

Beginnings: De La Salle and his Brothers

by

LEON AROZ, F.S.C.

YVES POUTET, F.S.C.

JEAN PUNGIER, F.S.C.

Translated and Edited by

LUKE SALM, F.S.C.



Beginnings:
De La Salle and his Brothers



JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE
Detail from the portrait known as Léger 2

Beginnings: De La Salle and his Brothers

by
LEON AROZ, F.S.C.
YVES POUTET, F.S.C.
JEAN PUNGIER, F.S.C.
Translated and Edited by
LUKE SALM, F.S.C.

Christian Brothers National Office
Romeoville, Illinois 60441

Beginnings: DeLaSalle and his Brothers
copyright 1980 by Christian Brothers Conference
Romeoville, Illinois 60441

Printed by Saint Mary's Press
Winona, Minnesota 55987

CONTENTS

Foreword	vii
PART ONE: ROOTS IN RHEIMS	1
Introduction	3
I The De La Salle Home in 1682	7
II The House on the Rue Neuve	21
III The School on the Rue de Contrai	35
PART TWO: THE FOUNDER'S FRANCE	53
IV France in the Seventeenth Century	55
V The Immediate Family	81
VI The Christian School	87
PART THREE: DE LA SALLE DIARY	107

ILLUSTRATIONS

John Baptist de La Salle	
Detail of a portrait known as Léger 2	frontispiece
Rheims in the Seventeenth Century	8
The House on the Rue de Contrai	39
Brothers' Communities at the Death of the Founder (1719)	120
Paris in the Seventeenth Century	124

Cover by Brother Roderick Robertson, FSC, of St. Mary's College, Winona, MN. It features the obverse of the medal designed and engraved by Alfred Borrel in 1888 to commemorate the solemn beatification of John Baptist de La Salle in Rome on February 19, 1888. The figure of de La Salle is from a painting by Pierre Léger done in 1734.

FOREWORD

There are at least two ways to read and interpret the changes that have taken place since Vatican II in the religious congregations of the Roman Catholic Church. One way is to interpret this period as an unprecedented era of decline, to focus on the many members who have left the orders and the few who have come in, to deplore the collapse of institutional structures or the erosion of the religious spirit and the symbols that once kept that spirit alive in the Catholic community.

But that is not the only way to interpret the processes at work in the religious congregations of the post-Vatican II Church. Most of the congregations, if not all, have taken seriously the directive in *Perfectae caritatis* of Vatican II to base their renewal and adaptation on three fundamental considerations: the spirit of the Gospel, the charism of the Founder and the signs of the times. In the fifteen years since the close of Vatican II, not a very long period after all, there has been a significant growth in an appreciation of the power of the biblical word: in teaching and preaching, in community prayer, in personal reflection. The spirit of the Gospel has led religious institutes to favor a simpler life-style, to join actively in the struggle for peace and social justice, to see to it that the poor and the disadvantaged hear the good news of salvation, even to accept the death of institutions and institutional forms as a passage to new life and rebirth. This Gospel spirit, in turn, has given new clarity to the way the orders have learned to read the signs of the times.

In like manner, religious institutes have begun to re-discover their founders, to recapture the spirit, imagination and creativity that enabled them to make the spirit of the Gospel a living reality

in the times in which they lived. The Brothers of the Christian Schools are no exception to this tendency to go back to the Founder to find there the sources of spirit and life. In the formidable Declaration entitled *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today*, the renewal Chapter of 1967 stated its position: "The Brothers are convinced that in the life, work, and writings of Saint John Baptist de La Salle the Holy Spirit is revealed in a privileged manner, and that they will find there even today a living principle for their guidance" (5-1). The return to the Founder is not, however, a mere exercise in historical research or a movement to bring back and relive an outdated past. The Declaration goes on to affirm: "Fidelity to the specific intentions of the Founder and to the traditions of the Institute is confided to us as living men. It is we who carry on the task of discovering how fidelity to his charism can be lived in the present time" (7-1).

In the Institute of the Brothers, this communal search for the charism of the Founder has not remained an abstract ideal. For the first time in its history, perhaps, the Institute has had Brothers professionally trained to conduct critical research into its origins; there are likewise Brothers qualified in history, psychology, philosophy and theology who can help to penetrate the significance of the data and events, locating them in the broader context of their specialized fields. Apart from the trained specialists, there are some signs that the Brothers generally are beginning to appreciate the Founder better, to revise the uncritical and often rigid impression of the Saint that may have been given in the Novitiate, to distinguish the permanent and dynamic creativity in the Founder's charism from the institutional forms and symbols in which it was enshrined in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The General Chapter of 1976, transitional and even rudderless as it may seem to some to have been, had revitalization for its theme; if there was one sign of vitality that was evident on that occasion, it was the sense of the Founder: he emerged as the bond of unity among the Brothers in their search together for his relevance today. The triduum devoted to prayer, articulation and discernment (all centered on John Baptist de La Salle) was an experience that those who shared in will never forget.

There is a special reason to focus on the life and charism of the Founder as well as on the origins of his Institute at this particular moment in history. In 1980 the Institute of the Brothers of the

Christian Schools will celebrate formally the tricentennial of its foundation. Actually, because the foundation of the Institute was more a process than an event, the dates that loom ahead will be occasions for anniversary celebrations for many years to come. When did the Institute begin? Was it in '79 when the first Christian school was opened under the direction of Adrien Nyel? Or was it in '80 when De La Salle took the teachers into his home? Or in '82 when the Founder moved the teachers, called Brothers for the first time, into a community house of their own? In '86 when they first made private vows of obedience? In '91 when three of them vowed to associate to found the Society? In '94 when at the first General Chapter, the vows of obedience, stability and association were made by the principal Brothers? And so on. As the Brothers recall these events and explore their significance for the Institute today, it might be useful to have on hand an updated instrument to pinpoint the successive events by which the Institute came to life. That is one function that this present volume is designed to serve.

There is another reason for the appearance of this volume at this time. Most of the recent research that has been done on the life of the Founder and the origins of the Institute has appeared in the French language. Very little of the fruits of this research is as yet available in English. Part of this research has been centered at the motherhouse of the Brothers in Rome and has been published regularly over the last twenty years or so in the more than forty volumes of the *Cahiers lasalliens*. Brothers Maurice Auguste, Michel Sauvage, Léon Aroz and Miguel Campos have made important contributions to this series. The ultimate goal of this project is to make available critical editions of the Founder's writings and, at the same time, to provide the documentation necessary for an eventual biography of John Baptist de La Salle that will be both critical and definitive.

It is surprising that we do not as yet possess that kind of scholarly biography of the Founder of a religious Institute that has lasted for three hundred years and, at one time, numbered as many as 17,000 Brothers throughout the world. Shortly after his death in 1719, three biographies of De La Salle appeared. The first, by Brother Bernard, was thought not worthy of publication; only part of it has survived in manuscript form. A second was produced in two manuscript editions (1723 and 1740) by Dom Eli Maillefer,

born as François-Hélie Maillefer, a nephew of De La Salle. The first biography to be printed was that of Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain who had been ecclesiastical superior of the Brothers at Saint Yon near Rouen. This work was commissioned by Brother Timothy, Superior General, who made all the relevant documents available to the author. It appeared in 1733 in two volumes: the first, devoted to the life story of the Saint; the second, to his "Spirit and Virtues."

While all of these early biographies are important, if for no other reason than the fact that the authors had access to contemporaries of the Founder and to documents that have since been lost, they do not meet the standards of contemporary biographical writing. In varying degrees, their style is rambling and cumbersome, the genre conforms more to the traditions of hagiography than to critical history, controversial matters that were considered too sensitive for their times are glossed over or suppressed, there is exaggerated emphasis on those elements that would enhance the possibility of eventual canonization. The result is a one-dimensional portrait of the Founder and his times.

The twentieth century has produced a fairly large number of new studies on the life and significance of De La Salle. That of Guibert appeared in 1900, the year of the Founder's canonization. The first volume of Rigault's nine-volume history of the Institute, published in Paris in 1937, is in effect a biography of the Founder. The biography in English by Martin Dempsey was published in London in 1940; that of the American educationalist, Edward Fitzpatrick, honoring De La Salle as the Patron of Teachers, appeared in 1951 on the occasion of the tercentenary of the Founder's birth. Of special interest to English-speaking readers is the eminently readable biography by W. J. Battersby, the late Brother Clair Stanislaus, FSC. It appeared in 1957. His stated purpose was to render a more human portrait of the Saint and to relate De La Salle to the social and economic situation of his time. English-speaking Brothers are likewise indebted to Brother Clair for his earlier biographical studies on De La Salle as educator, saint and spiritual author, for his translations of the letters and the meditations of the Founder, as also for his many volumes on the history of the Institute and the Brothers in the United States.

None of these modern studies may be said to constitute a

definitive and critical biography in the contemporary sense. Both Rigault and Battersby may have aimed at something of the sort; both had access to much of the original source material, especially all that is preserved in the Rome archives of the Institute. On the other hand, neither of them had the advantage of the documentation that has come to light in recent years, thanks in particular to the painstaking research of Brothers Léon Aroz and Yves Poutet.

It is not known when the definitive biography based on all the available source material can or will be attempted. Meanwhile the bulk of the research of Brother Léon Aroz has been published in the *Cahiers*, and a condensed version of the two-volume work of Brother Yves Poutet has become available. This present volume aims to introduce selected portions of this recent research to English-speaking readers.

Part One focuses on the City of Rheims, the streets and the houses where the Founder lived, and the property on the Rue Neuve/Rue de Contrai where the Institute may be said to have had its birth and where the Brothers conduct a school to this day. Most likely it was on this site that the schoolteachers around De La Salle were called Brothers for the first time. More than ever before Brothers from English-speaking countries have had or will have the opportunity to visit Rheims. It is appropriate, too, as the Institute celebrates the tricentenary of the events that led to its foundation, that special attention be paid to the very city and the actual sites where these events took place.

Part Two is intended to supply some detailed background on the social situation in seventeenth century France. The geographical boundaries then were very different from what they are today. So, too, were the relations between Church and State, the system of money and banking, the important theological issues, the life-style in the cities and on the farms, the domestic arrangements and the means of travel and commerce. This section also provides an appropriate context to take a closer look at the family of John Baptist de La Salle, to see the human influences, the joys and tragedies, that helped to forge his character and his personality. Finally, this approach provides an opportunity to examine the Christian school of the Founder's day and to re-examine what the expression "Christian Schools" in the official designation of the Institute could mean for the Brothers today.

Part Three may, at first glance, seem to be nothing more than a list of dates and events, some of them even rather trivial. But there are riches to be mined from this bare chronology. It was originally presented in the *Cahiers* as a sort of outline for the eventual definitive biography; the majority of the dates and events can be supported by documentary evidence, a good bit of it being primary source material that is reproduced with transcription and commentary in the other volumes of the *Cahiers lasalliens*. Through the pages of this inventory, one can follow De La Salle day by day, month by month, year by year through the varied stages of his career: student, canon, seminarian, priest, guardian of his younger brothers and sisters, organizer of the schoolteachers and, eventually, the Founder of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. We get a glimpse of his administrative and financial concerns, the legal battles he had to fight, his extensive journeys and, shining through it all, his patience and resignation, his abandonment to Providence, his religious spirit and, in sum, the content and context of his sanctity.

Part One and Part Three are translations of material that first appeared in volumes 37 and 41-1, respectively, of the *Cahiers lasalliens*. The material in Part Two on the Founder's family is drawn from material scattered throughout these and other volumes in the same series. The author of all of this, who has painstakingly sought out the documents and prepared them for publication, is Brother Léon de Marie Aroz, FSC. Originally from Spain, he obtained the degree of Doctor of Theology from the Gregorian University in Rome in 1955 with a major in missiology. He has devoted most of his professional life to research on the life and work of John Baptist de La Salle. More recently he has extended his interest to research in the archives of the Church in Spain and to the courses he gives in the Vatican's School of Paleography and Diplomacy. In February, 1979, the French government recognized the contribution of his scholarship and publications by naming him an officer in the Order of the *Palmes Académiques*.

Part Two of the present volume is, for the most part, a translation of a mimeographed brochure prepared for the use of the Brothers at the *Centre International Lasallien* (CIL) in the generalate at Rome. The order and style of the French original have been somewhat altered to suit the purposes of this presentation in

North America. The original also contained a rather lengthy section on the spirituality of De La Salle. That section has been omitted here in view of the projected translation of the two-volume work on that subject by Brothers Michel Sauvage and Miguel Campos. There exists a mimeographed English translation by Brother Edwin McCarthy, FSC, of the entire brochure that follows the order and content of the original more closely. Although that translation was helpful in preparing Part Two of the present volume, it had to be extensively revised to conform to American English usage.

The source for the French brochure prepared for the use of the CIL is a two-volume work entitled *Le XVIIIème siècle et les origines lasalliennes* published at Rennes in 1970. The author is Brother Yves Poutet, FSC, a Doctor of Letters in history. In the course of his research, Brother Yves had occasion to visit the archives of all the cities and towns in France which De La Salle is known to have visited and all of the still existing religious communities with which the Founder had some contact. Brother Yves has published in professional historical journals many other scholarly articles dealing with the history of religious orders and congregations in the seventeenth century. Brother Jean Pungier, FSC, is responsible for the condensed and popularized French version of Poutet's work. He himself is a graduate of the *Institut Supérieur Pastoral et Catéchétique* in Paris, a former director of the Pastoral Center at Kerivoal in Brittany and presently a member of the staff of the *Centre International Lasallien* (CIL) in Rome.

Finally, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the generous cooperation and creative assistance given by many Brothers in the preparation of this volume. Thanks are due to Brother Pablo Basterrechea, FSC, Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and to Brother Maurice Auguste Hermans, FSC, Managing Director of the *Cahiers lasalliens*, for their gracious permission to publish an English version of this material; to Brother Charles Henry, FSC, former Superior General and now Director of Translation Projects for the Regional Conference of Christian Brothers, for his encouragement and support as well as his critical reading of the manuscript; to Brother Edwin McCarthy, FSC, of the London District for making available his translation of the Poutet-Pungier brochure; to Mr. Roger Goebel for his advice on French legal terminology; to Brother Augustine Loes, FSC, for his

appreciative reading of the manuscript and his positive criticisms and suggestions; to Brother Hilary Gilmartin, FSC, of the Christian Brothers National Center at Romeoville, Illinois, for his eagle eye in detecting lapses in grammar, style, fact and typography; and, above all, to Brothers Aroz, Poutet and Pungier, not only for their willingness to have the fruits of their research translated and edited, but also for the imagination and dedication that led them to undertake the work in the first place and for the scholarly competence and religious spirit that are so evident in the finished product.

Luke Salm, FSC
Manhattan College
Bronx, NY
June 24, 1979

Part One

Roots in Rheims

(This section is a translation of the first three chapters of volume 37-3 of the Cahiers lasalliens entitled "Aux sources de la Vie et de l'Esprit: Rue-Neuve — Rue-de-Contrai [1682-1972]." The author is Brother Léon de Marie Aroz, FSC.)

INTRODUCTION

It was in Rheims, on June 24, 1682, that John Baptist de La Salle left the sumptuous town house which his family owned on the Rue Sainte Marguerite and moved into a place of his own on the Rue Neuve across the street from the monastery of Sainte Claire. This was a significant step, one that he had been thinking about for a long time, but one that left him at the mercy of an uncertain future. It was a conscious move by which he willingly accepted the challenge to respond to God in a special way as so many of his followers and spiritual sons have done in imitation of him even to this very day. The work which De La Salle undertook on that occasion still goes on; the site which witnessed its birth is still there; the address is 18-20 Rue de Contrai in Rheims. A technical school has replaced the primary school of the seventeenth century, and the students today are taught something more advanced than their ABC's. The Brothers who make up the faculty and administrative staff no longer wear the white rabat, the black serge soutane, the long mantle with the pendant sleeves or the heavy peasant boots of the original Brothers. Today the students are older and further along in their education than the little waifs of 1679 who were brought together from the Saint Remy neighborhood of Rheims to attend the first schools: one on the Rue Saint Maurice; the other in the parish of Saint Jacques.

Yet even today the Brothers are still very much at home in the world of ordinary people who live by the work of their hands in the day-to-day struggle to maintain a modest standard of living. It was to these people, the workers, the artisans and the small merchants of his time, that John Baptist consecrated his talents, his resources and forty years of his life from 1679 to 1719. To these people he likewise consecrated his Institute, which is composed of men bound by their vocation to the least privileged classes of society. He

wanted his followers to be "brothers" and nothing else. That is what he called them in order to signify their commitment to a particular segment of society, to the poor who are otherwise so generally neglected. He challenged the Brothers as brothers to share the poverty of the poor, to experience the scorn heaped upon them and to identify as well with all their legitimate aspirations. Thus the noble ideal to which the first disciples of John Baptist de La Salle bound themselves by deliberate choice was to live in poverty with people of modest means. The building at the intersection of the Rue Neuve and Rue de Contrai provided the backdrop for their original fervor, their generosity and the many sacrifices they had to make in order to think like the poor, to feel the reality of poverty and so to make concrete the gift of their lives.

It is the purpose of the pages that follow to bring into focus the various stages of this development: its origins, the sacrifices it entailed, the kind of blind faith that it presupposed, the total commitment that it demanded. Above all, it is important to understand the spirit which animated the enterprise. Without spirit, any undertaking, however praiseworthy, becomes nothing more than a passing experiment. It is the spirit of an enterprise that provides the basis for its cohesion and permanence.

The foundation in the Rue Neuve played a significant part of this development. It was there that emerged the institutions that are needed to give flesh and blood to good intentions, to provide the staying power that comes from a community formed with its own characteristics, its specific purpose and the means to achieve it. All of this resulted in the birth of a new congregation in the Church with a religious and professional character that was first recognized at Rheims and in the French departments of Ardennes and Aisne. Before very much longer the new community was known in Paris, Avignon, Rouen, and Rome; in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it spread through all of France; during the last hundred and fifty years it has reached out to the Americas, the Near and the Far East, Africa and Australia. The seed that fell into the good ground of the Rue Neuve has borne such good fruit that today the Founder of the Christian and gratuitous schools of the city of Rheims is known and revered all over the world.

It is not the purpose here, however, to trace the amazing progress of this worldwide development. Rather, all the attention will be concentrated on the house which was the citadel and, for a

time (from 1682 to 1688), the heart and the head of the newborn Institute.

Despite the uncertainties of the early days and the difficulties attendant on the Founder's departure for Paris in 1688, there grew a firm conviction that the work that had begun in Rheims had indeed met with success. Very often material necessities were lacking and the assistance that the Brothers had a right to expect was not always forthcoming. For all that, the Brothers never ceased to do all in their power to provide the working class with a good education and to do whatever they could to improve the lot of the poor. After the first hundred years of its existence, the foundation on the Rue de Contrai was at the height of its prosperity when suddenly it was caught up in the French revolution. Almost swept away by the hurricane force of the winds of revolution, it survived to stand proud once again. After peace returned, a truly great man, Brother Vivien, reorganized the Lasallian community. The school on the Rue de Contrai survived the revolution but its buildings, those that had been rebuilt between 1753 and 1760, no longer echoed with the recitations of the students as it had before 1791. Instead it was occupied by the barely literate employees of the Baudet-Fassin silk factory. Brother Vivien and his immediate successors made their home with the Carmelites from 1805 to 1835; from 1835 until 1880 in a house close to the Rue du Jard. During this period of almost eighty years, the Brothers often looked with a sense of nostalgia to their lost paradise, to that site where one hundred or more years earlier John Baptist de La Salle had fathered a religious family of educators of the people.

Providentially, the Brothers regained possession of these buildings in 1880, the very year that marked the second century of their foundation. It was a happy moment indeed when the Brothers could walk once again on that precious ground; the Superior General, Brother Irlide, knelt to kiss it in the course of the solemn celebration of the bicentennial. Ever since that time the property on the Rue de Contrai has remained in the hands of the Brothers. Neither the laws of banishment of 1904, the senseless bombings of World War I, not even the attempt in 1923 on the part of the clergy to take it over, succeeded in detaching a single parcel of this ground, "this family inheritance," to use the expression of Brother Vivientian who represented the Superior General in the negotiations.

The chapters in the history of this three-hundred-year-old foundation bear the following headings: Rue de Contrai in the time of De La Salle; Rue de Contrai, a Christian primary school for one hundred years (1682-1791); Rue de Contrai as a factory (1800-1880); Rue de Contrai as a free school (1880-1904); Rue de Contrai as a professional and technical school (1926 to the present). Well known among the professional educators of Rheims, this school is dear as no other to followers of John Baptist de La Salle; it is the continuing incarnation of his presence, his life and his spirit.

The pages that follow have been written as a sort of pilgrimage to the sources, inviting the Brothers especially to make personal contact with the origins of their spirit and life, to consider honestly how consistent is their life-style at present with the purposes that brought their Institute into being in the first place. Someone has said that we must live for the future without giving up our memories. That requires the courage to face the problem of fidelity and continuity which neither negate the past nor become intoxicated with illusory visions of the future. Rather we are challenged to live to the full the new possibilities of progress in the present while preparing, in the light of our history, for the awesome prospects of the day after tomorrow.

CHAPTER I

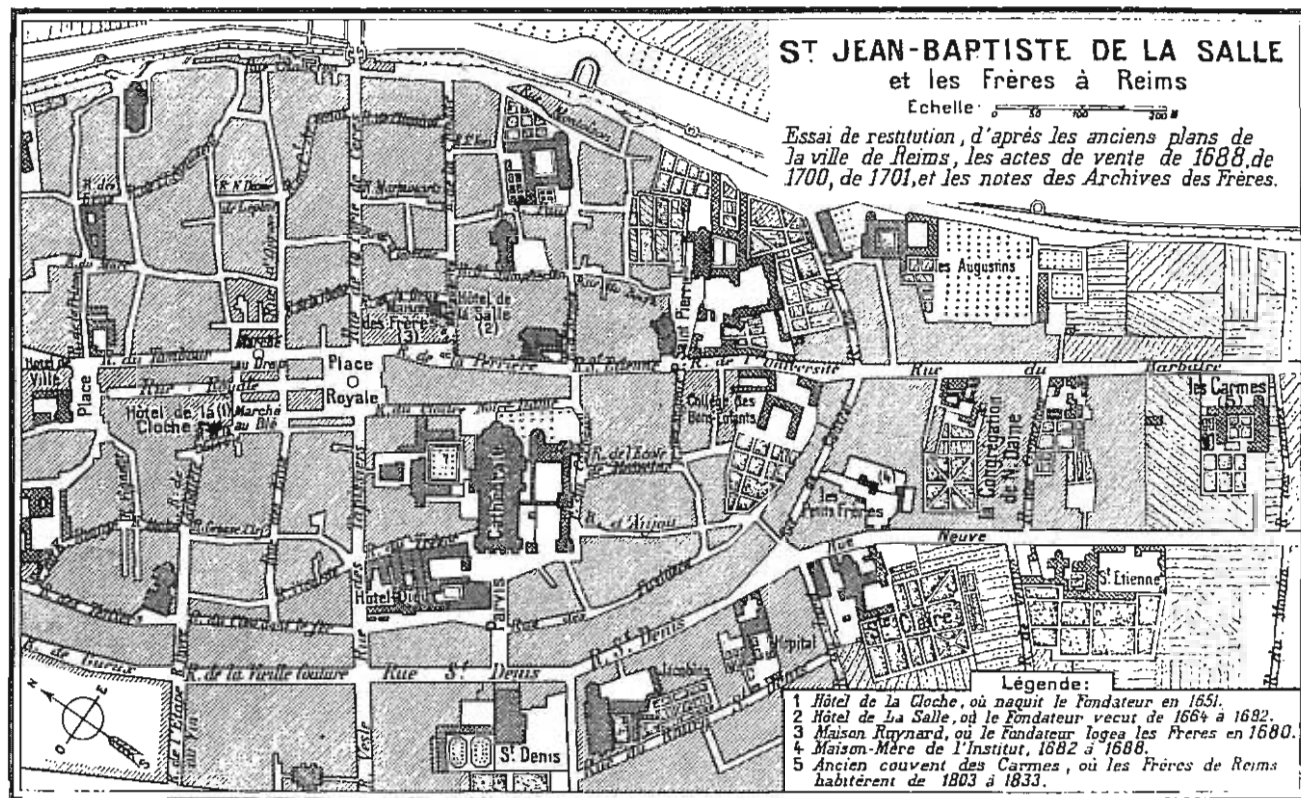
THE DE LA SALLE HOME IN 1682

There are three street names that are involved with the history of one man and the work he instituted. The streets are the Rue de l'Arbalète, the Rue Sainte Marguerite and the Rue Neuve; the man is John Baptist de La Salle; the institution is the community of the Christian Schools which he founded.

