn from others made me too sensitive to the negative criticism of religious instruction by a large number of students. It produced a crisis which we solved as best we could. The passage of time together with more experience has made me realise that we lack the human formation in depth and, perhaps, the intense spirituality needed to give a religious education rich and accessible to all- believers and unbelievers alike.

In the years that followed I was tempted to doubt my usefulness in that school. In fact the greater part of my time was not spent in making you known. Only a very small number of students came for religious instruction. Little by little and thanks to conversations, community meetings, reading etc., I came to understand how my way of life could be the bearer of a message capable of awakening in young people the desire to seek you. In this way I realized that we could teach by example, by our mode of life, and that we would be imitated in our search for God. That is why, when we cannot speak explicitly of you because of the hostility of men or of our own deficiencies you ask us to be still more vigilant in cultivating attitudes which speak very clearly of you. Grant Lord, that we may be ever more prepared to let your light shine through us.

I want to thank you also, you who are always so anxious for our good, for having allowed one of my students to make me acquainted with an association in the town of Beauvais, a group of young and not so young people who collected scrap after working hours. I became a pupil of that student who introduced me to the Association of Youth for Mutual Aid and Development (AJED). That was in 1972.

The following year it was decided to devote part of the funds raised from the sale of the scrap to helping families in the region who received no aid from the social services, public or voluntary. I was asked to take charge of this work with the help of a full-time worker for the Association. In this way I came into contact with families in all kinds of difficulties: homelessness, unemployment, illness, death or desertion of a partner, alcoholism...

In company with other members of the Association I spent many an evening listening to men and women who tried to make us understand something of their situation as emarginated, as rejects from the affluent society.

About two years later Yvon and Marie-Thérèse, members of the Association, told me about an appeal for help made by the Parish Priest of the parish where the school is situated. They had been deeply touched by the priest's appeal for a family living not far from us in an "emergency" housing estate. That priest had taught Yvon and Marie-Thérèse. They contacted the family and gradually became aware that they needed to learn a lot before they could deal positively with the problems they encountered.

Within the AJED we formed a little study and action group for just that. About 1975 we thought we should get to know the area where the family lived. Studying reports of visits made to families in trouble, discussing them with social workers, and with advice from the Movement for Aid to All in Distress, founded by Fr. Joseph Wrésinsky for the "Fourth World", we prepared ourselves for over a year before venturing into the "transit" estate.

You know, Lord, that we hesitated for a long time before making a move. We had heard so much about the people in the estate: "They're a crowd of good for nothings". "They spend their time drinking and fighting" - "They live at public expense" etc...

Then one day, doubtless urged on by yourself, Lord, we went to a vacant lot in the estate. It was January, 1976 and snow had fallen. I was with Yvon and Marie-Thérèse and two Brothers from the school, Claude, a teacher and Jean-Marie, a student. We arrived there like the members of ATD when they organise what they call a cultural pivot or street library. We had two worn carpets which we put on the ground, some books, some games and puzzles, paper and pencils. In a short while children gathered around. Some read with us for a while, others played games or tried the puzzles while others drew. We continued each Saturday to the following June. The numbers of children increased and we gradually became accustomed to their aggressiveness which became intense towards the end of the session. They tore the books and stoned us as we left. On Saturday evenings we made a report on the day's work.

In the year that followed, under your guidance, Lord, we continued our efforts to learn from our contacts with the children and their parents. We were also helped by the experience of the members of the ATD movement. While learning from the children I think we were acting a little like you, Lord. We came closer to the poor children of the estate which we visited. It was because we were willing to learn from them that they began to do as we did and to learn from life what it is right to do and not do.

Later on, in collaboration with the Municipal Library, we organized a lending library for the children, giving each one a library ticket. Gradually the number of readers reached 110. In this way we got to know the families of the children better and a little later were happy to find adults asking to borrow books also. Was this not a kind of school? In the process we became aware that some of the adults could not read or did not understand what they read. Lord, should we not do something about that also?

With the help of the students of the agricultural college we organized workshops and excursions for the children on Wednesday afternoons. I have just found, Lord, what a student wrote in November, 1977:

"I ask myself what is the point of going to these slum areas to visit people of no importance in so-called 'transit' or 'emergency' townships around Beauvais which at most form only a tiny part of the 'Fourth World'. Still that is how a team of eight or nine students have passed their Wednesday afternoons since the All Saints holidays." It is difficult to know what urges them to give their time to children who have no other school but the street.