THE RUE DE L'ARBALÈTE

During the seventeenth century, in the center of what is now the old city of Rheims, there was a recess off the Rue de l'Arbalète known as the Impasse de la Chanvrerie. It was a short distance from the city hall and the cathedral, not far from the church of Saint Pierre-le-Vieil and the church of Saint Jacques. In this recess there was a town house known as La Cloche or La Cloche d'Or with a beautiful Renaissance facade. This stately residence had been built by Henri Choilly between 1545 and 1560. It had an opening on a courtyard and was distinguished by a spiral staircase that had admirable and delicate columns supporting the open structure of its curved design.

This house was acquired in 1609 by François de La Salle and thereafter became the property of his son, Lancelot, who lived there with his wife, Barbara Coquebert, and their children: Simon (1618-1680), François (d. 1619), Marie (1620-1674), Louis (1625-1672) and Antoinette (d. 1628). It was there that Louis de La Salle, a magistrate in the presidial court of Rheims, lived with his wife, Nicolle Moët de Brouillet, from the day of their marriage on August 25, 1650. Louis lived in the part of the house designated by the nameplate NM — standing for Marie Noël Moët (not Nicolas, as was thought for a long time). This part of the house had been given over to Louis by his oldest brother, Simon, according to a codicil in the will of their mother, Barbara Coquebert. Two years before her



death in 1653, her grandson, John Baptist de La Salle, was born there on April 30, 1651.

At one time some question was raised about the place of his birth, with arguments advanced in favor of the mansion known as Le Vergeur. But the historical evidence recently brought forth has effectively undermined the claims of that house.¹ If it was disputed for a time that John Baptist de La Salle first saw the light of day in the Cloche mansion, no one has ever questioned the fact that he lived there. It was there that he spent the better part of his childhood, the thirteen years between 1651 and 1664, during which time he grew in piety and manifested both the wisdom and the mischief usual in children. In the small courtyard where the recess of the Chanvrerie provides a connection between the Rue de l'Arbalète and the passageway known as the Ruelle aux Veaux (and later as the Orde Ruelle),² John Baptist played at his first childhood games under the watchful eyes of his mother. It was in this house that he learned reading and writing from his tutor in preparation for his formal studies that began in the school of the Bons-Enfants. In this house, too, his curiosity as a child was awakened as he watched the displays in the shop windows of the hemp merchants, the processions in honor of Saint Remy after the pestilence of 1659, the bonfires celebrating the treaty of the Pyrenees, the long line of happy attendants that went before the bridal processions along the Rue de l'Arbalète en route to Notre Dame Cathedral.

Only a few yards away from the De La Salle home were the Marché-au-Bled, the Marché-au-Drap and Pierre-au-Change at the corner where the Coquebert and Lespagnol families lived.³ Nearby, too, was the Rue des Elus where some of the De La Salle family had their residence; also the Corbeille d'Or and the La Valroy mansions which were in the old section of the present-day forum, an area that was completely redesigned after 1918 in order to show off to better advantage the ancient Roman ruins. Such was the geographical horizon that provided scope for the curiosity of the young De La Salle and stimulated the attention and thought of such a fine lad, well-born and intelligent.

John Baptist inherited the moral and intellectual qualities of his parents: the integrity and professional seriousness of his father; the human qualities and virtues of his mother who had been brought up in the most exacting practices of Christian piety

sustained by faith and prayer. It was at the Cloche d'Or where, far from the frivolity of the world outside, John Baptist shared his diversions with his brothers and sisters: Remy, born in 1652; Marie in 1654; Rose-Marie in 1656; Marie-Anne in 1658; Jacques-Joseph in 1659; Jean-Louis in 1663. It was there also that John Baptist first learned the meaning of sorrow at the loss of Remy, Marie-Anne and Jean-Louis, all of whom died in the first flower of their youth. These events left indelible memories which John Baptist took with him when in 1664 he left the Rue de l'Arbalète and the Chanvrerie to move with his parents into a new home on the Rue Sainte Marguerite.

RUE SAINTE MARGUERITE (TODAY, RUE EUGÈNE DESTEUQUE)⁴

In due time the La Cloche mansion became too small for a family that kept growing in size at close intervals: eleven children in twenty years of married life.⁵ So the De La Salle family left it to settle down on the Rue Sainte Marguerite in a mansion they had purchased from Louis Ballet, a counselor of the presidium. The bill of sale is dated May 23, 1664. The Frémyn and Noblet families lived on that street also in the same De Prin mansion which Richelieu made famous by his visit in 1614 as Voltaire was to do two centuries later.⁶ Not far away, in the Rue de la Gabelle, lived Madame de La Salle, the grandmother of John Baptist. Scarcely a hundred yards beyond, on the Rue de la Perrière, could be seen the exterior of the apse of the cathedral with its flying buttresses topped by some very expressive gargoyles. Such was the north transept of Notre Dame, that splendid example of Romanesque art; nearby was the cathedral square surrounded by the conventual houses of the canons and the church of Saint Michel. Somewhat closer to the new De La Salle home were the chapel of Sainte Marguerite and the parish church of Saint Symphorien on the street of the same name. All of this constituted an architectural backdrop against which could be heard the centuries-old bells echoing in the narrow streets of the city of Rheims. It was in this city of kings and merchants that John Baptist de La Salle grew out of adolescence into young adulthood during the eighteen years from 1664 to 1682. These years were marked by indescribable joys and sorrowful trials; the sorrows were a burden for the heart of a son, the joys exhilarating for the soul of a priest.

Choosing not to follow in the footsteps of his father by pursu-

ing a career in law, the young De La Salle decided instead to enter the ranks of the clergy. He received the tonsure when he was eleven years old; at sixteen he became a canon of the cathedral of Notre Dame, the first of the De La Salle name to be admitted to the distinguished cathedral chapter of Rheims.⁷ It was on January 7, 1667, that he entered the cathedral through its magnificent main portal to take possession of stall #21 which his cousin, Pierre Dozet, had resigned in his favor. He assisted at the divine office when he was required to do so and this, together with his studies, filled his days with joy and peace for many years.

Things began to change in the month of July, 1671, when his mother died. Although this event caused him much grief, he was able to keep it from overwhelming him. It was especially difficult since he had left his mother scarcely a year earlier to follow the course in theology at Saint Sulpice in Paris. Then came the sudden death of his father on April 9, 1672. This time he had not only to interrupt his studies but also to face a whole new set of problems. When he arrived back in Rheims from Paris on April 23, he found his orphaned brothers and sisters full of sorrow. It was not very clear how he could reconcile his duty as the oldest son, himself still a minor, with his vocation to the service of the Church. A priest friend, Nicolas Roland, helped him regain his composure and peace of mind. Thanks to his advice, the young John Baptist began to see a way out of the darkness that helped to brighten his spirit: he could still be a priest and at the same time act as a father to his brothers and sisters. Accordingly, in 1672, he assumed legal guardianship over them.

This arrangement was satisfactory for a while but by 1676 he had to resign this obligation when he found the administrative responsibilities of guardian incompatible with his duties as a student and a canon. He saw what he had to do and made his decision with clarity and tranquillity. He continued to live with his family but was now free to give himself completely to his studies and his choir duties. He had received the subdiaconate in 1672, the diaconate four years later, and then prepared himself for the licentiate in theology which he received in 1678. He presented himself for ordination in that year and was ordained by his archbishop, Maurice le Tellier, on Holy Saturday, April 9, 1678. When he set out from the family home to say his first Mass, only his brothers and sister, Marie, his beloved grandmother and a few close rela-

tives went with him to the cathedral to unite their prayers to his in the holy sacrifice. Today, in the chapel of Notre Dame Cathedral in Rheims, there is a statue by Lejeune which, since 1952, has marked the place where De La Salle said his first Mass.

Once ordained, De La Salle had to ask himself whether this alone would be enough to fulfill his personal goals. Would he be content to say Mass every day, to hear confessions and to preach, as the very commitment to the sacerdotal ministry implied? He wondered, besides, about his preparation for the doctorate and the administration of the family patrimony which he took up once again in 1680. He had still to provide for the education of his young brothers Jean-Louis, Pierre and Jean-Remy whose ages ranged from nine to fifteen.

In 1676, about two years before his ordination, a new challenge had already presented itself to disturb the calm course of his life. Nicolas Roland, his spiritual director, had wanted to tear him away from the undisturbed routine of his duties as canon and so proposed that De La Salle take charge of the parish of Saint Pierre-le-Vieil in Rheims. John Baptist agreed, but the project, somewhat ambiguous from the start, never got beyond the planning stages. When it seemed that everything was settled, André Clocquet, the incumbent pastor who had suggested the whole idea in the first place, refused to agree. In any case it seems clear that Nicolas Roland had in mind high ideals for his preferred disciple, envisioning him as a new apostolic leader in the tradition of men like Barré or Bourdoise who in an earlier day had accomplished so much at Saint Nicolas-du-Chardonnet in Paris. By associating the young priest with the schools for girls that he himself had opened, by making him the executor of his will, by introducing him to the Sisters of the Infant Jesus, by entrusting to him on his deathbed his last requests, Roland was unwittingly preparing the young De La Salle for the work which God was calling him to do. Little by little, almost imperceptibly, circumstances were leading him into it deeper and deeper.

The year 1679 marks the beginning of a series of steps that was to lead De La Salle to a definitive commitment to the work of the schools. The first of these steps was a chance encounter that set his whole life in a new direction, although he did not realize it at the time. In a house on the Rue de Barbâtre — today it is #48 — two men who had never met before, Adrien Nyel and John Baptist

de La Salle, found themselves face-to-face in the parlor of the Sisters of the Infant Jesus. Present also was Mother Frances Duval, the Superior, who had introduced them. Nyel explained the purpose of his visit which was a daring proposal to open a Christian school in Rheims for young boys. There were several problems: how to get the project started without too much publicity, without arousing the suspicion of the professional writing masters, without provoking the city administration which, only a few months before, had unequivocally opposed the very foundation of the Sisters of the Infant Jesus. Blain, his biographer, reconstructs the response of De La Salle to Nyel in these words: "Come and live with me for a while . . . The house is large enough, and parish priests from the countryside often come there as do many priests who are my personal friends . . . You look something like a parish priest from the country and people will think you are one of them . . . In my house, quiet and unrecognized and without being a burden to anyone, you can easily spend a week or so . . ." The proposal was sensible and cautious; it was a restrained but preliminary involvement in the work.

Thus it was that for a whole week, in the house on the Rue Sainte Marguerite, John Baptist de La Salle and Adrien Nyel spent most of their time studying the many aspects of the problem. They sought the advice of men of experience among whom Dom Claude Bretagne, Prior of the Abbey of Saint Remy, and Jacques Callou, Rector of the seminary at Rheims, were especially helpful. De La Salle had taken the latter as his spiritual director after the death of Nicolas Roland. When De La Salle assembled the pastors of the town to discuss the matter, one would have thought it was a preliminary meeting of the ecclesiastical commission for elementary instruction of the city of Rheims. The pastor of Saint Remy, Nicolas Dorigny, agreed to the suggestion of De La Salle that he provide room and board in his rectory for Adrien Nyel and the fourteen-year-old assistant who accompanied him. Thus there began, in the first semester of the year 1679 (the commonly assigned date of April 15 seems arbitrary), in the parish of Saint Maurice, the first Christian school for the poor young boys of the city of Rheims. Without fanfare (so as not to arouse suspicion) and in semi-secrecy as if they were guilty of some major crime against society, two men who had hitherto not known each other, launched

a movement that was to open up entirely new social advantages for the children of artisans and the poor.

Once the school was opened De La Salle no doubt thought that his part in the affair was now concluded; he merely kept himself available in case there should be further calls for help from Nyel. But such was not the divine plan. In a memoir which has unfortunately been lost, De La Salle wrote these words: "God, who guides all things with wisdom and serenity and whose way it is not to force the inclination of persons, willed to commit me entirely to the development of the schools. He did this in an imperceptible way and over a long period of time so that one commitment led to another in a way that I did not foresee in the beginning."

The road would be long, the steps perfectly graded, the difficulties wisely spaced at suitable intervals. Once again Adrien Nyel entered the scene. There was a woman of the parish of Saint Jacques, Catherine Leleu by name, the widow of Antoine Lévesque of Vendières, who was stricken with a serious illness. She wanted to endow a charitable school for her neighborhood. All she had to do was to make that known for Adrien Nyel to step in to help make her wish a reality. However, the good woman had known De La Salle, at least since 1678, and so it was with him that she drew up the contract: three classes and 500 livres as salary for the teachers who would be in charge. Adrien Nyel had given birth to the idea but it was John Baptist de La Salle who brought the negotiations to their conclusion with, as his biographer says, "devotion, foresight and a cordial smile that dispelled all difficulties." It was left to Nyel to recruit the teachers; the school opened that same year. Six months later, on May 20, 1680, the foundress died.

Although he was expert in organizing schools, Adrien Nyel scarcely knew how to direct men. He lived at Saint Maurice and worked at Saint Jacques which was at the other end of town. This made it difficult to control his fellow teachers. Without adequate attention to the details of running the house, without even the minimum discipline required by ordinary politeness, with Nyel himself incapable of giving in his own person the kind of example that would encourage his companions, the project seemed doomed to failure. What was needed was to bring the teachers together as a team, to establish a daily routine, to find a leader to inspire them and, not incidentally, to find a decent place in which to live. With nothing to predispose him to this new commitment, John Baptist

de La Salle offered to assume this leadership role. For this purpose he rented the Ruinart house near his family mansion on the Rue Sainte Marguerite. He arranged for the lodging of the teachers and had a good part of their food prepared for them in his own kitchen. In the first months of 1680, on this newly rented property, Nyel opened a third school which Blain says was soon "the most well attended and the best regulated of them all." The school was intended for the poor children in the parish of Saint Symphorien.

This time De La Salle insisted that the teachers in the school apply themselves to their work with seriousness and with religious motivation. He often dropped in on them not only during class hours but after school as well to help them analyze their own conduct, to show them how to control the pupils and to make it easier for them to enter into a better regulated life-style. This was, however, only a provisional solution. It was approved, but only in part by Father Barré.

Although the teachers seemed to have nothing more in mind than to acquire a skill by which to earn a living, De La Salle was thinking more in terms of a lifelong commitment and the vocation he saw to be implicit in it. The problem was how to bring this out into the open. One way would be to provide his personal example and to enter into daily contact with those he genuinely believed to be called to such a commitment. He thought about this idea, it made sense to him, yet he fought it down and rejected it. It was a struggle between the flesh and the spirit with the reasons on both sides in mutual opposition without ever leading to a decision. For three whole months he was torn with uncertainty and unable to make up his mind. But one day he went to Paris to the Place Royale to consult with Father Barré who gave him an answer that allowed of no refusal: "Take them in and have them live with you." It was an oracle that spoke with the voice of God. John Baptist obeyed without further delay.

We come to Easter of 1681. Across the roads of the Champagne country and the worn paths of Ardennes and Aisne, Adrien Nyel, who wanted only to keep moving, winged his way toward Guise where the town wanted to entrust to him a new school for the poor. He began the negotiations but was unable to bring them to any conclusion. Meanwhile, back in Rheims, from Wednesday of Holy Week until Wednesday of Easter Week, his four or five associates were following a spiritual retreat under the direction of De La

Salle. There could have been no better way for them to learn what it was they needed than to share a common life together in this way.

The change was remarkable but it had to be consolidated. Yielding to pressure from Nyel and obedient to the formal order of Father Barré, De La Salle did not renew the lease on the Ruinart house that was due to expire on June 24, 1681. Instead he brought all the teachers into his own house to live. Nothing could bend his resolution: not the bitter recrimination of his family, not the so-called disgrace that would redound to him and to them, not the separation from his own blood brothers that this would necessitate, not the break with people of high quality, not the general misunderstanding to which he was condemning himself. His strong resolve was clear-eyed, something that very few appreciated at the time. There were indeed those who admired him for his decision, although they were very few. Among these was one of his aunts, most probably Marie Coquebert, the wife of his mother's brother, Nicolas Moët.

The result of this move was a much more intimate relationship in a common life-style that developed between De La Salle and the recruits of Adrien Nyel. Once he saw that he was completely free, he applied himself with vigor to bring his community into regular order. It was a community indeed and it was in this context that the word *community* was used for the first time to describe the association of the teachers. A uniform schedule was adopted for each hour of the day. The teachers practiced "modesty, humility, poverty, piety, and mutual charity without limit," qualities which were needed to constitute "the foundation and the basis of their state" in the words of Maillefer. Ascetical exercises were considered a prerequisite for the practical work of teaching in the classroom. De La Salle was reluctant, however, to impose anything by mere authority; in these early days he was content "to lead them by the hand, as it were, giving them a taste of the truth of what he was teaching them by his exhortations and even more by his example."

All of this was something that had been beyond the capability of Adrien Nyel to provide, that is, continuity in the work of the schools and stability in the ordering of the house. At the end of six months or so, most probably sometime in February, 1682, Nyel left for Rethel to establish the Christian schools there. This time De La

Salle himself took charge of the arrangements for the new enterprise. He offered to furnish the means to buy a house which could accommodate the schoolteachers "with a view to providing without recompense for the instruction of the poor children of the town." He asked that the town council be good enough to supply whatever else was needed. Eight days later, on February 26, 1682, Father Vincent Cercelet, pastor and dean, sent to De La Salle in the name of the Council of Rethel expressions of thanks for the affection that he showed for the town and for his generosity.

It is not clear what happened to cause the rift between Adrien Nyel and John Baptist de La Salle that seems to have developed from this time forward. It may have been the incompatibility between the characters of the two men. The one, according to Blain, "enterprising and full of intrigue;" the other "measured and tranquil in all that he did." It is also possible that the two disagreed over the future of the work and the best way to make it prosper. At any rate, once he had concluded all the business that had brought him to Rethel, Nyel could not bring himself to go back to live with his benefactor. He was to remain away from Rheims for a period of four years.

From Rethel, where he lived for six months, Adrien Nyel went to Guise. Nicolas Vuyart replaced him as head of the school at Rethel. At Guise, Marie of Lorraine and the Duke of Mazarin, regretting their failure to follow up on the plans made a year before, offered Nyel a place for the teachers to live. In due time the teachers arrived but their coarse manners were considered objectionable. About the year 1685 a group of replacements came from Rheims and the contrast was startling; the group trained by De La Salle was well liked and they were appreciated for their discipline and piety.

Earlier there had been a request from Laon, addressed to De La Salle himself, begging him to send two teachers to open and take charge of a school there. The letter was written by Pierre Guyart, pastor of Saint Pierre-le-Vieil in Laon, a future canon himself and a longtime friend of the canon of Rheims. He had come to a tentative agreement with the aldermen of the town and with the Premonstratensians of Saint Martin. He hoped in this way to provide in advance for any difficulties that might arise. At the end of 1682 the school was opened in the parish of Saint Pierre in Laon.

As far as one can judge from the deliberations that ensued on

November 19, 1683, no formal preliminary contract had been signed. Nyel, who had been left in Laon without adequate resources, expressed his intention to abandon the town and establish his school elsewhere. The Council did not take this seriously at first but eventually, in view of the considerable good that he had been able to realize for almost a year, granted Nyel "the sum of 150 livres a year, payable quarterly beginning with October 1 previous, with the mandate to keep the school open and there to teach reading gratuitously and exclusively to the children of the poor."

It was hoped the Nyel would settle down in Laon for a long period. In fact, he remained only two years. In moments of nostalgia, his only dream was to return to Rouen. This was understandable. He felt the fatigue of his sixty years. He found himself incapable of changing his ways to adjust to the demanding asceticism that the younger recruits accepted more easily. He probably had the impression that he had been supplanted by De La Salle whose ascendancy over the teachers was beyond question. For these reasons, and on many occasions, Nyel prayed De La Salle to take over the direction of the schools outside the city of Rheims.

In vain did De La Salle beg Nyel to change his decision to leave. On October 26, 1685, we find him back in Rouen at the General Hospice where the administrators had appointed him to supervise the schools for the poor. It was a position worthy of Nyel's talents but an excessive responsibility for a man whose forces and enthusiasm were on the decline. Less than two years later, he succumbed to a disease of the lung. When news of his death reached Rheims, they were all very much moved by this loss. To honor his memory the chapel of the community of the Orphelins was draped in black. John Baptist de La Salle himself celebrated a solemn Mass in which all the pioneer Brothers and their many pupils took part.⁸

Ever since the departure of Adrien Nyel for Rethel and Mazarin in February, 1682, John Baptist de La Salle had taken charge of the schools in Rheims. He personally supervised the developing situation in his family home where the small community of pioneers had its center. Each morning and afternoon they set out for the schools of Saint Maurice and Saint Jacques and the one close by on the Rue Sainte Marguerite. When they returned they shared their experiences and discussed their successes and their mistakes. De La Salle listened and gave his advice. In this situa-

tion there were present in rough outline all the elements that were to characterize the organization to come: one central house and three outside centers that would later be called the parish schools; one person as the uncontested leader and a specialized team of teachers who, for whatever they were lacking in professional training, were indisputably dedicated to the children of the poor. One of them, Christophe, described in his official death notice as "a schoolteacher with the priest De La Salle," gave his life for the cause, dying at the age of twenty-four on May 14, 1682.

One month later, the house on the Rue Sainte Marguerite was sold to the Favart family. By that time the sisters and brothers of John Baptist had already left the house: Marie married Jean Maillefer on March 20, 1679, after which they settled down at the Aigle d'Argent on the Rue de l'Université; Rose-Marie had entered the Abbey of Saint Etienne-les-Dames; Pierre and Jean-Remy at first accompanied their sister and brother-in-law and later went off to finish their studies at Orleans and Senlis. Only Jean-Louis remained with his older brother, sharing the table of the pioneer teachers and the company of the priests who frequented the De La Salle house. His priest friends from the countryside did not hesitate to recall this hospitality when, much later in 1687, they asked De La Salle to train teachers for their rural parishes.

We do not know how many of the original group of teachers followed De La Salle when, on June 24, 1682, he left the Rue Sainte Marguerite to live in the Rue Neuve in a rented house across the street from the convent of the Poor Clares. There may have been three of them, perhaps five, but evidently not more than that.

Apart from the names of the streets — Rue de la Grue, Rue de Saint Symphorien, Rue de la Gabelle, Rue des Marmouzets, Rue Saint Yon, Rue des Trois Raisinets — nothing remains today of this neighborhood. The bombings of 1917 completely destroyed it. The reconstruction after the war completely altered the layout of the streets. But this area is still dear to the Brothers. It is possible to identify the precise location of the property of the De La Salle family on the Rue Sainte Marguerite where John Baptist lived for such a long time — almost twenty years from 1664 to 1682 — where his personality took shape and where his charism as the Founder of an Institute was authenticated.

It was shortly after the change of residence that the men who, on the Rue Sainte Marguerite had been called "the schoolteachers

who live with the priest De La Salle," now, on the Rue Neuve began to be called by the name "Brothers." That is the next chapter of the story. It represents a new and irreversible phase in the commitment of the Founder. Its origins will now be traced in some detail.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

¹The refutation of the claims of the Le Vergeur mansion can be found in the *Cahiers lasalliens*, Vol. 26, pp. 236-243.

²The name is a contraction of *ordure-ruelle*. The passageway still exists today but it is completely closed off near the garden of the Hotel de La Salle and it is protected by an iron gate at the entry from the Forum.

³Barbara Coquebert (d. 1653) was the grandmother of John Baptist on his father's side; Marie Coquebert, her sister, was his favorite aunt. Perrette Lespagnol (d. 1691) was his grandmother on his mother's side and he always had a special affection for her. For full genealogical tables showing the relations of the various families to the De La Salles, see the appendices of *Cahiers*, Vol. 39. Also Chapter V in Part Two *infra*.