"My first impression was favourable thanks to the welcome of the children who were at once surprised to see us, curious, suspicious, outspoken but also amused. What struck me later was the aggressiveness of these children among themselves and towards us. They swear at each other and at us. They fight and try to appear tough... I believe this is due to the lack of affection in their lives. These children need to feel loved by someone and not to be treated as misfortunate rejects of society".

Reading between these lines written by a student called Etienne, one can guess that there is for him, and certainly for others, a call to learn from these poor children whom they have encountered:

"I believe this experience to be beneficial, not on the intellectual plane but because of the psychological effects it has on us. It lets us see a world totally different from the one in which we live. It shows the absurdity of two worlds which are unaware of each other's existence and yet live side by side. On the other hand it makes us realise that we are the privileged few, that we are the lucky ones, that we must change our way of life which rejects them because they do not belong to our milieu. Besides, it takes us out of our egoism and narrow-mindedness."

If these students have been able to stick to this work for one, two, or three years, in the case of some, it is perhaps, Lord, because you placed in their path people who had learned and had taught them something.

In 1977 we tried to make a methodical study of the population of the "transit" township which we visited each week. With the help of a lady Counsellor in social and family welfare we learned that the great majority were French citizens, that 38% were under 18 and that 55% of adults earned no wages.

We also carried out a study in the schools of the neighbouring residential area by contacting the Principals and the teachers.

We found that of 137 children from the residential sector 122 were in normal classes and 15 in special classes, that is classes for those who were retarded, lacking motivation or disruptive. On the other hand, out of 58 children from the "transit" township 19 were in normal classes and 39 in special classes. Lastly, in one of the schools in the area we learned the following facts concerning children from the "transit" area:

- at the beginning of school, that is, in the preparatory department, 3 children out of 16 are retarded. None are above average;
- at the end of the preparatory stage 9 out of 10 are retarded by one, two or three years.

These figures strengthened our resolve to do something to remedy this injustice. Perhaps it was you, Lord, who inspired us to act, for you said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice..."

In the months that followed, our plan of action took shape. It consisted in offering to the children who wanted it a period on one day of the week between 5 and 7 o'clock in the evening for revision of the work they had done that day or the previous days in school. We became aware, early on, that we could not limit ourselves to school work. Quite a lot of educational work could be done through games, conversation, mimes etc... As soon as we learned that we could use the time in a flexible manner and for a variety of activities we began to speak of A.D.S.-evening activities. We could find no more precise term. We did not want to speak of remedial classes or school work so as not to remind the children and their parents of scholastic failure. With about 50 children helped by 40 adults I think we are providing individual attention for children who are seldom listened to at home and who feel out of place in an ordinary school.

It seems to me that an adult is able to influence and educate a child to the extent that he or she is prepared to learn from the child as a human person. This is a necessary condition for the development of the full human potential of both the child and the adult.

In short, the discovery of our inability to help the young and not so young of the "transit" township compelled us to learn from others and to realise that this basic attitude is an important factor in our approach to the task of educating children.

In 1980, on the initiative of a student who had kept in contact with a group of young people in the township, an association was formed and registered. In 1981 Philippe arrived in the Community. While completing the second year of his novitiate he gradually came into contact with the 120 families of the township. You permitted him, Lord, to understand better through these contacts the nature of the call you addressed to him and to others. Like others before him he learned from the people he met.

Because of his presence and help the management of the "Maison du Quartier" (Neighbourhood Centre), recently built by the Municipality, was confided to our association.

In this building, which is meant to be a place of welcome and sharing, the parents meet on Thursdays for social, cultural and domestic sessions. On Mondays and Tuesdays children with reading problems come for help. A workshop for adolescents is in operation on Wednesday afternoons and on Friday evenings a group of young people hold their meetings there. There is still plenty to be learned. I am thinking particularly of those who recently broke into the building during the night and damaged it.

Through joy and suffering Lord, you cease not to offer your light and your strength that we may continue to combat injustice, bring others to you and be a symbol of the Church which brings together your children who are scattered, excluded, sick and in misery.

Lord, grant that we may learn from others so that we may be always your disciples and bearers of your Good News to the world.