⁴The name was changed in 1903. At that time many other street names that would have been familiar to De La Salle were changed to honor prominent persons from the city of Rheims.

⁵The eleven children were: John Baptist (1651-1719), the eldest; Remy (1652) who did not survive; Marie (1654-1711); Rose-Marie (1656-1681); Marie-Anne (1658) who did not survive; Jacques-Joseph (1659-1723); Jean-Louis (1663) who did not survive; Jean-Louis (1664-1724); Pierre (1666-1741); Simon (1667-1669); Jean-Remy (1670-1732). More detail about the lives and careers of the De La Salle children who survived into adulthood will be found in Chapter V of Part Two *infra*.

⁶Among the Noblet family was Francois Noblet who purchased the De Prin mansion in 1700 and gave it as a gift to his son, Jean-Antoine, who later married Louise de La Salle, a cousin of John Baptist. Antoine Frémyn was married to Marie de La Salle, the aunt of John Baptist; Jacques Frémyn, grandson of Antoine, married Marie-Rose de La Salle, a niece of John Baptist and daughter of his brother, Pierre de La Salle.

⁷There was a Gérard de Sale who was canon from 1457 to 1467 but it does not seem likely that he was of the same family. After John Baptist, two others of the De La Salle name became canons at Rheims: his brother, Jean-Louis, who was canon from 1694 to 1724 and his cousin, Jean-François, who was canon from 1737 to 1759 and Rector of the University of Rheims from 1756 to 1759.

⁸In a real sense, Nyel was the prime mover behind the foundation of the Institute of the Brothers. According to Blain, Nyel "provided the occasion for the birth of the Institute." He was "the first instrument employed by divine Providence to lay the foundation for what was to become the magnificent edifice known as the Christian Schools." He was "the one man in the world who rendered significant service" to John Baptist de La Salle. Adrien Nyel was "a good friend . . . a good person and true . . . active and zealous . . . very devoted." This moral portrait of Adrien Nyel would seem to correspond better to the real person rather than the negative picture that Blain paints elsewhere: "A man of intrigue . . . insinuating . . . of no substance . . . not suited for community . . . an enemy of stability . . . with no talent to direct men or a community . . . like a bird of passage . . . flying from one school to the next." (The precise references to the French text of the first volume of Blain can be found in *Cahiers* 37-3, page 29, in the footnote.) The success of Adrien Nyel as administrator of the schools for the General Hospice of Rouen seems to weaken the negative judgments given by Blain, Bernard and Maillefer.

CHAPTER II

THE HOUSE ON THE RUE NEUVE: THE TEACHERS BECOME BROTHERS

"The Establishment of the First House of the Institute" is the subheading used by François-Hélye Maillefer to begin the paragraph that describes the move to a new house that took place on June 24, 1682.¹ He continues: "It is this same house that the Brothers of the Christian Schools have occupied ever since that time . . . It has a just claim to being the first of their houses and the cradle of their Institute." It would be hard to formulate in a shorter space something that subsequent history has indeed confirmed.

The property faced on the Rue Neuve, a street known by that name as early as 1274. Before that it had simply been the road leading to the church of Saint Remy. It was a ceremonial street used by the kings of France when, on the day after their coronation, they made their way to Sainte Ampoule for the ceremonial visit to the victims of scrofula. This same route was used, but in the opposite direction, by the archbishops of Rheims when they came in solemn procession to take official possession of their metropolitan see.

Special street that it was, it lost all of its distinctive character once the great festivals were no longer observed. A water conduit was built along its entire length and this narrowed the passageway considerably. For a long time the street was neglected by the road maintenance service and it was not until the seventeenth century that it was made serviceable again.

On both sides of the street there were rows of buildings that withstood the ravages of time. There was, for example, the inn known as the Coq-à-la-poule by reason of the bas-relief that adorned the upper section of the Gothic doorway. Further on,

between the Rue du Moulin and the Rue de Venise, was the Abbey of Saint Etienne-aux-Dames. Originally this had been a Dominican convent and then the Augustinian priory known as Val-des-Ecoliers. The annals of the city associate this abbey with the name of Ermine, a mystic of Rheims, famous for her very unusual pious practices. All that is really known of her is contained in the miracle stories.

In 1617 the nuns of Saint Etienne came to Rheims from Soissons, where the war had displaced them, to occupy the building which the canons regular had sold to them. They placed it under the patronage of Saint Stephen, their principal patron, whence it came to be known as Saint Etienne-aux-Dames, Saint Etienne-aux-Nonnes or simply aux-Nonnains. The abbey church occupied a corner of the Rue Neuve and the Rue de Venise. Today the Rue de l'Equerre follows in part the lines of the original street. Behind the facade fronting the Rue Neuve and on the opposite side of the interior cloister was an enormous garden that extended as far as the River Vesle before its course was diverted. Fifty religious women lived in this abbey in an atmosphere of piety and fervor. They wore a pointed cap similar to that of the canons; they themselves had the title of Canonesses Regular of Saint Augustine. Rose-Marie de La Salle (1656-1681) formed part of the community during the ten-year period before her death on March 21, 1681. Several times she received visits from her brother, John Baptist, who always brought both encouraging words and small gifts. As her oldest brother he was always attentive to her every need.² This monastery was famous enough for Louis XV to visit it in 1722 and there receive the homage of the nuns.

At the corner where the Rue du Jard joins the Rue Neuve was the convent of Sainte Claire. Its foundation goes back to the year 1220. In response to the invitation of Archbishop William of Joinville, Marie de Braye had come from Italy and settled down in the area near the ramparts of the city. When she died ten years later, Gillette de Porte-Valoise succeeded her as abbess of the monastery. It was then called the Abbey of Saint Elizabeth of the Order of Saint Damian, so named after the convent in Assisi where Saint Clare had lived. It was from this Abbey of Rheims that Saint Louis called four Poor Clares to Paris to give over to their care the Abbey of Longchamps in the Bois de Boulogne which Isabel of France, his sister, had just endowed.

Opposite the Convent of Sainte Claire, going up along the Rue Neuve on the left-hand side, was another very different religious house. It was described by Tarbé, a nineteenth-century historian, as "humble and modest, having neither manuscripts, statues nor a treasury." Unlike its neighbors, it did not have its origin in the obscurity of the Middle Ages: it dates from the historic day of June 24, 1682, when a small group of men of good will, led by their priest superior, John Baptist de La Salle, crossed the threshold of the main door to the double house which he had rented for them. Its precise location is known but not its exact layout. It could not have been very different from the description given in the bill of sale of 1700: "Two adjoining and connected houses on the Rue Neuve in this city of Rheims, the first consisting of several rooms, a wine press, cellars, courtyard and garden, owned by the heirs of the widow Drouet among others; the second connected to the first contains a stall, a kitchen, an upper room, an office, a basement, a balcony, a courtyard, a wine cellar, all arranged in the usual way. The property rights are under the jurisdiction and control of the Lady Abbess and the nuns of the Abbey of Saint Pierre-les-Dames of Rheims and they are accountable for the rentals, revenues and the other usual rights of overseers."

Now that he was free to organize his own time in the new house, De La Salle made it his principal concern to direct his little band of followers and to mold them into a community. He was the superior from the start; he became the spiritual director by the free and deliberate choice of his subjects. Unity in direction fostered unity in the community. This made it easier for all the Brothers to make the spirit of their spiritual father their own; he in turn sought to win over their hearts and so lead them voluntarily to God. He introduced nothing by authority but, as Blain says, "he flattered them by giving them the satisfaction of being themselves the creators of their own vision and their own plans for making it a reality. In this way they became, in effect, their own legislators."

Perfection is not for everyone, however, and fainthearted souls dare not aspire to it. They lack the necessary courage and can adjust to its demands only for a time. This explains the many instances of desertion which threatened for a time to compromise the hopes of the Founder. However, in less than six months he was able to reorganize the whole house around new personnel. At the beginning of 1683, several new candidates presented themselves.

All of them seemed willing to give up their studies and any prospect of the tonsure as well. Blain describes them as having "talent for the schools, good will, determination, fervor and piety, all basic qualities for the ministry to which they felt themselves called."

Surprised at this development and filled with new confidence, De La Salle did all he could to fortify these new candidates in advance against the danger of inconstancy. The new regulations that he proposed were more carefully thought out and less severe. In order to remove every pretext for wanting to return to the world, he had them adopt "a poor and modest habit which would distinguish them from seculars."³ This habit became the occasion of much ridicule and even abuse. Although he was accused of stubbornness and self-sufficiency, De La Salle would not yield in this matter. Some years later, about the year 1690, in his *Mémoire sur l'Habit* he explained the reasons which led him to oppose any change.

Once they were cut off from the world by a distinctive habit, the members of the Lasallian community were soon to be distinguished in another way, that is, by the title by which they became known. Up until this time they had been called schoolteachers; from now on they were to be known as "Brothers of the Christian Schools," a more modest designation but one that conformed better to the life they had embraced. Union reigned among them and so did the precious gift of peace.

For all that, the future was far from certain. In vain did De La Salle urge them to trust in God. "It's all right for you to talk like that and not to have to worry," they told him. "After all, you have everything you need. You are a rich canon with a regular source of income and a guaranteed inheritance. You don't know what it is to have to do without. But we are without property, without income and we don't even have a trade. Where shall we go or what shall we do if the schools fall apart or the people no longer want us?" This brutal frankness surprised De La Salle but he recognized the truth in it. It seemed that only a heroic gesture, such as the one that Father Barré had once suggested, would serve to silence once and for all their objection to making a permanent commitment.⁴ He was ready to do his part. With superhuman courage he was prepared to give up his comfortable living for the laborious life of the tradespeople. Accordingly, on August 16, 1683, John Baptist de La Salle resigned his canonry in favor of a lowly priest, Jean Faubert

by name,⁵ one of those who frequently visited the De La Salle home. In naming this obscure priest, he passed over his own brother, Jean-Louis de La Salle, who even the archbishop had presumed would be his successor. In the choice between the poor priest and the rich one he chose the former, probably to suppress any vestige of self-esteem that might remain by reason of his family connections.

De La Salle did nothing by halves, even if unjust critics were to interpret his action as a sensational gesture. His only concern was for his Brothers and it was for them that he did what he did. But one so committed does not stop at half measures. Divested of his source of income, there yet remained his other financial assets. These, too, he would give up but there was the question: In favor of whom? It would have seemed quite natural to apply this wealth for the benefit of the schools. Yet Blain has him addressing the Lord in these words: "If You endow the schools, they will be well endowed; if You do not, they will be without endowment. I beseech You to make known to me Your will."

The famine and the shortages of the winter of 1683-1684 provided the answer.⁶ The famine was as unexpected as it was tragic. The excessive price of food together with the rigor of the winter increased the number of beggars and "converted the city of Rheims into one great almshouse," as Blain reports. To the schools and to the house on the Rue Neuve, the poor came in hordes — children, of course, but also adults of all ages — close to starvation. None of them went away hungry or unprovided for. According to Bernard, the distribution of bread grew more extensive each day, with one person bringing another, until the cost came to one hundred pistoles a day. It is impossible to estimate the exact amount of money that was eventually spent in this way. The figure of 40,000 livres given by Blain has to be treated with caution since this figure goes far beyond the total capital worth of John Baptist.⁷ All that we know is that he gave away all that he could without offending the justice due to his family or the charity due to himself and to God.

Close as he was to an act of total surrender to Providence, De La Salle found a way to go further still. Blain describes it thus: "Once he had the merit of poverty, he decided also to taste to the full the shame that comes from having to beg." Thus he asked as an alms for the bread that he could no longer afford to buy. His own

disciples were amazed. But they were in no position to chide him since they were the ones who had practically condemned him to liquidate his fortune. Once they saw that he had been reduced to penury, their uneasiness became all the more pronounced. Again he threw himself completely on Providence and this time his lesson carried weight. "Do not forget," he told them, "the sad times that we have barely come through." Rich merchants and well-to-do communities had been ruined but the Brothers, without revenue or capital, had never really lacked the basic necessities. It was a conclusive argument. On this trust in divine Providence, a capital that could never be alienated (as Blain puts it), De La Salle began to build his house. He wrote at a later time that the Brothers would survive only as long as they remained poor: they would lose the spirit of their state once they began to get used to comforts beyond what was needed to support life.

Some very devout clergymen, among them Jean Faubert, continued to live with De La Salle and the Brothers. For the most part these priests were working with poor students who wanted to study for the priesthood. They lived side by side with the Brothers in the same house and inevitably the disadvantages became evident. At first De La Salle generously yielded his place to Canon Faubert and took his Brothers to a neighboring house, probably the one owned by the widow Genty. But it was too small and not very sanitary so they could not remain there very long. De La Salle was forced to ask Faubert to let the Brothers have the space he was occupying. Their return was no doubt hastened by the death of three Brothers: Cosmas Boiserins on March 24, 1684; Jean Lozart on June 26, 1685; and a third whose name is unknown on September 30, 1685. The mortifications that the Brothers customarily practiced and the scanty food of poor quality were evidently not calculated to sustain the health of men who were daily worn-out with the fatiguing work of the classroom.

In order to help fill the vacancies, De La Salle offered to do some teaching himself. Twice a day he appeared at the school in the parish of Saint Jacques. He walked through the city "clothed in a short soutane made of coarse cloth covered by a mantle with pendant sleeves, a hat with a wide brim, and wearing a pair of thick-soled boots." Most people accused him of an exaggerated zeal and told him they did not think this was a good model for the future. They thought that as superior he ought to be always at the

service of his Brothers, that he should put the interests of the community ahead of his personal taste for mortification and humiliation.

Once he had provided for the needs of the school in the parish of Saint Jacques, De La Salle again took up his practices of withdrawal, prayer and meditation. But again God took him from this peace and calm. The Founder was now obliged to extend his charity to include the schools at Rethel, Guise, Laon and Chateau-Porcien over which Adrien Nyel had been in charge until 1685. Together with the three schools in Rheims, this amounted to seven schools altogether that came under De La Salle's authority. The question now was whether or not to bring the teachers together as a body in a single community. Blain writes: "Once he saw himself at the head of a considerable number of Brothers, De La Salle thought that it would be fitting to form them into a small congregation and to prescribe for them a uniform life-style . . . In order to make of them a religious community it was necessary to give them a habit, a set of rules and constitutions, and to establish in every respect a uniformity that would be ideally suited to their vocation." Since there was already a unity of thought and action, there was no reason why this situation should not be stabilized, protection against inconstancy provided, the vocation affirmed and the union made secure.

All of this was the subject matter for reflection and work that was taken up by the twelve principal Brothers whom De La Salle called together to the Rue Neuve for a prolonged retreat. They deliberated seriously from the feast of the Ascension until Pentecost. They all agreed on the need to commit themselves by some sort of vow to live in community according to the rules they had thus far been observing. We do not know precisely what formula was used except what can be deduced from the considerations that motivated such a decisive step. Even the date is uncertain: Blain gives 1684; Maillefer, 1686. Although the commitment was not definitive — it did not become so until perpetual vows were taken in 1694; although it was only a question of a private vow — the vows became public only in 1725; nonetheless this constituted an act of capital importance for the young Institute.⁸

Little by little the originality of De La Salle's creation was becoming apparent: a congregation composed of laymen, one that excluded the priesthood, its members taking only simple and not

solemn vows. The basic structures were falling into place as were the principal daily regulations which could not yet be called a religious rule in the strict sense. All the members were animated by the same spirit and concurred in the same sense of purpose. They lived together under a common roof without yet constituting a religious congregation. It was their sense of vocation that constituted them as Brothers of the Christian Schools.

To have a community of Brothers with an ecclesiastic as their superior seemed to the Founder to be a paradox. After many pleas and entreaties he was finally able to persuade the Brothers to select one of themselves to be at the head of the community. The election took place in 1687 after the retreat that had preceded Trinity Sunday, "the principal feast day of the community" according to Blain. The majority of the votes went to Brother Henry L'Heureux, "a wise man, prudent as well, temperate, discreet and solidly virtuous" according to contemporary accounts. John Baptist de La Salle was the first to kneel and offer obedience to the new superior. But in the eyes of the local clergy this was an intolerable situation: to have a priest, above all one who was a Doctor of Theology and a former canon of the cathedral of Rheims, subject by obedience to a Brother, an ordinary layman of no background or social standing. That is why, as soon as the officials of the diocesan chancery found out about the election, they invalidated it.

At about this time, writes Blain, "Divine Providence seemed to open up for De La Salle a broader field in which to exercise his zeal without going beyond the limits he had set to the purpose of his Institute." This refers to the proposal to create a training college for teachers who would conduct schools in the rural areas. The project came to realization in the year 1687 but it was not exactly a new idea at the time. Previously, on April 2, 1683, Canon Favart, who had provided De La Salle with the endowment needed to purchase the house at Rethel, had stipulated that the building was intended "to provide a place to hold classes for the school, to house the teachers and, if possible, to establish a training college for the rural schoolteachers of the diocese of Rheims."

Two years later, on April 30, 1685, with Messieurs Pauffin and Dubus as his representatives, the Duke of Mazarin expressed his intention "to provide an endowment for a house or community of young men in order to draw from it, as from a nursery, as many teachers as would be necessary to provide in all the territories,

parishes, towns and villages of his aforesaid dukedom of Mazarin and all the other territories pertaining to it . . . a sound education in Christian doctrine and morals as well as in the principles of civic virtue." The Duke made this determination known to De La Salle and drew up with him the specific program to carry it out. According to the plan, there would be seventeen promising candidates lodged in the house at Rethel. They were to be "instructed and educated according to the recognized theories of the best Christian pedagogues that would lead them to excel in reading, writing and singing." The professors for these student teachers were to be chosen "from the community that is presently being established in the city of Rheims." Appointment to these positions would be the right of the Duke and his successors, subject to the approval of the ecclesiastical superiors. This project, although it was carefully planned down to the least detail, never received the approval of the archbishop. Doubtless it was too bold for its time.

One month after the preparatory document was signed at Rethel, the Duke of Mazarin again sought to have a similar project approved in "the area very near to La Fère" or in some other place "in the diocese of César d'Estrée, the Bishop of Laon." He entered into these negotiations through the agency of Jean Chopplet, a notary at Renwez in Ardennes. This time the endowment was more modest: mention was made of six student teachers who would be provided with "a house, a suitably large chapel, cubicles, furniture and other such necessities." The house was to be subject to the community in Rheims. In case De La Salle might be able to obtain letters patent from the king, he was directed "to obtain them in order to give stability to the said establishment." There is no evidence that confirms that this establishment ever came into being and no way of knowing how long it lasted, if indeed it was ever realized.

By contrast, we have complete information on the training college for rural teachers which opened on the Rue Neuve in 1687. There was no contract in strict legal form and it does not seem that the approval of the archbishop was sought. It was the rural priests themselves who took the initiative and the responsibility. According to the direct testimony of Maillefer: "The parish priests of the rural areas around Rheims had been sending repeated requests to De La Salle to provide some Brothers of the Schools to instruct the children of their parishes." But since the Founder had made it a

rule never to send less than two Brothers together, and believing "that good order demanded that he never make an exception to this rule," De La Salle had always given a negative answer to these requests. Then the parish priests settled on a different approach: namely, that they themselves should select the schoolteachers for their parishes and send them to De La Salle to be trained. This was a good work that he could not refuse to undertake.

On these terms, he received as many as twenty-five young men (Blain says "about thirty"). He put them in a separate part of the building and prescribed religious exercises suitable for their profession. He gave them a very capable Brother as an instructor in the person of Brother Henry L'Heureux who taught them plainchant, written composition, arithmetic and the methodology to use in the instruction of the children who would eventually be confided to them. Although they lived as boarders, dressed in secular clothing, and seemed in all the externals to be different from the Brothers, several of them were captivated by the ideals evident in the life-style of the Brothers with whom they lived in such close contact. Many of them passed over from the training college to the Brothers' community. The others, once their training was complete, returned to the parish priests who had sent them and in due time accomplished a marvelous and very fruitful work. They never forgot their alma mater or the Founder who had provided for their formation with such sensitivity. As Blain says, "They looked upon him as their father and always thought of themselves as his spiritual sons."

The venture was a total success and De La Salle always found consolation in recalling it. His departure for Paris in March, 1688, marked the beginning of its decline. Brother Henry L'Heureux succeeded him as the Director of the operation and for a time was able to maintain it at the same level. But under another Brother, Jean-Henry by name, it began to run into difficulties and eventually collapsed. Its future had been irretrievably jeopardized by that Brother's lack of flexibility. Furthermore, it seems that no provision had ever been made for recruiting new candidates. Once their schools were provided with the teachers that were needed, the rural pastors lost interest and so the institution continued to decline.

In that same year of 1687, in addition to the Brothers and the student teachers in the training college, a third community was

added. This consisted of young lads fourteen or fifteen years old who wanted to become part of the Society of the Christian Schools. They occupied a part of the building that had no common facilities with those used by the Brothers, a possible exception being the kitchen which connected with the three separate dining rooms. The rabat and the short haircut were the only signs of resemblance among them; otherwise each one kept the clothing he brought with him to the house. Their way of life was an introduction to the life of the Brothers on a trial basis. Time was provided for them to learn how to read, to write and to do arithmetic. The rest of the day was devoted to exercises of piety in keeping with their age. Actually, it was a novitiate in the true sense of the word, although the early biographers always refer to it as a junior community or a training center for junior Brothers (as distinct from the community of senior Brothers). But Maillefer notes that for all practical purposes the religious exercises were the same as those that were eventually adopted for the novitiates of the Institute.

From that year on, that is from 1687, the Lasallian foundation had all the appearances of a complete organism. There was a preparatory novitiate ("a seed ground for Brothers, well cultivated and very fertile" in Blain's poetic phrase) which was a guarantee of continual new growth; there was the body of the community comprised of eighteen consecrated laymen; seven schools which were directed with notable success; a training college for rural school teachers that was a genuine normal school and a pioneering venture, as history has shown, for the France of its time.

It was at this time that De La Salle considered his corps of men cohesive enough for him to leave them to their own destiny. In the month of March, 1688, he set out for Paris, leaving to Brother Henry L'Heureux the responsibility for watching over the growth of the small community. Brother Henry was a man with a solid intelligence that he concealed under a heavy-handed exterior — when he was a student his companions used to call him the "Big Bull" — and it was he that the Founder had made his presumed heir. He responded positively to the confidence that De La Salle placed in him. Later on he himself was called to Paris to complete his studies in theology which he had begun at Saint Denis in Rheims. He was replaced by Brother Jean-Henry, a harsh and indiscreet sort of person who nearly brought the whole enterprise to ruin. Blain tells us that it was his fault that eight of the sixteen

Brothers who then constituted the young society abandoned their vocation during the four-year period between 1688 and 1692. During this time only one recruit came to replace those who had left.⁹

Yet it was in Paris that the initiative that had its roots in Rheims was to experience a new flowering. In the years that followed, the capital saw the opening of the parish school at Saint Sulpice; the preparatory novitiate which Father Baudrand, the pastor, and Father Sadourni, his assistant, tried incessantly to destroy; the novitiate at Vaugirard in 1691; the training school for teachers at Saint Hippolyte in 1699 (this was the school that was under the direction of Brother Nicolas Vuyart until 1705 when he brought it to ruin by his cowardly and traitorous desertion). There were also the boarding school for the Irish exiles founded in 1698 and the "Sunday School," or Christian Academy as it was called, opened in 1699, where some two hundred young people in their teens were able to develop their taste for the fine arts during their leisure hours on Sunday.

Attentive as he was to fostering the work in Paris, De La Salle did not neglect altogether the foundation at the Rue Neuve in Rheims. Worn-out from the constant pressure of the work and his never ending penitential practices, he returned to Rheims in 1691. He was very ill and so kept to his room, refusing even to give his grandmother the consolation of coming to visit him. He had scarcely recovered when a letter arrived informing him that Brother Henry L'Heureux was ill, a second letter that he was in serious condition, and a third that his condition was hopeless. By the time De La Salle was able to get to Paris, the Brother had been dead for two days. Never in his life, says Blain, had his heart been dealt such a heavy blow. Once he regained his composure, he declared to one and all that the sudden death of Brother L'Heureux was a clear sign from heaven that in the future there were to be no priests in the Institute, that the priesthood would be the ruin of the Institute if it were ever to be introduced. The Assembly of the Brothers in 1694 solemnly adopted this policy, totally without precedent. In the capitular decree of June 7 of that year we read: "We shall not have nor shall we accept anyone as a superior who has not been associated with us and who has not made vows as we have and as will those who will be associated with us in the future." No one would be chosen as a superior who was a priest or who had received sacred orders. The Society of the Christian

Schools would thenceforth be composed exclusively of Brothers who were laymen and committed not by solemn but by simple vows. As Rigault concludes, no other element was needed to assure for the Institute of John Baptist de La Salle a life-style according to rule or to affirm its originality and autonomy.

Thus it was that the work that was planted in the soil of Rheims on the Rue Neuve found in Paris its full growth and development. In tracing the various stages of the birth of the Institute, its early growth and development, its spread to Arden-nes, Aisne and finally to Paris, the emphasis had been deliberately focused on the special honor that belongs to the city of Rheims. The house on the Rue Neuve was the cradle of the new Institute. It was there that all the transformation took place: seculars turned into consecrated men, a human work became the work of God. It all began with an unplanned meeting between two men, but the warp and the woof of the enterprise could eventually be seen as the subtle but persistent working of divine Providence. That has to be seen in a perspective of faith in order to fully appreciate its meaning. The canonry resigned, the wealth given away, the unusual practices of asceticism that were considered too severe, the establishment of the schools, the innovations in educational method, the abuse, opposition, persecution and deception all sustained without weakening — none of these can be explained except through an initial act of faith.

Here then, was a person of rich parentage, assured of an inheritance, a wealthy canon who became a poor priest, an outcast, suspected and without friends, opposed and misunderstood, occupied only with a band of impoverished schoolteachers, suffering personal misfortune that few people would envy. Yet, in time, the superior of the Seminary of Saint Nicolas could say that, to John Baptist de La Salle, France would always owe an eternal debt of gratitude. It was on his account and because of him that the youth of France were able to rise out of the rut to which society had condemned them to enter instead the royal road to well-being and happiness. The remarkable upward social mobility of these young persons ennoble the memory of a truly great man.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

¹See the article by Brother Maurice Auguste concerning the date of June 24, 1682, and the origins of the Institute in the *Bulletin des écoles chrétiennes*, January, 1959, pp. 27-35.

²In the documents that contain the financial accounts of De La Salle's management of his deceased father's estate, there is a special section listing the disbursements made in favor of Sister Rose de La Salle. In addition to the cost of her board (200 livres annually), the sums "provided for her needs" contain some interesting items: 18 livres, 2 sols, 6 deniers for "a sheath for her knife, some thread, currants and two small jars to hold jam and sugar"; 41 livres, 8 sols for "sugar, jam, Portuguese oranges, orange peel, a box and some baskets in which to store them," all purchased by her sister, Marie de La Salle, as a New Year's gift; 18 sols for "a cincture of white silk"; 31 livres for "a piece of fustian cloth"; 18 livres for "a crucifix for her room"; 9 livres, 10 sols "for an inkstand"; 4 livres for "a pair of stockings and an iron candlesnuffer." These expenditures are touching indications of the tender affection John Baptist had for his younger sister.

³Blain, following Bernard, dates the adoption of the habit from 1684 and the first assembly held in that year. Aroz prefers to follow Maillefer and accepts the school year 1683-1684 as the probable date for this significant move.

⁴Miguel Campos disagrees with this notion of a "grand gesture," claiming that this is Blain's interpretation. Campos maintains that De La Salle's motive was strictly between himself and God, wholly evangelical. See *Cahiers* 45, pp. 148-165.

⁵Jean Faubert was a native of Château-Porcien and a zealous priest, according to Bernard. He was a Doctor of Theology; Blain cites his talent for preaching, his reputation for piety and discipline; he remarks that De La Salle could not have made a better or more worthy choice. Yet Blain seems to think that Faubert eventually lost his zeal and his love for the work once he became a wealthy canon and developed a taste for an easy life "like the rest of the canons." Aroz challenges this judgment and suggests that Blain may have based his judgment about the canons of Rheims on what he knew of the canons in Rouen. See *Cahiers* 37, 3. p. 37, footnote no. 2.

⁶The French text reads 1684-1685 but the author (Aroz) subsequently seems to have opted for 1683-1684 as the more probable date. See the chronology in *Cahiers* 41, 1, p. 33.

⁷Aroz disputes the sum given by Brother Emile Lett of "more than 400,000 livres," a figure that Battersby used in his 1957 biography. All the sources agree that De La Salle heeded the advice he was given to keep back 200 livres which was the sum usually paid by the parish priests for the maintenance of each Brother. See *Cahiers* 37-3, p. 38 and Battersby *Saint John Baptist de La Salle* (Macmillan: 1957), p. 66. On the value of the livre, see the footnote in Part Two, *infra*, pp. 63-64.

⁸A history of the vows in the Institute is readily available to English-speaking readers in Chapter IV of *Circular 406* dated December 25, 1977, and entitled "Our Consecrated Life". Although the circular is authored collectively by the General Council, this chapter bears evidence of having been prepared by Brother Maurice Auguste. In addition to the conferences he has given, he has also written on the vows of the Brothers, e.g., in *Cahiers* 2.

⁹Blain describes the situation as "pitiful, with very few Brothers, practically no progress in the enterprise and continual fear that it might collapse altogether." The Founder at first seemed perplexed as to how to respond to this development. Then, in one heroic effort, there came the vow of 1691. De La Salle, Gabriel Drolin and Nicolas Vuyart took a vow "of association and union for the purpose of bringing into existence and maintaining the Society" even if they should be abandoned by all the others and be forced to subsist on bread alone. See *Circular 406*, p. 55, in the English version.

CHAPTER III

THE SCHOOL ON THE RUE DE CONTRAI AND THE RUE NEUVE: THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS

There are no original documents that would allow us to add any new details to the history of the house on the Rue Neuve during the period from 1688 to 1700. It was in 1688 that John Baptist de La Salle left Rheims for Paris and in 1700 that he returned to his native city to sign the contract for the purchase of the house which had been rented since June 24, 1682. There are, however, some secondary sources which can help fill the gaps in our information about this period.

According to the records of the time, the schools in Rheims, Laon, Guise and Rethel continued to operate without any great fanfare but with consistently good results. The most important of these schools was the one at Rheims, despite the blundering of Brother Jean-Henry who, as we have seen, came close to compromising the whole enterprise. The schools continued also despite an acute shortage of Brothers which became alarming during the void between 1688 and 1692 in which time not one postulant joined the community. For these reasons, no new foundation was begun in the Champagne region until 1703 when, at the request of François le Bé, parish priest, and with the approval of the bishop, Denis-François Bouthillier de Chavigny, three Brothers opened a Christian school in Troyes in the parish of Saint Nizier.¹ It was one of the aspects of the genius of the Founder, as Rigault notes, "to know when to introduce his work into a situation at just the right moment, to adapt it to the circumstances and the persons involved, protecting it with care and fearless vigilance from any compromise either in quality or in its structural form."

During his long absence from Rheims that began in 1688, De

La Salle entrusted the care of the work "to those of his followers who had superior merit," that is to the Brothers known as "Visitors." He kept to himself personally the task of corresponding directly with the Brothers and their Directors. It was in this way and by special delegation that Brother Joseph made the visit to the house at Rheims in 1708, and again in 1709 and 1711.

Through his delegates, De La Salle was able to keep continually informed of the development of the work that he had started in Rheims. Furthermore, ever since 1691 when he had relocated his novitiate at Vaugirard, he periodically summoned his Brothers from Rheims, Guise, Rethel and Laon to come to Paris for prolonged retreats. These combined sessions were devoted both to spiritual and to pedagogical matters, if we can judge by the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, although this book was published much later.²

During the period following 1690 it was Rheims that gave to the Institute a good part of its administrative personnel. Among these could be mentioned Gabriel Drolin, the first recruit to come from the Rue Neuve about 1684; Brother Antoine (Jean Partois), the personal secretary of the Founder; Brother Thomas (Charles Frappet), who at first would take vows only as a serving Brother; Brother Dominique, who was to become the Master of Novices. All of them exemplified the spiritual traits of their Founder, each embodying in his own person the faith of John Baptist de La Salle and the Founder's zeal for the education of children. So it was that the novitiate at Vaugirard, that "happy village" which at the time was outside the city limits of Paris, was supplied with its leaders from the country further east, that is to say from Champagne and the region around Rheims.³

Originally the property that the Brothers had occupied on the Rue Neuve since 1682 was rented. The rent was a heavy burden that their meagre resources could not easily carry. To solve the problem, De La Salle established in 1700 a sort of civil association which had for its purpose to provide the financial resources needed to house the Brothers and assure the well-being of their schools. The first project of this association was to acquire the houses on the Rue Neuve. The owners at the time were Nicolas Hourlier, a royal notary who had ownership as part of his patrimony; Damoiselle Claude de Clèves, his wife; Jean and André, their sons who had not yet come of age. The names of the buyers, all charter members of

the Founder's civil association, were given as follows: Claude Pépin, canon of the cathedral of Rheims; Pierre Delaval, priest of the diocese; John Baptist de La Salle, "priest, Doctor of Theology, former canon of the cathedral of Rheims,"; Jean-Louis de La Salle, "Doctor of the Sorbonne, canon of the cathedral of Rheims". The sale price was 4,950 livres, payable on account to Pierre de La Salle, magistrate of the Presidial Court, legal trustee for Jean Bachelier to whom the Hourlier family were in debt for 7,000 livres. The ready cash paid to D'lle Hourlier amounted to 150 livres.

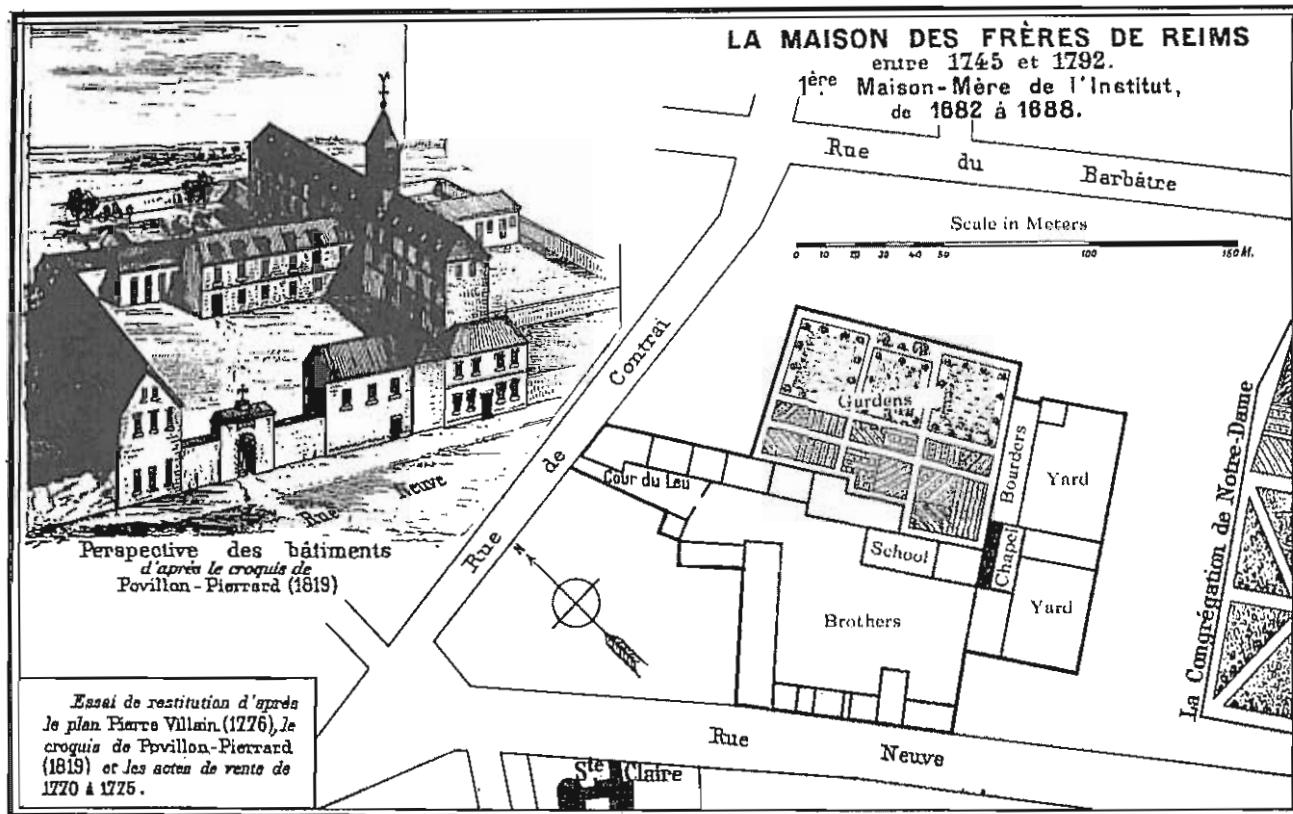
As part of the contract the buyers were bound "to allow the present occupants to remain in their houses for one year." Their names are known: Jean Faubert, priest, Doctor of Theology and canon of the cathedral of Rheims, who lived in the larger of the two houses and who paid 160 livres a year in rent; the widow Genty who lived in the second house and who paid only 35 livres rent. Both of them benefited from the hospitality of the Brothers who lived in the larger house; it was the Brothers who paid the rent to the owners, even though the receipts were in the name of the canon who acted for them. The document speaks explicitly of a house "presently inhabited by the men who teach in the gratuitous schools for boys in Rheims under the name of the Brothers of the Christian Schools." Three groups, to a total of about fifty persons,⁴ lived under the same roof: the Brothers, the aspirants, the seminarians directed by Canon Faubert. This would lead to the conclusion that in the period between 1682 and 1701 there was no school in operation at the Rue Neuve. The classes that had been started in the Rue Sainte Marguerite would not, therefore, have been transferred to the Rue Neuve at the time that De La Salle and his followers came to live there opposite the convent of Sainte Claire.

Before our story takes us too far away from this historic street, it might be well to indicate the various pieces of property that the Brothers, or those who administered their financial affairs, added to the original site purchased in 1700. On September 11, 1720, Jean-Louis de La Salle purchased from Jean Dervin, a master serge weaver, the garden which joined the yard of the Brothers' house. The purchase price was 800 livres. On September 27, 1742, the houses, courtyard and stables were added when Eustache-Christophe Bernard, a laborer, and Marie Villet, his wife, sold them for "the use of the owners and managers of the goods of the

Christian and gratuitous schools of Rheims" for the price of 5,000 livres. Finally, in 1759 the Brothers added the property which Thérèse Godinot, the eldest daughter of the widow Mme. Godinot Tellier, had held since 1719 and which she had been renting to Dr. Ponsardin, a surgeon. According to the terms of the contract drawn up in good and proper form on June 26, 1759, Jean-François de La Salle, canon and former rector of the University of Rheims, acting in the name of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, paid the sum of 7,600 livres for it. Thanks to the Brothers at Rethel and the revenue from the Clauteau and Roger bequests, it was possible to raise such a large amount which the community at Rheims would never otherwise have been able to advance.

Altogether, then, counting the original property which was purchased on August 1, 1700, there were five houses adjoining one another on the left side of the Rue Neuve, all belonging to the Brothers. This represented a capital holding worth 19,500 livres. In addition, behind the houses that faced the street, there were the two extensive gardens that formed an additional part of the capital holdings. This raises the question why these successive acquisitions were made; why further acquisitions on the Rue de Barbâtre and the Rue de Contrai were gradually added to the property holdings of the Christian and gratuitous schools for boys.

Thus, for example, one document tells us that "in the presence of Messieurs Charpentier and Dallier as royal notaries" Pierre Plantin, a merchant, acting in his own name and in his capacity as the father of Pierre, the only son of himself and Nicolle Vincent, his deceased wife, as also in the name of Jean-Baptiste Duchastel, his son-in-law and husband of Marguerite Plantin, sold to Messieurs Claude Pépin, Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, "resident in Paris," and Jean-Louis de La Salle, a house on the Rue de Contrai in the Cour-du-Leu "consisting of a downstairs kitchen, a storeroom above, a cellar below and adjoining gardens" adjacent to several other properties on the one side and "on the other side adjacent to the community in the Cour-du-Leu." This property had belonged to Antoine Legoux up until 1688 when the Plantin family bought it. Because of the interest shown in the property by the Brothers, the Plantin family agreed to sell it to them in 1701 for a price of 950 livres. This price did not include the right to the rent and to the quit-rent owed to the landlords, the Abbey of Saint Pierre and the General Hospice of Rheims. This same Cour-du-



Leu, known also as the Cour-le-Lieu, the Cour-du-Crime and the Cour-des-Frères, connected by a narrow passage with the Rue de Contrai. In it there was also the Vouet house which thirty years later was acquired by Gérard Thiérion, Pierre Godinot, Pierre and Simon-Philbert de La Salle. It had belonged to Ponce Torchet as part of his inheritance and was valued at the time of the sale at 1,080 livres.

On this same street, three other pieces of property came to be owned by the Christian Schools between 1740 and 1746. Pierre Oudinet, a master barber and wigmaker, sold a garden in 1741; Jean-Baptiste Mozet, a house in 1742; in 1743, the Chapter of Saint Timothée in Rheims gave over the house occupied by Nicaise Seigniart in exchange for the rental rights at Boulton and at Avaux-le-Château. Louis Desjardins, a merchant, and Apolline Rogier, his wife, sold "a house adjoining on two sides the two houses that provided living quarters for the Brothers as well as for the functioning of the aforementioned schools of Rheims"; it was occupied at the time by a butcher named Rogier. Brother Généreux managed to have the asking price of 2,000 livres reduced by half, partly by paying in cash and partly by contracting for a rent of 50 livres a month payable annually and in perpetuity. This entire block of real estate was bounded on four sides by the Rue du Barbâtre, the Rue de Contrai, the Rue des Orphelins and the Rue Neuve. It constituted an integrated center for the Christian Schools of Rheims consisting of a huge garden, two spacious courtyards with stables at the entrance and nine houses. Five faced the Rue Neuve; three, the Rue de Contrai; and one, the Rue du Barbâtre.⁵

After the death or dispersal of the charter members who had formed the civil association of the Christian Schools in 1700, Jean-Louis de La Salle became solely responsible for its direction. On his death in 1724, Pierre de La Salle, his brother, assumed control. By an act of January 2, 1725, he appointed new members to the association and specified in very clear terms the precise value of its assets. These were described as including a large house situated on the Rue Neuve opposite the convent of Sainte Claire "where are housed those who . . . are associated together to keep the gratuitous schools for poor boys under the name of the Brothers of the Christian Schools"; on the Rue de Contrai at the end of the Cour-du-Leu "another house and garden . . . where there is presently a building that is used for school purposes."

This mention of a school on the property is a significant development. It should likewise be noted that, from the beginning, community and school were carefully separated with distinct buildings for the one and the other. Every morning the Brothers left their religious house for their noble work as educators. They did not come together again until the end of the day when they assembled to perform their religious exercises, to draw up the schedule of their school activities and to prepare the program for the next day. This consistent commitment of the Brothers to their students and their sense of dedication among themselves entailed a continual interaction between their religious life and their professional work. This sense of consecration, together with the fruit of their daily experience, is reflected in the pedagogical manual known as the *School Management*, published at Avignon in 1720 "after extensive consultation with the most mature Brothers and those most skilled in teaching school." The intuitive vision of the Founder, his practical sense and the daily experience of running the schools are the sources of this remarkable guide for teachers and school administrators.

It is probably correct to presume that it was only with the acquisition of the Plantin house in 1701 that the Christian School which had been opened in 1680 on the Rue Sainte Marguerite was transferred to the Cour-du-Leu. An additional factor in the transfer was no doubt a long-standing agreement with Simon Lhermite, the pastor of Saint Etienne whose jurisdiction included the Rue Neuve, that the Lasallian community could be established within his parish only on the express condition that there be a functioning charitable Christian school as part of the operation.

Thus the Rue Neuve/Rue de Contrai became a little Lasallian kingdom all to itself. Its autonomy was affirmed with vigor and its social purpose definitively specified. In the event that the followers of De La Salle should ever come to the point of "giving up the practice of the Christian and gratuitous schools for boys in Rheims" without hope of re-establishing them, then, by the act defining the civil association on January 2, 1725, "the sale price or the revenue from these houses would be used to train women teachers for the schools, teachers other than those from the community devoted to the orphans, with the purpose of keeping gratuitous schools for girls in those rural areas where the need would be the greatest."

"The well-being and the preservation" of the Christian Schools in Rheims was the phrase used to describe the perspective that governed the activity of the civil association presided over by Pierre de La Salle and his associates: Mathieu Serrurier, Jean-Hermann Weyen and Jean Clicquot (1725), Gérard Thiérion (1732), Pierre Godinot (1734), all of whom were priests; Simon-Philbert de La Salle (1732) and Jacques Frémyn de Branscourt (1741), cousin and son-in-law respectively of the president. It is undeniable that their undertakings were encouraged, inspired and perhaps sometimes pressured by the major superiors of the De La Salle Institute. There must, therefore, have been some specific and ulterior motive for all these successive acquisitions of houses and parcels of land adjoining the property that had been the cradle of the Institute which were needed to remove any obstacles to future expansion.

We find the explanation for all those acquisitions in a request that Brother Généreux, empowered to act in the name of Brother Timothée, Superior General, addressed to the "Archbishop, Duke of Rheims and First Peer of France," Armand-Jules de Rohan, on the occasion of the General Chapter held at Rheims in May, 1745. "With great respect for the city where the Institute had its birth," wrote Brother Généreux, "the Superior General has desired for some time now to have his residence there together with his Assistants, to convoke there the general chapters, and also to be able to assign there the old Brothers who, because of their infirmities, are no longer able to teach classes in the city." In view of the fact that the Brothers were required to assist at Mass every day, he requested "permission to have a priest come to celebrate Mass every day in the house," especially to obviate the inconvenience for the capitulants to have to go out in order to attend Mass.

So it was that on May 21, 1745, Jean Dominé, pastor of Saint Jean and dean of the clergy, assisted by Jean-Baptiste de Lorme, administrator at Saint Etienne, François Motté, chaplain, Jean-Baptiste-Remy Chastelain, sacristan, Michel Serpette, a cleric of the same parish and Claude-François Pierrot, a deacon of Saint Jean, came in procession to dedicate this place of worship to Our Lord under the protection of the Blessed Virgin.⁶ In addition to the ecclesiastics present, there were also Brothers Généreux, Director; Silvain, Sub-Director; and Michel, Fiacre, Judes, Félicien, Stanislas, Toussaint, Liévain — all professed Brothers of the community.

Following the clergy, these Brothers countersigned the original copy of the official proceedings dated May 21.

One week later, on May 27 which was the feast of the Ascension, the General Chapter convened. Among its members were some of the oldest Brothers including Brother Jean Jacquot, the dean of the Institute and a former Assistant, a native of Porcien who had entered the Institute in 1686. Also present were Brothers Benoît (entered in 1711), Clément (1700), and Humbert (1700) — all originally from Romagne in the diocese of Rheims. The new generation was represented by men of real talent, Brothers Raymond, a native of Lerzy (Aisne), Généreux and Exupère to whom the Institute would confide its destiny for the next twenty years.

One of the first questions to arise was the possible transfer of the administrative center of the Institute to Rheims which would then become "the residence of the Brother Superior General, his Assistants . . . and other officers" as well as "a place of retirement for the sick and elderly Brothers." But this matter had to be put aside and did not become an immediate concern of the assembly. The delegates had as their first priority to safeguard the unity of the Institute in doctrine, spirituality and administration. They wanted to arm the Brothers in advance against the dangers of Jansenism, to eliminate "the disorders and bad consequences" that came from having boarders in the schools, and to strengthen the ties that bound the local superiors to the central administration of the Institute. In this connection Rigault can remark: "From the community in Calais to the community in Rome, from the one in Brest to the one in Nancy, the physical appointments, the method of teaching and the religious discipline were all maintained in a rigorous unity, just as De La Salle would have wished." Rheims was especially determined to preserve the Institute in the straight line that was traced by the Founder.

However, a certain amount of decentralization was provided for, something that was even more accentuated when the General Chapter of 1771 created the Provincial or Regional Chapters. But even the Chapter of 1745 saw the need to overcome the difficulties created by the slow communications. Accordingly, one of its capitular decrees conferred on the Brother Director at Avignon a permanent delegation of powers which up until that time had been reserved to the Superior General.

On the question of transferring the administrative center to Rheims that arose at the beginning of the meeting, it was decided to leave it to the discretion of the local superior at Rheims. He was charged to enter into the necessary negotiations and to carry them forward as best he could. These eventually collapsed, as we know, because of the intransigence of the local authorities. Canon Jean-François de La Salle de l'Etang, a cousin of the Founder of the Brothers, wrote to his interlocutor, Brother Exupère: "We grant you the permission to come to live in your house in Rheims . . . since this is the cradle of your congregation." But he placed so many conditions on the move that the superiors of the Institute were forced to reply with a categorical negative: *non possumus*.

Although the Institute had its beginning in Rheims, the focus for the course of its development shifted to the West: to Paris in 1688 and to Rouen in 1705 where it remained until 1771. Many reasons can be given: economic difficulties, surely, but above all there was the determination to give the Institute a national character and even perhaps a supranational character. This explains the plan, unfortunately abandoned, for an establishment in Canada in 1717. From the beginning, the Institute refused to let itself be circumscribed within strictly diocesan boundaries.

Despite the fact that the center of the Institute eventually became fixed in the metropolis of Rouen, Rheims always remained the "holy city" for the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The house at Rheims was in a sense the motherhouse of all the other houses, "the house where the good work had begun." As early as 1713 an attempt was made, without any spirit of competition, to guarantee its claim to priority by obtaining letters patent from the king. That attempt failed as did later ones in 1746 and 1773. It was not until Louis XVI granted letters patent to all the Lasallian establishments and placed them under the jurisdiction of the parliament of Paris that the house at Rheims would enjoy all the privileges of royal recognition, especially the financial autonomy that the municipality of Rheims so stubbornly refused to grant to it.

But that is to get ahead of the story. We have now to turn backwards to that year of 1745 which seems to have marked a turning point in the history of the house at Rheims. From that time on, the complex on the Rue Neuve/Rue de Contrai gradually became the center from which were staffed the parish schools of Saint Maurice, later Saint Timothée or Saint Remy, the school of Saint

Jacques which had moved to the Rue de Thillois in 1731, and the school of Saint Hilaire which, thanks to the generous gift of the Canon Jean Godinot, had opened in 1739. If we add the two classes which functioned from May 2, 1783, on the Rue des Telliers in the parish of Saint Pierre, we would have a complete list of the schools for the common people that were conducted in Rheims by the disciples of John Baptist de La Salle during the entire course of the eighteenth century.

These outlying schools were considered as satellites in relation to the mother community which was administered by the Brother Director. Each of them operated as an independent adjunct in whatever concerned the temporal administration. Such matters were under the control of the local parish authorities. This did not apply, however, to the assignment of the teachers who always remained subject to their religious superior. The central community and the outside school functioned along parallel lines. This interdependence preserved the cohesion of the teachers as members of a community but, at the same time, it also respected the special character of the situation in each parish. Up until the day it was closed in 1791, the Rue de Contrai served as the control school. From there came the pedagogical guidelines and directives for the other schools and it was on the model of the Rue de Contrai that these policies were introduced and put into practice. The whole enterprise remained under the direction of the one man who was at the same time religious superior, administrator and inspector of schools or, in other words, both spiritual and temporal leader. It was a position of great responsibility and one that was held by some very distinguished Brothers of whom Rheims can well be proud. Among so many others could be mentioned Brother Jean Leroux, a native of the area, Brother Généreux from the North and Brother Léandre from the South. They left their mark on their times; history has shown how remarkable they really were.

Certainly the most representative among them was Jean Leroux who became known as Brother Joseph. He was a native of Lerzy in the vicinity of Vervins (Aisne) where he was born on February 18, 1678. It is quite possible that he attended the Christian school at Guise, opened by Adrien Nyel in 1682, which was only a mile or so from his native village. This is quite probably the reason why he decided to become part of the Lasallian movement at the age of nineteen. He entered the novitiate at Vaugirard in

1697 and three years later, on May 10, 1700, he made perpetual vows. This is an exceptional case in the annals of the Institute and is much to the credit of a young man who, at the age of twenty-two, signified in such a definitive way his determination to live in poverty with the children of the working class. He was a first-class subject; anyone could feel comfortable in entrusting him with the most serious responsibilities.

He first taught school in Paris where we find him in 1704 and 1705. His name, Brother Joseph, is cited in the suit brought by the writing masters against John Baptist de La Salle in 1705. Some time later he was called upon to take over the direction of the Brothers as a replacement for a Brother Ponce, "Director and Visitor, who had been unfaithful to his vocation."

Brother Joseph was tireless in his work despite a chronic lung congestion which brought on a violent cough that was almost continual. Yet nothing could stop him whenever the well-being of the Society was in question. He was the Visitor of the schools of the Eastern region in 1708, 1709 and again in 1711. He was also the Director of the Rheims community in 1713. It was there that he received a letter from John Baptist de La Salle dated February 6, 1711. The departure of Brother Placide for Guise and his replacement by "the little Brother de Mende" seem to have been the occasion for the letter. If we did not have the text of the Founder's letter it would be hard to believe that it contained such severe reproaches as the following: "Brother Dositheus would not have written to you if you had not written to him first. The same is true of the Brothers in Guise. I do not know why you act in this way, writing to any Brothers you please. That is not wise. There is no need for these communications from one house to another; that is not the way we do things. If you want to call them to task, don't take it upon yourself to write to them." This was a straightforward reminder of the respective areas of competency. The right to correspond with the Brothers by letter belonged to the Superior alone; the function of Visitor, which was only a temporary commission, did not include the authorization to write to the Brothers.

Brother Barthélemy had met Brother Joseph at Rheims during his visit there in 1716-1717. In the official report of the visit dated February 13, 1717, Brother Joseph had placed his signature together with those of Brothers Paul, Clément, Simon, Gervais, Grégoire, Sulpice, Placide and Médard. On May 18 of this same

year Brother Joseph, in his capacity as the Director of Rheims, was at Saint Yon, just outside Rouen, for the election of Brother Barthélemy as Superior General. The assembly then proceeded to elect two Brothers to act as Assistants to the Superior and to provide him with help and counsel. The majority of the votes went to a Brother Jean, the Director of the house in Paris, and to Brother Joseph, the Director of the schools in Rheims. As the depository of the tradition, Brother Jean Leroux (Brother Joseph) was to become the right-hand man of Brother Barthélemy who delegated to him most of the internal and external affairs of the Institute "which he understood so very well."

Brother Joseph continued to reside at Rheims and function as the Director, but his duties frequently brought him to the side of the Superior in Paris. It was on the occasion of one of these visits that he received Monsieur Charon, administrator of the General Hospice in Montreal, who had come to interest the Institute in opening some primary schools in Canada. Brother Barthélemy and Brother Joseph listened to his presentation, great expectations were aroused, and four Brothers were actually singled out for the assignment. "Good God! What are you about to do?" exclaimed the Founder to Brother Joseph when he stopped to say good-bye before returning to Rheims. He repeated the same question to Brother Barthélemy who gave him a complete account of the negotiations. It was a question raised in anguish, one that came from a real premonition that the enterprise would fail.

All of this took place in 1717. Three years later, on June 9, 1720, Brother Barthélemy died. The interim government of the Institute became the responsibility of the two Assistants, Brother Jean and Brother Joseph. On June 16 they sent to all the houses of the Institute a circular letter announcing the death of the Superior and inviting the Brothers "to discern by the grace of illumination given by the Holy Spirit" the Brother who should succeed the late Superior. On August 7, Guillaume-Samson Bazin, known as Brother Timothée, was elected to assume this responsibility. Brother Jean and Brother Joseph were confirmed in office as Assistants. Most probably at this time, Brother Joseph took over the direction of the house at Saint Yon, leaving Pascal La Truite, otherwise known as Brother Sixte, to succeed him at Rheims.

Up until the very end of his life Brother Joseph devoted himself to the affairs of the Institute. He was sent to Paris toward the

end of January, 1729, to conclude the negotiations with Cardinal de Bissy to establish the Brothers in Meaux. This caused him so much anxiety that he fell ill and suffered an attack of angina. On February 21 he died. Monsieur de Pontcarré, the president of the parliament at Rouen, had always held him in high esteem. But the principal merit of Brother Joseph was to have won by his virtue the total confidence of the Founder. The son was a carbon copy of the spiritual portrait of the father; as a superior he had been for his Brothers a man of deep understanding and insight.

Due to the initiative of Brother Joseph, the seed that had begun to sprout in the lifetime of De La Salle had grown into a mighty tree. Brother Généreux, a religious of the finest type, to say nothing of his rather distinctive name, took upon himself the task of pruning the withered branches in order to give the organism a new vigor. The antiquated buildings on the Rue Neuve were torn down to make way for new ones that were solidly built and unimposing but able to withstand the test of time. A new residence replaced the old house that had been bought in 1701. What was once the school on the Rue Sainte Marguerite found here a new life and from then on experienced an impressive period of development.

The new construction included a building in the shape of the letter "T" that extended from one end to the other of the lateral courtyard. The chapel, blessed in 1745, occupied the central area where the sections crossed. On the side facing the Rue du Barbâtre a boarding school was opened about the year 1753. It had a rather precarious existence. The "gentlemen" of the city had wanted it but it was no sooner opened than they asked "as a favor" that it be closed. But it served its purpose and was eventually recognized by letters patent of the king. Between sixty and eighty boarders lived there and this helped keep the classrooms filled. The students in this school were instructed in advanced studies such as writing, arithmetic, clockmaking, foreign exchange, accounting and book-keeping, both single and double entry. Altogether it constituted a genuine commercial course that corresponded to the needs of the *petite bourgeoisie* of the time.

The separate gardens that had been acquired since 1741 were merged into one large kitchen garden. The property formed an irregular rectangle amounting to almost 5,000 square meters. It was surrounded by rented houses on the Rue de Contrai and the

Rue Neuve where there were also a nearby storehouse and a stable. The names of the Brothers who lived in the community there from 1758 to 1792 are known. The "conventual house," as it was called in the report of the commissars of 1791, always faced the Rue Neuve. It was there, under the watchful eyes of the Brother Director and the Brother Sub-Director, that the Brothers came together on their return from the day's work in the schools of the town.

During the school year of 1716 there were nine Brothers, twelve in 1745, the same number in 1775, between twenty-five and thirty in 1785. In 1790 there were twenty-seven Brothers but this number was reduced to twenty-one in the following year, as we know from the written report giving the names of those who refused to take the civil oath. This report was signed individually by each of the Brothers. Gabriel Cathola, known as Brother Léandre, was the first to sign; the next was Brother Vivien, a man destined to become in a certain sense the second Founder of the Christian Schools in Rheims. It was to him that the city officials had recourse when they wanted to re-establish the primary schools in Rheims after the Revolution. He had a clear mind and a remarkable ability to translate thought into action.

Rouen became the administrative center of the Institute between 1705 and 1709 and then again from 1715 on. Rouen was supplanted in 1780 by Melun just outside Paris. It was left then for Rheims to become something of a way station for the rest of the Institute. The Superior General and the Brother Assistants in the course of their visits to the eastern provinces, the Brothers coming from the North on their way to Epernay, Troyes, Melun, Maréville or Nancy, all found there an assured place to stay. Both the Superiors and the other traveling Brothers found a respectful welcome "in the house of their Father" even though they were asked to defray the expenses of their stay. Under the heading of "travel expenses" there are several entries in the account book of the motherhouse at Melun that notes the various sums advanced or paid by these traveling visitors: Brothers Agamon, Dizier, Salamon and others. Thus, for example, Brother Zachée, Assistant, left his horse at the Rue Neuve while he went on to visit the houses of the Champagne country, and Brother Nicolas paid three livres, four sols to have it brought back to Paris.

In the same document from Melun we can get some idea of how

extensive was the business conducted by the procure that was set up in the Rue Neuve. The precise date is not known but it could have been as early as 1739. Thus we read that Rheims provided "flannels, woolens, hats with broad brims, cloth dyed black, needles and gray thread" for making the habits of the Brothers. The habits were actually made at St. Yon which had the monopoly so as to preserve uniformity. Rheims also provided candles — 100 livres worth at a time — and even such items as English steel, copper and clock weights for the very talented Brother Martin-de-Jésus, an artisan of repute. When the Chapter of 1734 forbade soliciting donations of wine,⁷ Rheims became the supplier for the motherhouse. Thus in the year 1781 there were shipped on order to Rouen and Melun "two barrels of red wine . . . two casks of white wine," and again "two barrels of red wine . . . two casks of white wine . . . one large puncheon of the red wine of Montbré." Incidentally, there is no mention of the champagne for which Rheims and the surrounding country have been famous for centuries. Even Blain remarks that Rheims "is the city in France where the wine is the most abundant and the most excellent."

After the year 1777 at the very latest, the printery of the Institute was also functioning as an adjunct to the school on the Rue Neuve. The Brother in charge at that time was Brother Simon. Among other things he printed there was the text of "The Decrees of the General Chapter Held at Rheims in the Month of August, 1777." These sold for "twenty livres for the first hundred . . . or sixty livres per five hundred lots." The circular letter sold for "thirty livres per five hundred" and the prospectus at only "thirty sols per hundred" since he had printed two thousand copies of it. Brother Simon was so satisfied with his workers in the printery that he gave a bonus of six livres to the foreman and twelve livres to be divided among the workmen. From these presses in the Rue Neuve came also the publications of the Régime in 1780. In this way the Brother printer was able to work off the loan of 7,000 livres in capital funds that had been advanced by the central administration to the house at Rheims.

And so we come to the end of the first century of existence of the establishment on the Rue Neuve/Rue de Contrai without any significant outward change in its appearance.

The personnel was of course renewed periodically with new and younger members; the teaching methods, while preserving

their basic pattern, were adapted to the needs of the time and to the progressive trends in educational theory. The satisfaction of the parents was evident and often expressed. The high level of enrollment, completely voluntary, was proof of how effective were the means that Lasallian pedagogy made available to the teaching Brothers.

In the whirlwind of the French Revolution all of this disappeared. The Brothers were scattered, everything that had taken so long to build up was in ruins, the buildings were confiscated and all that the Brothers owned was nationalized. They had owned fifteen houses rentable at 3,175 livres and five farms worth a total of 4,064 livres. Now the entire work of more than a century was wiped out. On June 14, 1791, the school at Rheims had an enrollment of 740 students in 13 classes. On that day they left for the summer vacation. When they returned on the following September 5, secular teachers recruited by the commune had taken over the schools. Soon after, in the very place where young boys had moved in disciplined ranks, the rowdy soldiers of the Revolution came to occupy their place. Once they were dislodged, the "house of the humble Brothers" with its dependencies, courtyards and gardens were all put up at auction. Citizens Barbier and Baudet-Fassin became the owners on the 2 Messidor in the year IV (June 20, 1796). A factory was installed in the place. It continued to operate until 1880 when the Brothers once again were able to regain the property and carry on there the work of Christian education which they continue to do on this historic site up to now.⁸

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

¹In the contract, the Founder is designated as "Monsieur John Baptist de La Salle, priest, Doctor of Theology, superior of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, resident of the Rue de Vaugirard in the Saint Germain des Prés quarter in the parish of Saint Sulpice." Reference to De La Salle as priest, Doctor of Theology and Superior of the Brothers, occurs regularly in the formal documents of the time. See *Cahiers* 37-3, p. 51, note 1.

²These meditations were published sometime before 1731 at Rouen by Antoine La Prévost, printer and bookseller on the Rue Saint Vivien.

³At this point in the French text, Aroz provides a chart showing the names and places of origin of the eleven Brothers from the Champagne country who joined the Society between 1691 and 1700.

⁴Citing Blain and manuscript sources, Aroz estimates that when the Founder left Rheims for Paris in 1688 there were at the Rue Neuve about sixteen Brothers, twenty-five or thirty students in the training college for rural teachers, from five to ten teenagers in the preparatory novitiate. These figures do not include the Brothers at Laon, Guise and Rethel.

⁵At this point in the French text, Aroz supplies lists of all the properties along the Rue Neuve and the Rue de Contrai drawn from a 1747 document in the Marne archives.

⁶The written record of the visit was drawn up by Jean Dominé. Among the chapel decorations he mentions tapestries depicting the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi as well as a varnished wood panel of the Annunciation.

⁷The Brothers apparently were in the habit of going to the winegrowers to ask for donations of wine as an alms. The decree of the Chapter of 1734 reads as follows: "Taking note of the unfortunate consequences that follow from the practice of begging for wine, especially irregularity and the loss of vocation, it is decreed that this will no longer be allowed in any house of the Institute." The decree did not forbid the use of wine in the community.

⁸The history of the establishment on the Rue Neuve/Rue de Contrai that is summarized in this final paragraph is described and documented in detail in the subsequent chapters of Volume 37-3 of the *Cahiers*. Chapter IV is entitled "Rue de Contrai: a factory from 1800-1880"; Chapter V, "Rue de Contrai: a Free School from 1880-1904"; Chapter VI, "Rue de Contrai: a Professional and Technical School from 1926-1972."

Part Two

The Founder's France

(This section is, for the most part, a translation of a brochure entitled "Un éducateur et un saint aux prises avec la société de son temps: Jean-Baptiste de La Salle 1651-1719." These notes were prepared for use in the renewal program at the Centre International Lasallien [CIL] in Rome and edited somewhat in the process of translation. The authors are Brothers Yves Poutet, FSC, and Jean Pungier, FSC. Chapter V in this section on the immediate family of the Founder is based on material derived from the commentary on the original documents by Brother Léon Aroz, FSC, as published in the Cahiers lasalliens, Volumes 26, 27, 28 to 32 and 41-1.)

CHAPTER IV

FRANCE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THE EUROPEAN SITUATION

The political map of Europe in the seventeenth century was very different from what it is today. The European states were monarchies that in some cases were grouped together into empires. Instead of alliances based on economic ties there were family alliances between the heads of states. Thus, for example, the Bourbons, by reason of their intermarriages, had control over France, Spain and the Italian kingdoms; the Hapsburgs of Austria were emperors of Germany, that is to say, the German states. The Mussulman empire was at the door of Europe as it is today. The most important countries were Turkey, Austria and Spain with France caught in the middle as if in a vise.

The United States did not yet exist, and Canada was merely a French province. Italy and Germany were divided into numerous small kingdoms, and Russia seemed to be in another world. England was engaged in a civil war and was, in any case, a relatively unimportant country with barely seven million inhabitants. France, by contrast, was the most heavily populated country of Europe with twenty million people. The French language was universally understood and served as the basis for diplomatic and social communication.

The Holland of the time included all the Low Countries and was the most important maritime power. It was the center of commerce, finance and culture as well. Merchandise from all over the world poured through the port of Amsterdam: herring from Norway, salt from Breton, wine from the Loire, wool from Spain, steel from Sweden, wood from Africa, all were assembled at Amsterdam and transferred for redistribution in a fleet of eight thousand ships, more than half the merchant tonnage of the world.

Customs barriers were everywhere, even between towns and

provinces of the same country. Economic crises were frequent and devastating; especially when the crops failed, people all over Europe would die of starvation or in the widespread epidemics that followed.

In most countries those who held civil, economic and political power were also the religious authorities. England, officially Protestant since the time of Henry VIII, was trying to prevent James II, a Catholic prince, from coming to the throne. By the Test Act of 1673, any candidate for public office was required to take an oath repudiating the authority of the pope and denying the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Irish Catholics fought in vain to have their economic and political rights restored, to say nothing of their struggle for religious freedom. They wanted desperately to control the land that they farmed, something their English landlords would not allow since the Irish were not Anglicans. Louis XIV gave the Irish Catholics what support he could in this struggle.

The seven united provinces of Holland, organized into a republic, were likewise Protestant. Sweden, Norway and Denmark as well as most of the German duchies were governed by princes who were either Lutheran or Calvinist.

On the other hand, Spain, France and Russia were officially Catholic. The bishops were often temporal princes and controlled vast landholdings. Thus Archbishop Le Tellier of Rheims was a member of the king's council. The Spanish Bishop of Urgel was, as he still is today, a co-prince of Andorra sharing his authority with the French chief of state.

The normative principle of pagan antiquity, according to which the official religion of the government determines the religion of the people, was hardly ever called into question in the seventeenth century. Henry IV was a notable exception with the Edict of Nantes which gave religious freedom to French Protestants and even conceded certain economic privileges, such as allowing them to maintain fortified towns. Louis XIV, in a retrogressive decision, returned to the more general usage of the time when he revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685.

GEOGRAPHY AND DEMOGRAPHY OF FRANCE

Under Louis XIV, the boundaries of France were constantly changing, and the main roads were clogged with the passage of

armies. The French armies consisted of officers drawn from the nobility and troops composed of mercenary soldiers who might be Swiss, German, Italian or French. They were able to conquer Artois, Flanders, Alsace and Franche-Comté. These troops were the most formidable in Europe, although their total number, from 72,000 to 200,000 at any given time, might seem insignificant today.

Sailors were also considered very important. Military service of one year in the French navy for every three years of age was compulsory for fishermen and seafarers. The compensations, however, were considerable: professional wages, exemption from taxation and immunity from prosecution for debt.

During this time Corsica, Savoy and Lorraine did not as yet belong to France. Avignon belonged to the pope and was governed by his legate.

Compared with Paris, the south of France with its provincial ways was a world apart. Thus on one occasion, when De La Salle was returning from Marseilles on his way to Paris, he wrote to a correspondent in Rome, "I have just now come back to France." The same was true for most of the provincial capitals far from Paris.

Paris, with half a million inhabitants, was by far the most populous city in France. Marseilles, Lyons, Rouen, Saint Malo, Nantes and Bordeaux owed their prosperity and development to their ports and to their distance from the capital. They became in effect the economic capitals of their regions. The other towns were rather small. All that was needed to provide for the entire student population of Rheims, for example, was the university college, the Jesuit college and four gratuitous elementary schools for the common people, one for each section of the city. There were a few small tuition schools but they had little importance for most of the population.

Then there was the countryside. More than two-thirds of the French people lived far from the towns. For the most part they lived in small villages of two hundred to three hundred inhabitants. Most of these villages have since disappeared. It was difficult to bring together such a scattered group of people and that is why the organization of the village schools had to be very different from that of the towns. The way of life and the needs of the children were not the same as in the urban centers.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES

In principle the power of the king was considered absolute. The center of its exercise was Versailles and from there it extended into the provinces. Louis XIV appointed supervisors (*intendants*) whose duty it was to watch over the observance of the laws, economic development and the "policing of the realm," to maintain good order and domestic tranquility. Royal subsidies were provided to enable these officials to assist local charitable enterprises and experimental projects for social betterment.

The king also selected the bishops by sending to the pope a list of the priests he wanted to have raised to the episcopacy. In those days a bishopric was a rich temporal prize that carried with it the lordship over a considerable territory and the function of representing the king in certain juridical matters. Thus the Archbishop of Rheims and the Bishop of Laon were both dukes and peers of the realm. Other bishops bore the titles of counts or barons.

No organization, no society, no religious community could enjoy legal status without securing letters patent from the king. Furthermore, to have the force of law, these letters patent had to have the approval of parliament. Papal bulls appointing a bishop or approving a new religious congregation carried no weight in France if parliament refused to recognize them.

Whenever civil authorities, bishops or priests challenged the right of the pope to interfere in temporal matters that involved the application of religious principles to concrete situations, or claimed that they were justified in espousing religious doctrines opposed to the official Roman teaching, they did so on the basis of the doctrine known as Gallicanism. In De La Salle's day, most of the members of parliament were Gallicans. So, too, were the professors of the Sorbonne, the theological faculty of the University of Paris. On the other hand, the Jesuits and Sulpicians were staunchly loyal to the directives from Rome.

The religious and secular aspects of life were closely interrelated. In each parliament, the supreme law courts of the land, ecclesiastical officials were required to preside together with the lay magistrates. Every year, on the occasion of the meeting of the higher clergy, the king would make his priorities known. This was done to guarantee that the clergy would support his plans with large subsidies to the government, known as "the free gift of the Church." On such occasions the king would not hesitate to offer

proposals that touched on other areas, including those that were strictly religious. Thus, at the very moment when the bishops met to discuss matters of a pastoral and doctrinal nature, they would be asked to deal with social and economic problems or perhaps, the means to finance public works and military expeditions.

In the towns and villages the parish was the religious and the administrative center. Each parish had a council (*la fabrique*) that was charged with administering the resources needed for the sacramental and religious services of the parish. The lay members of the council were known as *marguilliers*. They were charged with the financial matters pertaining to the parish.

In each town there was a group of "notables," drawn mostly from the bourgeoisie and the professional guilds, who elected the town councillors. They in turn were to assist the mayor in governing the town, in determining the subsidies to be given to schools and to the almshouses, in expropriations of property for the common good, and in granting or withholding authorization for commercial ventures in the town.

It was according to parishes, section by section, that taxes were imposed and the census taken. The community budget had to be submitted to the royal supervisor who had the power either to make up for deficits or to forbid certain expenditures that were considered contrary to the policies of the king.

This interpenetration of the secular and the religious made a profound impression on De La Salle. He sought a solution that would respect both the rights of conscience and the legitimate autonomy of the secular world on the one hand and, on the other, his personal conviction that the universe was the creation of God, for whom and with whom everything ought to act. He found the solution in the concept of the Christian school. For him, this was the means given by God "to know the truth," the truth that is God himself, the Creator, and all that comes from him, the secular as well as the sacred.

Since no educational reform would have been possible without the agreement, at least tacit, of the notables, the elected town council, the parish priest, the parish council, the bishop, the royal supervisor and, in the great cities, the leaders of parliament, it is easy to understand why De La Salle proceeded with such caution. It took more than thirty years for him to gain acceptance for the changes he introduced in school management and the recruitment and training of teachers.

ECONOMIC LIFE

In the countryside there were not very many huge estates. Those that existed belonged to the great nobles such as the Duke of Mazarin or the Duchess of Guise. The law of primogeniture prevented the breakup of these estates. Yet these enormous pieces of land were exploited to the full, one plot at a time. Even the most elementary farm machinery was unknown. Farming implements were made of wood covered with metal, small sickles were used instead of scythes. Three out of four farmers had no plow since the French steel industry was only in its infancy and most of the steel had to come from Sweden.

Small farms were very numerous. Although they occupied only one-fifth of the farmland of France, they had to support four-fifths of the population. Most farmers lived at subsistence level, dropping below it whenever the harvest failed. One out of seven farmers did not have sufficient land to feed his own family and so had to hire himself out to the great landlords.

Specialized farming was rare and impractical. Transportation facilities were lacking and there was always the danger of crop failure which in a specialized farm would be total and irremediable. Most farmers and peasants kept a few pigs and hens, the main source of meat; only a minority could afford to keep small cattle. Farmers cultivated a mixture of wheat, rye and barley in addition to linen and flax for clothes. Poaching was common since hunting was reserved to the rich. Smuggling was a way of life by reason of the high customs duties between towns and districts.

In the towns, the guilds (*corps de métiers*) were powerful bodies. There were no corporations as such in the seventeenth century but there were groups organized as "fraternities" of butchers, barrel makers, mattress makers, carpenters and masons.

The regulations of these guilds and fraternities were both professional and religious. The allowable number of authorized shops, of journeymen, apprentices and clerks was carefully specified. In Paris, for example, the schoolteachers and masters of boarding schools had their statutes protected by letters patent. No teacher could set up a school that was not at least two hundred yards removed from his nearest competitor.

Manufacturing and industry were beginning to develop, thanks to the policy of Colbert, the minister of the king. Banks were practically nonexistent in France. Those who were called

bankers were mostly merchants who changed and lent money at high rates of interest. In order to pay a debt it was often necessary to transport very heavy sacks of silver, gold or bronze.

Between the small shopkeepers and the wealthy merchants, there was an intermediary category that was just beginning to appear in the seventeenth century. These people strove to find a place in the ranks of those who had some schooling, although it was impossible for them to think of being accepted in the cultured upper classes.

TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL

The transportation of goods was continually paralyzed by the high customs duties that had to be paid at the entrance to every town. The most convenient method of transportation was by boat along the streams and rivers of France. But floods, ice and drought made this method impracticable for six months of the year.

Contrary to what one might imagine, people traveled a great deal in the seventeenth century. Although there were very strict controls, it was still possible to get through the frontiers. Artisans sometimes made the circuit of France to develop their professional skills. Merchants traveled to Holland or Italy to establish commercial contacts. News circulated through these travelers since printed newspapers were only just beginning to appear and the airwaves were not even thought of.

For those who wished to travel, there were the private stagecoach, the coach service provided by the universities and the towns, as well as horses, coaches and carriages for hire. Each system had its privileges, and the rivalry among them was intense.

Travel prices varied and it is possible only to cite average costs. From Rheims, for example, it cost 25 sols a day to hire a horse. The horse was changed at each relay post. Public vehicles covered about one hundred kilometers a day (sixty miles) and cost about 15 livres per day for that distance. This was about ten times more expensive than hiring a horse.

To go from Paris to Rheims, the stagecoach changed its team of horses eighteen times. From Paris to Rouen there were only fourteen relays, but from Paris to Marseilles via Lyons there were no less than ninety-three relays. Counting the cost of stopping at hostels, a schoolteacher going from Rheims to Paris would spend about three months' salary if he traveled by coach, but only one

week's salary if he went by horse. Thus it is easy to understand why De La Salle and the early Brothers almost always traveled on foot.

*OF THE WAY OF CONDUCTING ONESELF WHEN
WALKING IN THE STREETS AND ON JOURNEYS BY COACH
OR BY HORSEBACK.*

One must pay attention when walking in the streets not to walk either too rapidly or too slowly. Slowness in walking is a sign either of dullness or of nonchalance; however it is more unbecoming to walk too fast . . .

When one gets into a coach, one must always take the less important seat, if one is of a lower rank than those with whom one enters.

In a coach, there are usually two seats at the back and two in the front; the first place at the back is on the right-hand side; the second on the left; and in the case when there are three places, the third is in the middle; if there are two doors, the first is on the right and the second on the left, and the seats on each side at the back are the principal ones. If one gets into a coach with a person of higher rank, or to whom one ought to give honor, one should, because of the respect one owes him, allow him to go up first, and get in after him . . .

When one is in a coach, it is most uncivil to stare at anyone among those who are there; or to lean against the back of the seat or to rest one's elbow on anything; one must keep one's body straight and rigid with one's feet joined as far as possible.

It is also most unbecoming, and quite contrary to good manners, to spit inside a coach and, if one is obliged to spit, one should do so in one's handkerchief; if one spits out of the window, which is not really gentlemanly unless one is seated next to it, one should raise one's hand to one's cheek to shield it.

On getting out of a coach, it is good manners to be the first out, without waiting to be told, so as to offer one's hand to assist the person of quality, whether man or woman, to alight.

When one is mounting a horse, in company with a

person one must honor, it is courteous to allow that person to mount first, to assist him and to hold his stirrup

Christian Politeness II, 9 (1703)

FOOD AND THE STANDARD OF LIVING

Potatoes were almost unknown in France. The main staples of diet were bread and meat. White bread was too expensive for most people and it was considered more like a pastry. The bread for ordinary consumption was either wholewheat or rye. In Paris, the usual ration was one pound of bread per person per day, but manual workers often ate two or three pounds for lack of anything else. The only vegetables were the herbs used to garnish whatever meat there was: beef, mutton, pork or fowl. Milk derivatives, eggs, cheese and fruits completed the ordinary diet.

France was considered a rich nation and potentially it was so in terms of the resources of its countryside. Despite the huge cost of war, of revolts, of dishonest ministers and officials; despite protest, complaint and near mutiny, the sum total of taxes more than doubled in a quarter of a century. This is some indication of a growing personal income. No other country could have come through so many trials, as one historian notes, without such resources at its disposal.

THE MONETARY SYSTEM

The unit of money was the *livre* or French pound. There were 12 deniers to the sol and 20 sols to the livre. In 1686 the annual stipend of a parish priest was fixed at 300 livres and that of a curate at 200 livres. An ordinary workingman might earn 10 sols a day, a woman half that and a child one-quarter. Thus an ordinary family might earn 100 to 120 livres a year, more if all the family worked. De La Salle accepted 150 to 200 livres per Brother per year when negotiating the opening of a new school. It has been estimated that one livre might be worth about three dollars in United States currency at the present time.⁴

⁴In 1966, Brother Léon Aroz in *Cahiers* 27, page 54, equated 22,503 livres with roughly 300,000 new francs, i.e., about 13 francs to the livre. At the 1966 rate of five or more francs to the dollar, Brother Erminus Joseph concludes that the livre would be worth about \$2.70. Granted that adjustments have to be made for currency fluctuations, this is

the basis for the estimate given here. However, in the 1963 *Lasallian Panorama*, Vol. 1, p. 30, Brother Hubert Gerard accepts the value of the *livre Tournais* at 19½ cents, USA currency, as consistent with the testimony of Bernard that the Founder gave away 1000 livres worth of bread per day over a long period (Maillefer says one year). On the other hand, Brother Augustine Loes argues that ten dollars is a more realistic figure for the value of the livre. Since the Founder asked 150 to 200 livres per annum per Brother, this would translate into \$1500 to \$2000 as the minimum sum required today to supply even the barest necessities for each Brother. [Ed.]

CONTRAST BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR

Between 1680 and 1719 the social hierarchy began to change. Birth alone was no longer the criterion of worth. Some of the bourgeoisie, such as Colbert, began to rise to the highest offices. The wealth of the merchants enabled them to build sumptuous private mansions. The rivalry for positions of influence was intense among the bishops, the members of municipal councils and parliament. A favorite theme of writers of the time such as La Bruyère was to dramatize the rise of a man from a minor fiscal post to very high office and, in the process, by use of threats and violence bring many families to ruin.

There were, however, many disinterested and generous people among the bourgeoisie who were genuinely concerned for the welfare of the nation and the well-being of the poor. It was the educated among these people who took delight in the satirists of the day, such as La Fontaine and La Bruyère, in whose pages could be detected the foibles of many public figures.

Vauban, in *La Dîme royale* written in 1707, came to the defense of the common people and tried to interest the king in the cause of social reform. "It seems to me," he wrote, "that we have never had enough concern in France for the humbler people . . . They are the most oppressed in the realm . . . yet they are most important both in numbers and by reason of the real and effective service they render . . . It is indeed the lowest element that enriches the nation by their work and industry . . . It is from them that come . . . the tradesmen . . . the artisans and factory workers . . . farmers, vinegrowers and laborers . . . It is they who do all the heavy and menial work in both town and country . . . Kings ought to be willing to go to any length to preserve and to improve the lot of these people who ought to be so dear to them."

Bossuet, for his part, spoke of the "eminent dignity of the poor" as privileged members of Jesus Christ.

Despite this theoretical esteem for the poor, most of the nobility and the bourgeoisie despised them and treated them as inferior beings who did not deserve so much as a glance. In Paris, just opposite the Tuileries and not far from the Brothers' school known as Pont Royal, the ferry operators would transport people across the Seine for only six deniers. The nobility and the bourgeoisie preferred to pay five times as much and go further upstream rather than suffer the proximity of the common folk.

De La Salle admitted that before he became involved with the work of the schools he considered schoolteachers as inferior to his valet. He had great difficulty overcoming his instinctive repugnance when he welcomed them to his own table. It was only by dint of willpower and fasting that he was able to bring himself to eat their food; he found the very smell of it revolting.

THE SPECIAL SITUATION OF THE POOR

In the first place, it is important to decide what constituted a person as poor, how much income was needed before one ceased to be considered as poor. According to present-day standards a poor person is anyone who is unable to afford the minimum comforts available to those in the lowest wage category. But in the seventeenth century such comforts were lacking generally. According to such a norm, most of the population of France would be considered poor — from the lowliest beggars to the artisans and the small shopkeepers. For this reason the seventeenth-century usage distinguished between the poor and the destitute.

The poor were characterized, not by lack of comfort, but by lack of security. Richelet, in his dictionary of 1680, has this to say: "Most artisans are in straightened circumstances at the present time because they have no work." They had no security because unemployment was so general. They had no steady income and no capital to help them weather an economic crisis. Consequently they were poor. But their poverty might be only temporary.

The destitute, however, belonged to another social category. Their insecurity was continual and a way of life. The slightest illness could result in the loss of a job and hence in destitution. Here we are talking about genuine poverty, the poverty of those who rarely ate their fill, who lacked the means to provide heat in

the winter, who were unable to get married before the age of thirty since they could not afford to support a family. Those who were poor in this sense composed about one-third of the manual workers: street porters, road sweepers, postmen, unskilled workers, ferry-men, water carriers, ragmen and knife grinders. They were always at the mercy of the seasons, the rain and the frost. For nearly all of them, periods of unemployment and semi-starvation were inevitable and persistent.

ORGANIZATION OF RELIEF FOR THE POOR

Each parish kept its own register of the poor of the parish and accepted gifts of money intended for them. The royal treasury had its own budget for the poor which was dispersed through the office of the Almoner General. It was also common, in well-to-do families, at banquets and other festivities, to set aside "the portion of the poor." This "portion" was then sent, sometimes to a poor family nearby, sometimes to the general hospice for the poor.

The monks in their monasteries, famous for clearing the forests and making them productive, also fulfilled a social obligation in favor of the poor. Their monasteries served as storage houses for food in times of famine. The monks distributed bread and soup to those in need and provided free shelter for wandering beggars.

The government also imposed a special poor tax which was levied on all nonindigent citizens. In Paris this tax was fixed by the Poor Board. Every Monday, sixteen of the bourgeois, three parish priests, two canons and several members of parliament met for this purpose. The same was the case at Rouen, Marseilles and a number of other important French cities.

The judicial magistrates were also involved in caring for the poor. For example, instead of condemning a rich person to prison, a judge might impose a heavy fine to be paid either to the Poor Board, the general hospice for the poor or to the Almoner General.

A royal edict made it a strict duty for all schoolteachers to accept poor children without charge. Jesuit colleges were tuition free for all their nonresident pupils, so no poor child need be rejected. But the ragged clothes, the coarse language and the lice that were characteristic of so many really poor children drew down on them the contempt of the sons of the great families. Con-

sequently the poor and the rich did not usually intermingle in the colleges.

De La Salle reversed this situation by turning the most wretched ragamuffins into clean and polite students eager to learn. In time, the rich themselves were attracted to his schools for the poor by the innovative policies, the variety of the curriculum and their evident success. Social barriers fell with the more refined sensibility of children who had previously been badly brought up.

SOCIAL LIFE AND CUSTOMS

In the towns as in the countryside people followed the rhythm of the sun. They rose at dawn and went to bed at sunset. Each evening, at eight or nine o'clock depending on the season, the night watchman sounded the curfew. After that no one was allowed to wander about the streets. The constables arrested vagabonds and took them to the hospice for the poor which also served as a refuge for the night. The next day the steward would demand some work from them in exchange for food and shelter.

Little was eaten at breakfast. De La Salle states in his *Christian Politeness* that "the ordinary practice of respectable people when they breakfast is to eat a piece of bread and drink a mouthful or two; beyond that, one must be content with dinner (the midday meal) and with supper, as is the custom among those who know best."

The practices recommended by De La Salle were not those of the rustics or even those of the country gentry, however respectable they may have been in their own context. De La Salle was concerned to prepare city children to take their place without difficulty in the world of cultured and well-mannered people. If the children of artisans and laborers were not to be made to feel out of place in the company of the well-to-do, they had to have an education suited to their situation. They had to be taught to abandon certain mannerisms that were customary among country people and manual laborers but which were considered by townspeople of any education as vulgar and coarse. That is why De La Salle remarks that "it is contrary to good manners and somewhat rustic to offer a person a drink and urge him to take it, except when a person has just arrived from the country, hot and thirsty, and needs some such refreshment." De La Salle was not writing for country schools; his principal concern was for the things the stu-

dents had to know to be able to live properly in a town. Education always supposes an adaptation of the person to the environment.

The life-style of the nobility and the upper level of the bourgeoisie was totally different from that of the common folk. This was due, among other things, to the right of primogeniture in inheritance, the importance of family ties in the choice of a career, the fact that marriage brought a person into a whole new network of relationships, the employment of wet nurses and tutors for young children and by the large number of servants in every wealthy household.

Life among the lower class people provided a sharp contrast, and Molière has left us a fairly accurate picture of what it must have been like. The older girls were in charge of the upbringing of the younger children; once the girls reached the age of thirteen or fourteen they were expected to enter service in a bourgeois household. People married late. Although marriages of persons as young as sixteen years of age were not unknown among the nobility, the ordinary practice of the lower classes was to defer marriage until the age of twenty-eight or thirty.

Once married, the lower class housewife had no hesitation about standing up to her husband, despite the French law, based on Roman law, which made the husband the head of the household. She worked all day. There was no such thing as a vacation. Her children were a source of endless worry: deaths in infancy, diseases for which there was no remedy, rough conduct in the streets, squabbles with the neighbors. In addition, the living conditions were unhealthy, heating was always a problem, there was an ever present danger of fire, washing and toilet facilities were lacking. All of this put a heavy burden on family life.

OF PROPRIETY AND OF FASHION IN CLOTHES:

It is also necessary, if clothes are to be correct, to pay attention to the age of the person for whom they are intended. It would, for instance, be unbecoming for a boy of fifteen to be dressed in black, unless he were a cleric or were training to become one. It would seem absurd for a young man who was thinking of getting married to be clad as plainly and as simply as an old man of seventy.

It is of no less consequence that a person who is

having a suit of clothes made should have regard to his position, since it would not be seemly for a poor man to be clad like a rich person, for a commoner to be dressed like a person of rank.

A coat trimmed with gold braid, or made of some rare fabric, is proper only for a person of rank. A commoner who would want to wear a suit of this kind would make himself a laughingstock; besides which, he would incur an expense that would undoubtedly be offensive to God, being above what is required by his state in life and what his means would allow. It would also be most improper for a tradesman to wear a feather in his hat or to carry a sword at his side . . .

The best rule concerning suitable clothing is fashion; one should follow it without fail. The mind of man is subject to change and since what pleased people yesterday no longer pleases them today, men have invented, and invent daily, different ways of dressing so as to satisfy their fickle minds. The person who would dress today as one dressed thirty years ago would be considered singular and ridiculous. It is, however, a characteristic of the behavior of a well-bred person never to be conspicuous in any way.

By "fashion" is meant the way in which clothes are made at the present time . . . The surest and most sensible rule concerning fashions is never to be their innovator, not to be the first to adopt them, and not to delay abandoning a fashion until there is no one else following it.

OF SIMPLICITY AND CLEANLINESS OF CLOTHES:

The way to set limits to fashion, and to prevent those who follow it from going to excess, is to control it and reduce it to moderation. This should be the rule of any Christian in everything that pertains to the exterior . . . As women are, by their nature, less capable of great things than men, so they are also more subject to vanity and ostentation in their clothes. It is for this reason that St. Paul, after applying himself to exhort men to avoid the

coarser vices into which they fall more easily than women, then goes on to advise women to dress simply

Christian Politeness, III, 1-2 (1703)

FORMAL EDUCATION AND COMMON SENSE

The seventeenth-century peasant read little and wrote less. He worked with his hands, never received any printed matter, and therefore rarely had need for either reading or writing. He could, however, do simple arithmetic both quickly and accurately. The culture was still one of verbal rather than written communication.

The country population was not concentrated enough to permit schools of more than one class in the tiny villages. The journeys of anywhere from four to ten kilometers that were necessary to get to the nearest school were often too much for eight-year-olds. Very often a cleric in training for the priesthood or a curate who might be a deacon or a subdeacon, or even a sacristan, might show the children how to read and write during the slack periods when the youngsters were not needed on the farm. Whereas the vacation periods for the colleges in the towns were limited to two or three weeks — in September and not in August — the small villages found many excuses to close the school. And truancy was one of the major problems of the age.

Among ordinary people, the things that counted most were an apprenticeship in a skilled trade, the rudiments of reading and writing, a better knowledge of arithmetic and calculation or any instruction that would help them advance in the hierarchy of their trade. Grammar, philosophy, history and literature appeared to them to be totally useless. More than formal instruction, they needed common sense. Genuine apprenticeship in all that is necessary for everyday life took place in the family and in the company of skilled workmen. It was through experience rather than study that ordinary people came to know their rights. They were always ready to haggle over them, though they may have forgotten the basics of reading and writing they had learned as children, even to the point where they could not sign their own marriage certificate. They knew all about plants without having studied botany, the strength of materials without knowing the laws of physics. The homespun wisdom of the characters in the fables of La Fontaine

and the comedies of Molière was the result of these lessons learned in the book of life.

The upbringing of girls differed from that of boys; the aims were not the same. Boys were expected to assume their role in society by becoming capable of supporting a family by hard manual labor. Girls, even when still quite young, were expected to begin helping the mother take care of her other children. Public opinion, even among the nobility and the bourgeoisie, treated with derision any women who showed a desire to learn. Referring to the upper levels of society, Fénelon wrote that "nothing was more neglected than the education of girls." Father Barré and Canon Roland, both advisers to John Baptist de La Salle, sought to remedy this sorry state of affairs. They were determined to improve the education of girls because, in the first place, they wanted to train good mothers; they saw that the whole future of society depended more on the women than on the men. They argued that women could teach religion in the same way that priests did, citing the practice of the primitive Church that instituted the office of deaconess to assist the clergy in the religious instruction of women.

Another way of approaching this problem is suggested by the classical authors in somewhat the same way as some psychologists do today. This is reflected in Fénelon's comments on the education of boys and girls. For these authors, it is not so much a question of equality or inequality; the emphasis is rather on the differences between the sexes and their complementary qualities. In this view, men are said to be less sensitive, less curious, less attentive to detail than women; women are thought to be more subtle and more gentle. For this reason boys and girls would not have the same motivation in their work.

The vocational prospects in the seventeenth century were also very different from what they are today; the same educational system could not suit both boys and girls. Girls needed to learn sewing, knitting, weaving and spinning, or how to manage a small shop; boys had to prepare themselves to earn their living by heavy manual work: shaping raw materials, making tools, construction work of all kinds, none of which can be taught to small children.

For all these reasons, the seventeenth century was convinced that the school, the teachers and the curriculum had to be adapted to the special needs of boys and the distinctive qualities of girls. Boys and girls attended separate schools, especially in the period

after 1680. Girls would leave school at an earlier age, despite the edict of Louis XIV making school obligatory until the age of fourteen, because they were needed at home from the age of ten to help with the housework. There was no question of a girl having to read Latin since no priest would dream of asking a girl to serve Mass. For boys, however, the parish schools placed great emphasis on Latin. Choirboys were needed to sing at weddings and funerals, and the children of the poor were not at all reluctant to earn a bit of pocket money by serving at Mass or assisting at baptisms.

When John Baptist de La Salle became involved in the schools, he took up a work that was already under way. He did not concern himself with girls; they were already provided for with talented women teachers. But there was a great lack of facilities for training teachers of boys. It was here that De La Salle concentrated his efforts and in doing so he responded to one of the most urgent needs of his time. The experience and competence that he developed in this specialized field had no equal anywhere. While most of the religious congregations of the seventeenth century offered their members various fields of activity such as the care of the sick, preaching or teaching, De La Salle blazed a new trail. He raised the task of teaching the children of the poor to the dignity of a vocation; he created a religious community whose members would work "together and by association . . . in gratuitous schools."

CHURCH LIFE

Diversions for the common people were generally rare, except for the wakes and liturgical festivals that drew people together. These festivals were encouraged by the Church not, as La Fontaine suggested, to reduce a workman's income but rather to reduce his work load. The working day could be as long as fourteen hours with no Saturdays free, no paid holidays and no summer break. Servants were not free to dispose of their own time on Sundays. However, each diocese drew up its list of holy days of obligation, usually about twenty of them, and on these days at least all work was forbidden.

Church life in those days had an intensity that we find hard to imagine today. In the church of Saint Sulpice in Paris, for example, the first Mass began at 4 AM on weekdays as well as on Sundays. Many people attended, and in Lent there would be a sermon. A staff of more than forty priests guaranteed that wills and contracts

providing for Memorial Masses would be honored. There would be more than twenty-five such Masses every day. Likewise, in the parish schools, daily Mass was considered part of the normal routine. Thus the seventeenth century was bathed in an atmosphere of Christianity, of faith, of love of God and love of neighbor such as we do not experience today. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that this era had its share of vice, vindictive lawsuits and fierce rivalries of every kind.

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENTS

In the seventeenth century, the proportion of educated people to the illiterate was the opposite of what it is today. The common people had their own patterns of thought that were very different from those of the nobility and the bourgeoisie. Only the sons of the well-to-do families attended the colleges and universities. Philosophy dominated the curriculum which included cosmology, mathematics, theoretical physics, ethics and metaphysics. Systematic thinking was derived mostly from Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. A thinker like Montaigne was considered suspect since any method that involved doubt was rejected.

Fierce opposition was able to suppress, for a time at least, the theories of Copernicus that had been taken up by Galileo concerning the movement of the earth around the sun. Descartes attempted to revolutionize the approach to systematic reasoning, but his philosophy also encountered strong opposition from traditional thinkers. In the field of medicine, the Englishman Harvey experienced the same difficulty with his discovery of the circulation of the blood. In fairness, however, it should be noted that Copernicus, Descartes and Harvey mingled their scientific conclusions with some fanciful notions that left them open to the attacks of their opponents.

In mathematics, Pascal invented the infinitesimal calculus and applied it to games of chance in order to determine the odds of winning or losing. In physics, Pascal's experiments on weight and those of Mariotte on the movement of liquids contradicted some ancient and traditional principles and so paved the way for progress in various technical fields. From then on, the saying that "nature abhors a vacuum" was to become an obsolete presupposition. Improvements in telescopes made it possible for Colbert, the minister of the king, to encourage the Academy of Sciences to build

the Paris observatory. A popular writer such as Cyrano de Bergerac was already helping his readers to dream of a "Journey to the Moon."

All of this served to overturn completely the traditional method of reasoning from first principles, or from texts of Sacred Scripture which were falsely considered to be a source for scientific information. As a result, the consciences of people were torn apart; the very basis of their thinking was under attack. One reaction was to reject all the new theories. Cartesianism, for example, was condemned by the Sorbonne.

Ordinary people, however, were not directly affected by these intellectual and scientific disputations. Yet they were disturbed whenever they would hear of the uncertainties and contradictions among scholars and the educated class.

SUPERSTITION AND UNBELIEF

Religious ignorance was widespread. It was the result of the lack of a good general education and of effective means of religious instruction. Freethinkers flaunted their unbelief. In his younger days, Nicolas Roland had encountered atheists who jeered at his piety and mocked him when he bowed before the Blessed Sacrament being carried to a sick person. The Prince of Condé and a medical doctor named Bourdelot undertook on one occasion to burn a relic of the true cross. On the other hand, many people were credulous in the extreme and easily accepted obvious fakes as genuine relics.

The old medieval superstitions were far from dead: divination, both genuine and contrived, beset the rural population; belief in alchemy had not disappeared but it was kept underground; secret practices were transmitted by word of mouth. In 1676 a sensational criminal case brought some of this to light. It seems that magic philters and poisons had been circulating among the members of high society, including some who were close to the king. There was evidence of murders, orgies, Black Masses and witchcraft. A whole underworld of spellbinders, fortunetellers and magicians was implicated. The major blame was placed on an adventuress, the Marchioness de Brinvilliers. She was beheaded, her body burned and her ashes dispersed. Madame de Sévigné, the society gossip, wrote that she was well pleased with the result. This sort of thing could hardly occur today — perhaps we have made some little progress.

DOCTRINAL DISPUTES AND TENSIONS

During this period the Catholic Church in France was in turmoil over Jansenism, Gallicanism and Quietism. Intelligent and sincere people were in open conflict with one another. Parishes and even families were often split in two by contrary views.

Jansenism owes its name to Jansenius, a Belgian bishop, who preached a very rigorous ethical code. Pascal became involved in the controversy when he derided the Jesuits for giving absolution too easily to their penitents. The confessor for religious at the Abbey of Port Royal near Paris maintained that salvation was reserved for a very small number of the elect. In opposition to this rigorous doctrine, some confessors went to the other extreme, distinguishing an infinite number of cases and excusing circumstances in such a way as to eliminate personal responsibility altogether. Nobles and merchants alike became involved in discussions on the nature of grace, the nature of man as good or evil, and whether Holy Communion should be received frequently or hardly ever at all.

Gallicanism was espoused by parish priests who refused to communicate to their parishioners the directives from the pope on the grounds that the papal decree had not been registered by the parliament. Others declared themselves independent of their local bishop since they had received their parish as a benefice directly from Rome.

Bossuet and Fénelon engaged in a dispute over the different approaches to prayer. Just as the techniques of Zen and Yoga occupy many people today, so the various methods of concentration and meditation were the subject of conversation in the seventeenth century. The Quietists maintained that anyone can experience in some way the presence of God and make direct contact with him; for this purpose no effort and no particular virtue were considered necessary; the "simple quiet" and "passivity of the soul" would of themselves produce the effect.

The ordinary people of the time, without entering into these disputes which were beyond them, were nonetheless troubled by them. De La Salle does not hesitate to speak of "these unhappy times." Faced with all these confusing theories, he preferred to abide by the directives of the pope. He was suspicious of extreme theories. He provided his teachers and their pupils with books that were both reliable and doctrinally sound. All that was calculated to

engender controversy, anything that was not universally accepted in the Church he regarded as suspect, or at least as inappropriate, for those not trained in theology. He asked the Brothers of the Christian Schools to "leave scholarly disputes to the scholars" and to confine themselves to "what is of faith in the Church." Scholarship and religion were to be confined to their rightful places. Yet he did not separate them radically, as if the secular and the sacred were two different and mutually incomprehensible worlds. For De La Salle, they were rather complementary aspects of the same divine creation. This indeed was part of his genius: to know how to remain within the area of his own competence, to know how to unite rather than separate everything that belongs to the work of God.

ATTEMPTS AT REFORM

The great movement for Catholic reform had been launched by the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Seminaries were opened for the training of priests. In the footsteps of Cardinal de Bérulle, the Oratorians preached on the worship and the respect due to God; the Sulpicians stressed the dignity of the priesthood and the vital importance of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, Penance and the Anointing of the Sick; Vincent de Paul spread the aura of his charity over all human miseries. Everywhere the thought of God became a reality; church bells reminded men that life is not limited by death or earthly horizons.

The common people, however, remained almost untouched by this great revival. Since they were not used to reading, they could not educate themselves, acquire information or form opinions that they could rationally defend. They learned about changes in the law through the announcements made by the parish priest at Sunday Mass. Some attempt was made in the sermons to provide for moral development and responsibility, but words easily vanish into thin air and there can be as many interpretations of what is said as there are hearers. For this reason, preachers like St. Grignon de Montfort or Father Barré recommended the creation of schools so that the children could learn to read and thus be in a position to acquire for themselves all that they needed to know as adults and as Christians. Sometimes the opening of a parish mission was accompanied by the opening of a school. But once the mission was over, that was the end of the school. The whole process

would have to be started over again the following year, and nothing lasting was ever accomplished.

De La Salle found himself up against the same problem. He saw that what was needed was to give stability to the school and stability to the teachers, something impossible to accomplish with men who had no pride in their work. De La Salle set out to provide a remedy by opening up to the teachers the significance of their work. He spoke of the ministry of the Christian teacher, putting it on a par with the ministry of the bishop. He did not imply that the teacher commissioned by the Church is superior to the priest. Yet the teacher does in fact participate in the specific teaching function of the bishop, a mission in which, of course, the priest likewise shares. The teachers formed by De La Salle were men who would become devoted to their chosen mission, confining themselves to it and specializing in it. This is how they developed their competence and increased their effectiveness in a work so essential to society and the Church.

MINISTRY OF THE TEACHER

One of the main duties of fathers and mothers is to bring up their children in a Christian manner and to teach them their religion. But most parents are not sufficiently enlightened in these matters; some are taken up with their material needs and the support of their family; others, under the constant concern of earning the necessities of life for themselves and their children, cannot take the time to teach their children their duties as Christians.

In his providential care, God has appointed others to take the place of fathers and mothers in this responsibility. He sends persons with the necessary enlightenment and zeal to help children attain the knowledge of God and his mysteries. According to the grace of Jesus Christ given to them by God, they are like good master-builders who give all possible care and attention to lay the foundation of religion and Christian virtue in the hearts of these children, many of whom would otherwise be abandoned.

You have been called by God to his ministry and you have been given the grace of teaching and the gift of exhortation for the sake of those entrusted to your respon-

sibility. Use these gifts you have received with care and vigilance in order to fulfill the main duty of fathers and mothers towards their children.

Meditations for the Time of Retreat 1,2

SOME IMPORTANT CONTEMPORARIES OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE

Nicolas Roland (1642-1678) was a Canon of the Cathedral of Rheims, the spiritual director of John Baptist de La Salle and the founder of the Sisters of the Infant Jesus who were devoted to the education of young girls. He had an exceptional and precocious intelligence — he could read at the age of four — and was instrumental in effecting in the diocese of Rheims the reforms called for by the Council of Trent. He was always available for retreats for the clergy or for seminarians as well as for missions in the country parishes. Before undertaking any new work, he would always make inquiries beforehand of those who had engaged in similar experiments. His dedication to the apostolate of schools for the poor was extraordinary. His great hope was that De La Salle would accomplish for boys what he himself had been able to do for the education of girls. He did not live to see it come to pass. He was able, all the same, to appoint De La Salle as the executor of his will and in this way to provide the future founder of the Brothers with a religious and educational experience that would prepare him for the mission ahead.

Adrian Nyel (1621-1687) was a layman from the diocese of Laon and the general administrator of the hospice for the poor in that town. As such he was responsible for the schools for the poor in Rouen. Under the direction of the Poor Board he established four schools, one in each of the four districts of the town. He then attempted to train the teachers who, like himself, were willing to devote their lives to working for the poor and to accept a bare minimum for their own subsistence. In 1679 Nyel came to Rheims to establish schools on the model of those in Rouen. De La Salle invited him into his own home. Together they decided to organize the schools of Rheims on a different model: instead of seeking the support of the general hospice for the poor, they would put themselves at the disposal of the parishes and the parish priests. De La Salle obtained the agreement of the diocesan inspector of schools not to interfere. Accordingly, Nyel undertook the direction of the

first school in the parish of Saint Maurice in 1679. It was an instant success. Nyel recruited more teachers, opened another school in the parish of Saint Jacques and from there went on to others in the neighboring towns of Guise and Laon. In this way De La Salle found himself left with the responsibility for the teachers at Rheims and so became involved in a vocation that he had not foreseen. In 1685 Nyel returned to Rouen where he became superintendent of the schools for the poor. He never forgot the solemn commitment he had undertaken in 1657 to consecrate himself entirely, to the end of his days, to the service of the poor.

Nicolas Barré (1621-1686) was a religious priest of the Order of Minims, a talented preacher, a professor of theology at Paris and Rouen; he was the spiritual director of John Baptist de La Salle after the death of Nicolas Roland. He drew up the rules for the Sisters of Providence of Rouen and for the Ladies of Saint Maur, both congregations devoted to the education of girls. He was held in high regard by Madame Maintenon who persuaded him to send some of his Sisters to the Royal School of Saint Cyr in order to help train the teachers there. He lived a life of self-denial and complete trust in God. He was the one who advised De La Salle to give all his wealth to the poor and rely solely on God for the support of the schools.

Charles Maurice Le Tellier (1642-1710) was the Archbishop of Rheims and the brother of the royal minister, the Marquis de Louvois. His father was Michel Le Tellier, a minister and chancellor to Louis XIV. This prelate was a hot-tempered man. He has won a small place in history by reason of a delightful letter written by Madame de Sévigné. She relates how on one occasion the coach of Archbishop Le Tellier was rolling merrily along ("tra, tra, tra") when it rammed into the rear of a peasant's cart and sent it flying upside down into the ditch. The archbishop kept his coach rolling merrily on ("tra, tra, tra"). Obviously an archbishop could not be in the wrong; it is up to people to get out of the way when dignitaries are passing in a hurry. John Baptist de La Salle had difficulty in trying to obtain from Le Tellier permission to renounce the office of canon; permission to live in poverty with his Brothers — the archbishop thought that this was an affront to the dignity of the priesthood; permission to leave Rheims for Paris. In the long run, in all of these matters, De La Salle was able to convince the archbishop that his reasons were well founded.

Charles Démia (1637-1689) was a priest of the diocese of Lyons. He organized the Seminary of Saint Charles for the training of both priests and schoolteachers. He was a member of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, an organization of priests and laymen similar to some secular institutes today. He was particularly interested in opening schools for the poor and establishing policies and procedures that would insure their continuation. He was responsible for the creation of a school board at Lyons and was likewise the founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Charles for the education of girls. He wrote a treatise called *Remonstrances to the Municipal Magistrates* in which he drew the attention of both religious and civil authorities to the problem of education for the poor. This work had a profound effect in Paris and Rheims. It presented the school question as a matter of national concern by reason of its political, social and religious importance. Démia aroused public opinion and encouraged many persons either to embrace the vocation of teacher or to become the founders of schools. In one of his manifestos, Démia quoted as an example the early stages of De La Salle's work.

Louis Antoine de Noailles (1651-1729) was the Archbishop of Paris. He wavered back and forth in his attitude towards Jansenism and was equally undependable in his relations with De La Salle. At first he accorded to the priest from Rheims the broadest powers to hear confessions in the diocese and granted a semi-official status to the "novitiate" at Vaugirard. He accompanied James II of England on his visit to the Brothers' school in the parish of Saint Sulpice. He advised the exiled English king to entrust De La Salle with the education of the sons of the Irish families that had accompanied him to France. Later on, however, the archbishop proved all too ready to listen to the criticisms against the founder of the Brothers. He appointed another superior in his place and forbade De La Salle to train teachers for the schools for the poor. De La Salle submitted to the orders of the archbishop but he soon realized that the situation in Paris was no longer suitable for him to exercise his apostolate in harmony with the diocesan authorities. Accordingly, he accepted the invitation of the Archbishop of Rouen to take up his work in that city which was the capital of Normandy. In this way, De La Salle was able to reconcile his perfect submission to the directives from Rome with his concern never to disobey the diocesan authorities, even when they were in disagreement with the pope.

CHAPTER V

THE IMMEDIATE FAMILY OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE

PARENTS

Louis de La Salle, father of John Baptist, was a distinguished magistrate of the presidial court at Rheims. Louis married Nicolle Moët de Brouillet in August, 1650; he was twenty-five years old at the time, she was seventeen. John Baptist, their eldest son, was born on April 30, 1651. Altogether the parents had eleven children in twenty years of married life. Four of the De La Salle children died in infancy. In addition to John Baptist, two girls (Marie and Rose-Marie) and four boys (Jacques-Joseph, Jean-Louis, Pierre and Jean-Remy) survived.

Louis de La Salle was a highly respected professional man, a true humanist with a taste for music and the arts; he had a provident concern for the education of his children. He was a faithful husband and a more than ordinarily devout Christian. Apparently he had hoped that his oldest son would follow him in a career at law, yet he fully respected the lad's freedom when he decided instead to enter the priesthood. The father wanted to find for his son the best possible seminary and with that in mind had him enrolled in the Seminary of Saint Sulpice in Paris.

The biographer, Blain, describes the mother of John Baptist as even more remarkable for her piety than for her nobility, and attributes to her the deep sense of the presence of God that was later to become an important element in the spiritual vision of her oldest son. She was, in fact, of the noble De Brouillet family but lost all her claim to her title when she married outside the nobility.

On the father's side, the De La Salle family, though not of noble origin as once was thought, was one of the more distinguished among the upper bourgeoisie in Rheims. The De La Salles were well connected by marriage with some of the other important families of the city. The family was well-to-do: the successive

houses they occupied were stately and well furnished; the documents that survive speak of investments in property, lending money at interest, generous dowries, lavish celebrations of weddings and other family events, expensive funeral arrangements.

De La Salle's mother died on July 19, 1671, at the age of thirty-eight; his father less than a year later on April 9, 1672, at the age of forty-seven. Both parents died rather suddenly. The last will and testament of Louis de La Salle, written and signed the day before he died, still survives. In it, John Baptist is appointed testamentary executor and guardian of the younger children; his uncles, Simon de La Salle, Antoine Frémyn, and Nicolas Moët are appointed to assist him in this office.

GRANDPARENTS

The paternal grandfather was Lancelot de La Salle who died in 1651, only a few months after John Baptist was born. The paternal grandmother, Barbara Coquebert, died in 1653 when John Baptist was only two years old.

His maternal grandparents had a much greater influence on the young De La Salle. They were the godparents at his baptism. The grandfather, Jean Moët de Brouillet, had a great affection for the lad and quite probably brought him to visit the vineyards that he owned at Rilly or the open spaces of the Brouillet estate. Jean Moët loved to recite the divine office and, according to Blain, is said to have instructed young John Baptist in its use. Jean Moët lived until 1670, when John Baptist was nineteen years old.

Perrette Lespagnol, the wife of Jean Moët and maternal grandmother of John Baptist, was a lifelong source of guidance and support. When John Baptist found himself charged with the care of his orphaned brothers and sisters, it was she who agreed to take into her home Marie, the oldest girl, and Jean-Remy, the baby, who was little more than a year old. In 1682, when most of the relatives of John Baptist complained openly about his growing involvement with the Brothers of the Schools, Perrette Lespagnol was one of the few to approve and encourage him. She always remained proud of her grandson; she admired his apostolic work and had deep respect for his priestly character. She visited him when he was ill; at her death in 1691 she left him a generous legacy.

SISTERS AND BROTHERS

Of the two girls in the De La Salle family, Marie was the older. Even after her marriage to Jean Maillefer in 1679, she continued to live with the grandmother and to help care for the young Jean-Remy. The Maillefers had ten children, among whom was François-Hélye who joined the Benedictine order and, as Dom Elie Maillefer, wrote a life of John Baptist de La Salle. The work was written in two editions, one in 1723 and another in 1740, ostensibly to serve as a corrective to what the author considered the deficiencies in the biography of Blain. (The life by Maillefer was translated into English for the first time by Brother William Quinn, FSC, in 1960 and has recently been reprinted by the Saint Mary's College Press, Winona.)

Rose-Marie, or Rosette as John Baptist liked to call his younger sister, was only sixteen years old when their parents died. At about that time she joined the Canonesses of Saint Augustine in the convent of Saint Etienne-aux-Dames in Rheims. In the account of his guardianship that John Baptist de La Salle was required to prepare and that only recently has come to light (See *Cahiers lasalliens*, Vols. 28-32), there are many entries listing books, articles of clothing and small personal gifts that the older brother provided for his sister for whom he had such a special love. Some indication of the resources of the De La Salle family can be gathered from the fact that the dowry of Rose-Marie on her entrance into the convent was fixed at 7,000 livres. Rose-Marie died suddenly at the age of twenty-five in 1682.

Jacques-Joseph de La Salle remained in the family mansion on the Rue Sainte Marguerite with his three brothers for five or six years after the death of the parents. He then joined the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine in the monastery of Sainte Geneviève in Paris. He made his religious profession in 1678 at the age of nineteen. At that time, his guardian, Nicolas Lespagnol, who had replaced John Baptist de La Salle in that capacity in 1676, was required to pay the sum of 1,500 livres for the expenses of the novitiate. In due time Jacques-Joseph acquired a master of arts degree in philosophy, a licentiate in civil and canon law and a doctorate in theology. He was professor of philosophy and theology at Blois in the Loire valley from 1688 to 1714. He then was appointed prior of the monastery and pastor of the church of Saint Martin in Chauny (Aisne), a post he held until his death in 1723.

Jean-Louis de La Salle had a distinguished ecclesiastical career in many ways parallel to that of his older brother, John Baptist. Both were students at the Sorbonne in Paris, both became doctors of theology, both were canons of the cathedral at Rheims. While still a seminarian at Saint Sulpice in Paris, Jean-Louis acted as an intermediary between his brother and the priests of the parish in the negotiations that led to the opening of the first Christian school in Paris. Jean-Louis was always solicitous for the Institute founded by his brother; he headed the civil association that was formed in order to purchase property for the Brothers and otherwise provide them with financial assistance and legal protection.

The personal relationships between the two brothers remained affectionate and cordial until 1714, when the Bull *Unigenitus* condemning Jansenism was published in France. When Jean-Louis sided with the *appelants* protesting the Bull, a rift developed between the brothers and the regular exchange of letters came to an end. Neither was at the center of the controversy but for John Baptist, then traveling in the south of France, it was enough that Rome had spoken; the case was closed. However, when near to his death, John Baptist named Jean-Louis as the executor of his will and gave him full power to dispose of his personal effects in favor of the children of Jean-Remy, their youngest brother. Thus the misunderstanding seems to have been healed. Jean-Louis survived his older brother by five years and died in 1724.

Pierre de La Salle was six years old when his father died in 1672. After spending ten years with John Baptist in the house on the Rue Sainte Marguerite, he left to go to live with his sister Marie, the wife of Jean Maillefer. There is some controversy as to whether the move was precipitated by the hostility that broke out into the open against John Baptist for his growing involvement with the schoolteachers. At any rate, Pierre was shortly thereafter sent to Orléans to study law. He began his career as a lawyer for the parliament of Paris, then he became magistrate of the presidial court at Rheims and eventually its dean. In 1696 he married Françoise-Henriette Bachelier, a distant cousin, who bore him eight children, two boys and six girls. After the death of his brothers, John Baptist and Jean-Louis, Pierre de La Salle reorganized the civil association that had been founded to provide financial assistance to the Brothers of the Christian Schools. His wife

died in 1728 and most of his children died young, but he lived on until 1741 when he died at the age of seventy-five.

The story of Jean-Remy, the youngest of the De La Salle brothers, has only recently come to light and is overshadowed with uncertainty and tragedy. He was only a year old when his parents died; his early years were spent with his sister, Marie, and his grandmother, Perrette Lespagnol. In 1681 he was enrolled in the boarding school attached to the monastery of Sainte Geneviève in Paris where his older brother, Jacques-Joseph, had been professed three years earlier. Jean-Remy seems to have preferred an army career, however, and within ten years he was a second lieutenant in the Navarre regiment. He then exchanged his military uniform for judicial robes to become "counselor in the King's service and president of the court of royal justice in the Hall of Finance at Rheims." Two years later, in 1698, he was appointed procurator of the court by royal decree. He filled this office with honor and distinction for thirteen years. Then, in 1711, he married Madeleine Bertin du Rocheret, but from the beginning there were difficulties in the financial arrangements with her family. Whatever the cause, Jean-Remy began shortly thereafter to exhibit strange patterns in his behavior. By 1715 he had lost almost all control over his affairs; in 1717 he was declared mentally incompetent and sent away, presumably to a mental institution. He died in Paris in 1732, but the place and the circumstances are not known. From the time Jean-Remy was confined to an institution, his older brothers, John Baptist and Jean-Louis, were generous in their financial support of their sister-in-law and her three children.

OTHER RELATIVES

Mention has already been made of some of the other relatives who played an important role in the affairs of the De La Salle family. There were those appointed in the father's will to supervise and assist John Baptist in the discharge of his duties as executor and guardian: his father's brother, Simon de La Salle de l'Étang; another uncle, Antoine Frémyn, who was married to Marie de La Salle, sister of Louis and Simon; and his maternal uncle, Nicolas Moët, brother to Nicolle, wife of Louis de La Salle and mother of John Baptist. When the pressure of his theological studies and his duties as canon became too great, John Baptist surrendered the

legal guardianship over his younger brothers and sisters to Nicolas Lespagnol, his granduncle and brother of Perrette. Nicolas Dorigny, the parish priest of Saint Maurice where the first school was opened under the direction of Adrian Nyel in 1679, was a distant cousin. Long after the death of John Baptist, the Brothers in Rheims had dealings with another member of the family, Jean-François de La Salle de l'Etang. He was the grandson of Simon de La Salle, and canon of the cathedral at Rheims, doctor of theology and also rector of the University of Rheims from 1756 until his death in 1759.

The complicated interrelationships and intermarriages among the De La Salle, Coquebert, Lespagnol, Dorigny, Moët, Bachelier and Frémyn families can be found in the genealogical tables in the appropriate volumes of the *Cahiers lasalliens*.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

In his letters, John Baptist de La Salle often asked whether the schools were "doing well." For him, this expression would apply only when the classes were interesting, when they nurtured the spirit as well as the mind, when they developed willpower, faith and moral living. If these goals were to be realized, several factors were considered essential. Some pertained to the teachers or the pupils, some to educational policy, some to methods of teaching, and some to the life of a Christian.

THE TEACHERS IN THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

In place of the traditional schoolteacher who worked in isolation in front of his pupils, De La Salle substituted the notion of a teaching community. It is "together and by association" that the Brothers of the Christian Schools were expected to reflect upon their mission, draw up their programs and exchange pedagogical insights.

The Director of the community was commissioned to watch over the proper coordination of all of these elements. Since faith was the foundation of the entire Lasallian enterprise, the Director was expected to keep alive the Christian spirit of the teachers and pupils. A Brother Inspector assisted him in visiting the classes so that the Director could better advise the teachers and see to it that they continued to develop as teachers and religious. The transfer of teachers from one place to another was made relatively easy through the Brother Visitor. He was in a good position to place each teacher in the situation calculated to make the best use of his professional expertise after taking into account all the relevant circumstances. It was the good of the children rather than the personal preference of the Brother that was given prime consideration.

The burden of so many austere demands upon the teachers was made easier to bear by reason of the religious consecration of the Brothers. Their religious vows guaranteed a minimum at least of unselfish zeal "for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls."

Pedagogical competence and a perfect grasp of the subject matter to be taught were equally essential. For this reason the timetable drawn up by De La Salle provided for daily periods of personal study and preparation of lessons. Before De La Salle began his Sunday Schools, the purpose of which was to enable young men to perfect their knowledge of mechanical drawing and bookkeeping, he arranged to have private instruction given to several Brothers to prepare them thoroughly for this new undertaking. In the *School Management* he insists that every teacher become perfectly familiar with the treatise on French pronunciation. It was not enough merely to teach children how to read; they had to be taught how to read well.

However, the most important thing for De La Salle was the human and religious character of the teacher himself. He knew that children behave according to their impressions: the child is more likely to imitate what he sees than to practice what he is taught. On this point De La Salle was adamant and he would not allow any teacher to remain in a school if he were the source of scandal. Thus he writes: "The first thing you owe to your pupils is edification and good example. Do you teach your students anything that you do not practice yourself? It is important that your example should speak louder than your words."

There was no end to the qualities that De La Salle expected of the Christian teacher: love of the poor, detachment from worldly possessions, concern for the disadvantaged, energy, constancy, fidelity to one's promised word, obedience to the Church. He cited twelve particular virtues as especially appropriate for a good teacher: gravity, or seriousness without gloom that would provide a distinctive air; silence, or a calm demeanor that commands attention; humility, or simplicity that does not overwhelm the child with heavy-handed authority; prudence, or the ability to adapt to the level of the child; wisdom, or common sense that knows what is practical and not just theoretical; patience, or the toleration of imperfection in others; restraint, or self-control; mildness, or the goodness that engenders affection; zeal, or devotedness in action;

vigilance, or constant attention to guard against anything that could cause physical or moral harm to the student; piety, or the recourse to God for oneself or for others; generosity, or an unselfish spirit that never counts the cost.

Here we touch at the heart of the matter as far as De La Salle was concerned. For him, what mattered most was not what the teacher said or did but what sort of person the teacher was. An essential element of any educational system that conforms to the Lasallian spirit is a Christian conviction that integrates the teaching process with faith and action.

THE STUDENTS IN THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

The seventeenth century was not lacking in free schools and colleges, but the children of the poor rarely set foot in them. The school programs were not suited to their needs, and the teachers did not welcome poor children into their classes. When De La Salle arrived at the parish of Saint Sulpice in Paris to take over the charity school there, he found that it consisted of a workroom for the making of hosiery.

The children arrived whenever they pleased and spent most of their time gambling. They were there more to fill in the time than to learn anything. The articles they made in the workshop were sold to help maintain the school.

De La Salle transformed this scene of chaos and greed. He established a daily routine that provided for instruction as well as for manual work. Prayer ceased to be a mere formality without spirit. People in the neighborhood began to notice the change: no more children fighting in the streets, no more petty thievery, less slovenly dress and more personal cleanliness, more regard for the elderly and the sick. In a short space of time the school doubled its enrollment; the children seemed happy and showed their appreciation for the help that was given them.

A veritable social revolution had begun. Its horizons expanded when the poor schools of De La Salle were open to all children without distinction. It was a revolution that would promote genuine progress for the poor by bringing them into contact with those who were better off.

In the schools of De La Salle, complete gratuity was a fundamental principle. Even families that could afford it found them-

selves forced to accept free of charge something that they would have willingly paid for. Part of the reason was to prevent them from trying to secure a position for themselves whereby they could exert influence on and control of the school. The right to interfere in school affairs had been the privilege of the rich and De La Salle rejected it. In the beginning only poor children came because the school was still called a "charity school," a name with pejorative connotations. But De La Salle soon changed the title to "Christian School." Then the artisans began to send their children because the teachers no longer tolerated the vermin on the ragamuffins from among the poor; fleas, ringworm and lice became increasingly rare.

The writing masters and the masters of the Little Schools protested because they were losing their fee-paying pupils. De La Salle insisted on keeping his schools free even for those who could afford to pay. Poverty was not to be a criterion for admission to his schools. He felt that children of the people had a right to associate in class and to play with children of the bourgeoisie; there was no reason why the poor should be excluded from genuine and worthwhile relationships with children from the upper levels of society.

OF THE HEAD AND THE EARS:

To scratch one's head when talking, or when in company and not talking, is indeed most indecent and unworthy of a well-born person; it is also the result of great negligence and dirtiness, for this ordinarily comes from not having taken care to comb one's hair thoroughly or to keep one's head clean. This is something to which those who do not wear a wig must give their attention, not to leave dust or scurf on the head . . .

Propriety and good manners require one not to allow dirt to build up in the ears, thus, one must from time to time, clean them with an instrument made for this purpose and called accordingly an ear-swab. It is most indecent to use one's fingers or a pin for this purpose; and it is contrary to the respect one should have for the persons with whom one finds oneself, to do it in their presence; one must also have the same respect for the holy places . . . The finest ornament for the ears of a Christian is that they should be well disposed and ever ready to hear attentively, and receive with submission, instructions

concerning religion and the maxims of the holy gospel. It is for this reason that holy canon law has ordered all ecclesiastics to leave their ears completely uncovered, to remind them that they must always be attentive to the law of God, to the teachings of truth, to the knowledge of salvation, of which they are the trustees and distributors.

OF THE HAIR:

There is none who should not take for rule and for practice to comb his hair daily and one must never appear before anyone with tangled and untidy hair; above all, one must be careful not to have any lice or nits. This concern and care are of importance for children.

Although one must not too readily use powder on one's hair, which reminds one of an effeminate man, one must nevertheless take care not to have greasy hair; that is why, when one's hair is naturally greasy, one can remove the grease with bran or put powder on the comb so as to dry the hair . . .

It is even more improper to wear a badly combed wig than to have uncombed hair . . . Although one must not be over-negligent with this sort of head-dress when it is customary, it is nevertheless contrary to good breeding and to common sense for a man to spend a long time, and to go to great trouble, to adjust and arrange it.

Christian Politeness I, 2 and 3 (1703)

Little by little social discrimination began to disappear. Following the lead of the artisans, the children of the lesser bourgeoisie started coming to learn reading and writing on the same benches as the children of the poor. The concept of equal opportunity gained ground, especially since the Brothers concerned themselves more with the poor than the rich, more with those who were slow to learn than with the natively brilliant, more with the unruly than the docile, more with the rough and tumble than with the gentlemanly types.

This openness extended to non-Christians as well as to practicing Catholics. Only one condition was imposed: that all attend the classes in religious instruction. It was not a matter of trying to turn them into Christians but of informing them of the content of

Christian doctrine. Just as foreigners attending school in France are expected to study French history in order to pass the French examinations, non-Christians coming to a Christian school were expected to be informed about the nature of Christianity. There was no pressure exerted on them to convert to Catholicism. The only concern was to leave them a free and enlightened choice on the basis of objective teaching.

Faced with the problem of how to deal with those whose work and whose behavior continued to be unsatisfactory, the Brothers were encouraged to be very cautious. It was felt that unruly pupils should not be allowed to harm their companions since education, after all, is as much a matter of relationships between friends as the work of the teacher alone. Three unheeded warnings were considered a sufficient reason for dismissal. Whenever a student had to be dismissed, the Brother was told to consider himself responsible, at least in part, for the failure; to see to it that such an impasse would not occur again. It was always possible for a child who had been dismissed to return to school after a period of reflection provided there was some hope of improvement. The matter was not considered final until after a second dismissal.

CONCERN FOR THE POOR:

You are under an obligation to instruct the children of the poor, you must therefore have a very special concern for them and procure their spiritual goods as far as you can, looking upon them as members of Jesus Christ and his loved ones; the faith with which you should be animated should make you honor Jesus Christ in their persons and should make you prefer them to the rich of this world, because they are the living images of Jesus Christ, our divine master.

Show, by the care you take of them that they are truly dear to you and ask St. Nicholas, their patron, to obtain for you from God, some share of the love he had for the poor, above all a great zeal to obtain purity for them, a virtue which it is difficult to preserve in a century as corrupt as ours.

Meditation for the Feast of St. Nicholas

We are poor Brothers, unknown and of little consid-

eration to people of the world. It is only the poor who seek us out; they have nothing to offer us but their hearts disposed to receive our teaching. Let us love all that is most humiliating in our work so as to share, in some way, in the abasement of Jesus Christ at his birth. Rest assured that, so long as you remain committed at heart to poverty and to all that may humble you, you will bear fruit in souls and the angels of God will cause you to be known and will inspire fathers and mothers to send you their children to be taught; that, by your instructions, you will touch the hearts of these poor children and that most of them will become true Christians. But if you do not resemble Jesus at his birth by these two eminent qualities, you will be little known and little used, you will be neither loved nor appreciated by the poor and you will never be able to possess, for them, the character of "Savior" which befits you in your work, for you will attract them to God only in the measure of the likeness that you bear to them and to Jesus at his birth.

Meditation for the Feast of the Nativity

GROUP-CENTERED AND CHILD-CENTERED EDUCATIONAL POLICY

In the nineteenth century, too much perhaps was made of the simultaneous method in the schools of De La Salle. In fact, the original Brothers in the seventeenth century knew very well how to individualize their teaching. They were as concerned for the progress of the person as well as the group. Some aspects of the impact on the pupils of group instruction, good order and discipline have already been described. It remains to say something about the provisions for the student in his individuality.

In the Christian schools each pupil was followed up individually. With due regard for professional secrecy, the teacher studied the character of each child and drew up a statement of his good and bad qualities. These observations were not made in a judicial form but rather with affection and concern. De La Salle wanted his teachers to "have a tender love" for all their pupils. The teachers were expected to know the child well, to know his family, the company he kept and his special difficulties. In this way the child could benefit from the teacher's experience, and the teacher, in turn, had a basis to encourage the child in his efforts.

The school curriculum was planned with a carefully graded syllabus in each subject. A child who was gifted in one subject could advance more rapidly in that one than in the others. Changes from one section to another more advanced were carried out at monthly intervals so that it was not necessary to wait until the end of the school year before a student could begin a new program or join a new class.

A sharp intelligence was not the only criterion for deciding such individual promotions. Psychological factors also entered into the decision. Bright children were encouraged to take their time and deepen their knowledge rather than rush through the various grade levels. There were good reasons for this: what is learned too quickly can easily be forgotten; the ability to think reasonably is better than the accumulation of isolated facts. Furthermore, it was better for young children not to complete the whole course of studies too quickly for then they would be deprived prematurely of the relationships that the school provides and they would be thrown much too early into the adult working world. On the other hand, boys who were already thirteen or fourteen years old when they first came to school could change grades as soon as they had mastered the knowledge necessary to follow the classes at a higher level. Thus they could complete the whole course of studies in a relatively short time.

This approach was all the more possible because the tests and examinations were not designed simply to provide marks. Rather they were intended to verify that a particular course of study had actually been assimilated. The school administrators watched over this process with the greatest care. They gave encouragement and rewards but it was not the total or the average of the marks that counted so much as the quantity and quality of the knowledge each student had acquired. Individual progress was also fostered by the participation of the students in some of the responsibilities of the teachers.

*OF THE QUALITIES AND ABILITIES THAT CHILDREN MUST
HAVE IN CHANGING GRADE LEVELS:*

*It is of the greatest importance never to place a child
in a grade of which he is not capable because he would
then be put in a situation of never learning anything and
of remaining ignorant for the rest of his life. That is why*

one must not be concerned about a pupil's age or size or the time he has spent in one grade when one wishes to move him into a higher one, but only with his aptitude; thus, for instance, before making a child read words in groups, it is necessary that he should know perfectly how to read letters and syllables. With regard to young children with quick minds and ready memories, one must not move them up continually, when they are capable of it, because otherwise they would not attend school for a long enough time. This is, nonetheless, what would be desirable and what one must try to obtain as far as possible, without upsetting the parents. One must, however, avoid the two extremes: for it is not good to keep a child a long time on one lesson lest he, and his parents, become disgusted with it just as it is not fitting to promote too quickly those who are too young and too immature, or who are not capable of it, for the reasons which have already been given. The ability and the qualities a child must have to be changed from one grade to another, are the following:

Those who have shown a lack of self-control or piety or who have been careless and lazy in studying and in following lessons will be changed only with great reluctance and will be examined more rigorously and severely than the others; if they fall into the same ways, the following month, they will not be changed the next time, however clever they may be.

Those who have been absent for five full days, that is ten times, will not change grades at the end of the month even though they would otherwise be capable of so doing.

Those who read in the rules of politeness will not be changed from the first to the second grade until they have been reading by syllables for at least two months, and they will remain in the second grade for as long as they continue to attend the school.

Those of the seventh grade who are writing letters of account, will not be changed to do small and cursive writing until they have written in this seventh grade for at least six months.

Those of the first and second grades for arithmetic,

who are learning addition and subtraction, will not be changed until they have spent at least two months in each grade.

Management of Christian Schools, IV, 3 (1706?)

EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND STUDENT PARTICIPATION

While the colleges of the seventeenth century were highly organized, the primary schools enjoyed a freedom of action that is very different from the tight administrative control that is customary today. There were no laws to specify the nature and the extent of the relative roles of teachers and pupils, of teachers and parents, of schools and the professions.

De La Salle's point of view was quite clear. He insisted that children are not to be considered as pupils but "disciples"; the teacher is not a legal functionary but takes the place of the parents; the teacher is the minister of God and the Church and as such he represents Jesus Christ. God's work of creation is not something already complete. Therefore, the teacher participates in the progress of each child with a view to the good of society and the temporal and eternal happiness of each one.

The atmosphere of the popular school was radically changed by this attitude. The teacher was no longer the supreme and arbitrary authority. It was to God that all concerned looked for direction; it was from God alone that orders came; it was from the discovery of his will that policies were formulated. Vigilance and affection were to replace supervision and impersonal control. Expressions such as the following are to be found everywhere in De La Salle's writings: "Show great affection for all the students . . . watch over the children . . . have adequate concern and vigilance . . . be careful in all that relates to them . . . devote yourself wholeheartedly to their instruction."

There was no lack of firmness, however. This was evident in the consistency of the teacher's expectations. Teachers were not to give in when confronted with the fickleness or carelessness of lazy and turbulent children. Punishment was administered when necessary. Its purpose was to make amends and bring about reform. It was not applied for academic failure but only for lapses in conduct. The conditions for imposing punishment were strictly defined. Disciplinary action had to have certain qualities. It had to be disinterested, carried out for the love of God and for the child; just,

dealing with a genuine fault; proportionate to the extent of the guilt; moderate (rather less than more); calm and preferably delayed in its application; reasonable enough to be acceptable to the child.

The relationships developed through the school were recognized as natural and genuine because they derived from a real knowledge of the child himself and of his family background. Personal contact was made with the father or mother at the time the child entered the school. The Director would inquire about the parents' occupation, the behavior of the child in previous schools, the future they planned for him, his good and bad points, his special strengths, his physical condition and the way in which he practiced his religion.

The students were encouraged to take part in the running of the school in several ways. When a child missed a class, a student "visitor" would go to his home to inquire as to the reason. If the absentee were ill, the visitor would try to cheer him up and come back from time to time to see how he was progressing. On occasions when a teacher would be called away from class or again, each day before the teacher arrived in class, a pupil known as "the inspector" would take his place. The student inspector was not to speak, much less to threaten. It was his job simply to observe what was going on and give an account to the teacher. To prevent the inspector himself from distorting the facts, other students were appointed to watch over the inspector. In this way justice was done to the satisfaction of all. There were also prayer monitors, students to distribute books and papers, some appointed to help clean the school or open and close the doors. They fulfilled a function that was useful to the entire school community. The number of such posts to be filled provided a large number of students, at one time or another, with the opportunity to assume responsibilities that could form a useful part of their education.

LIST OF PUPILS IN THE FOURTH GRADE WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THEIR QUALITIES AND WEAKNESSES.

François Delevieux, aged 8½ years, has been coming to school for two years. He has been in the third grade for writing since July 1.

He is a restless boy; he shows little piety or self-

control in church and at prayers, unless one watches him. Because he is so light-headed, his main defect is lack of self-control. He is fairly well-behaved; he needs to be won over and encouraged to do well. Correction has little effect on him because he is light-headed.

He rarely misses school, except occasionally without permission through meeting dissolute companions and because he is light-headed; but he has often failed to arrive on time.

His application to work is poor; he will often gaze around and take a rest, unless one is watching him. He learns easily, but he has twice failed to be moved up a grade, from the second to the third, on account of his lack of application.

He is obedient if one has authority; if not, he is stubborn. However, he is not of a difficult nature; once he has been won over, he will do anything one requires. He is loved by his parents who are not pleased if he is punished.

He has not held any office because he is not really capable of any. But he is alert and would acquit himself well of his duties but for his often coming late.

Lambert Dulong, aged 12½ years, has been coming to school for four years. He has been in the fourth grade for writing for six months, in the fifth grade for accounts, and in the fourth for arithmetic since May 4. He is a scatter-brained, light-headed boy but he learns and retains easily. He has very little piety in church and at prayers, he rarely goes to the sacraments. His particular defect is pride and he is very upset when he is humiliated. Punishment is sometimes useful for him.

He is normally hard-working, is very attentive at catechism, at writing and arithmetic. He has always changed grades on time.

He is submissive when he meets his master; otherwise he is disobedient. His parents are not displeased when he is corrected.

He has been the reciter of prayers and the first in the bench; he performs these duties well.

From a 1706 Class Register

PEDAGOGICAL METHODS

The methods in use in the Christian Schools are to be found in the *School Management* written by the Founder himself. It is a book that cannot be summarized but must be read. There are shrewd observations, good common sense, suggestions on the subject matter of the elementary school and these can be found on every page. It is possible here to cite only a few of the elements the *School Management* contains. These are not necessarily the most important but they are important enough to illustrate some of the unique features of the Christian Schools.

The good order insisted on by De La Salle was in direct contrast to the general disorder that prevailed in the schools of the day. Good order was achieved by a detailed timetable that was exactly observed. An atmosphere of calm came from the habitual silence of the teacher. Only the pupil designated was allowed to speak; the emphasis was on action rather than talk. A small instrument known as the "signal" enabled teachers to give directions without having to use their voice. In the elementary classes it was more important to show the pupils how to read and write than to explain complicated notions.

Repetition, together with progressive intensity, was the complement to the teacher's silence. The children who thought they knew the answers to the questions which the teacher put quietly would be heard first; then those who were somewhat less intelligent would be asked next and would repeat whatever they would be most likely to forget; finally those with poor memory or concentration would be asked to reply. During this time, the more advanced would already be scanning the rest of the lesson to anticipate what they would next be asked. No one was left behind.

Uniformity and consistency of method were considered essential. De La Salle often insisted on this point. He wanted it to be possible for teachers to move from one town to another without obliging the pupils to adjust to new methods with every change of teacher. Instead, it was the teacher who was expected to pick up where the previous teacher had left off and so adapt to the pupils. The *School Management* was there to provide uniformity and continuity in the application of time-tested methods. New ideas were not, however, totally excluded. The more experienced teachers were authorized to carry on prudent experiments in method provided the innovations did not hinder the work of others or upset the

general harmony of the school. The *School Management* was periodically revised. The results of the most successful experiments were incorporated into it when the "principal Brothers" met in general assembly.

In every school of at least four Brothers, De La Salle assigned an extra teacher. In ordinary times the teacher might busy himself with the affairs of the house such as maintenance, purchases or meals. But when the occasion arose, the additional Brother would replace some teacher who was ill. During periods when the work load was heavy he might be called upon to assist those who had the heaviest part of the burden. Thus, in typical fashion, De La Salle solved the problem that was so frequent in the seventeenth century, namely, absentee teachers. The problem was due in part to the prevalence of tuberculosis, influenza, mysterious fevers and early death. One of the fundamental differences between the gratuitous schools of the Brothers and the other schools of the time was the guarantee of uninterrupted teaching throughout the school year. The only reason that absenteeism among the students began to diminish generally in the eighteenth century was the fact that a remedy was finally found for absenteeism among the teaching staff.

The curriculum in the Brothers' schools was determined from within the schools themselves and not imposed by some external authority. In this way the instruction could be geared to the situation of the children of the common people. Latin was of no practical use for manual and commercial work. The time spent in school was too short for the children of artisans and the poor to acquire even a smattering of classical culture. So the reading of Latin was relegated to a secondary place in the curriculum. French was given pride of place. Indeed this was a revolutionary policy.

EXCERPT FROM THE MEMORANDUM to Mgr. Godet des Marais, Bishop of Chartres, to justify the reasons for teaching reading by beginning with French:

Experience shows that boys and girls who attend the Christian Schools do not persevere long enough in their attendance and do not come long enough to learn to be good readers of Latin and French. As soon as they are of an age to go out to work, they are withdrawn; or they are unable to attend any longer because they need to earn

their livelihood. That being the case, if one begins by teaching them to read in Latin, the following disadvantages ensue. They withdraw before they learn to read in French or to read well. When they withdraw they can only read Latin imperfectly and they soon forget what they knew, with the result that they are never able to read either Latin or French. Finally the most harmful disadvantage is that they almost never learn their Christian doctrine.

In fact, when one begins by teaching children to read French, they at least are able to read it competently by the time they leave school. Being able to read, they can continue to educate themselves in Christian doctrine, they can learn from printed catechisms, they can sanctify the Sundays and Holy Days by reading good books and by saying their prayers well in French . . .

Finally, experience shows that nearly all those boys and girls who do not understand Latin, who have no acquaintance with letters or the Latin language, especially the common people and most of all the poor who frequent the Christian Schools, never learn to read Latin properly and, when they do read it, are simply pitiable to those who understand that language; it is therefore quite useless to spend a long time teaching a language to people who will never use it.

Quoted by Blain, I, 375-6 (1773)

Another provision of a practical nature is to be found in a textbook written by the Founder himself for training the pupils in how to act in social situations. The text was entitled, *Les Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne*. It was later translated into English with the title, *Christian Politeness*. It contains more than the rules of politeness and good manners. It is characterized throughout by a reflection on the bonds that link people together in society. Instead of teaching the history of civilizations, De La Salle preferred to train children to live as civilized persons.

The ability to read opened to children of ordinary means the door to genuine culture. The curriculum left ample room in this regard for wide personal choice and continual growth. As time

went on, the cultural background of the students in the Christian schools would evolve with the improving taste of society itself.

In the Christian schools, there was also much innovation in the matter of teaching tools. The traditional dunce cap was abolished. Although corporal punishment was not eliminated altogether, it was only to be used with the greatest discretion. The Brothers were encouraged to prefer other sanctions that involved no physical pain but that called for more thought and creativity, such as to study a text that had been poorly understood or to rewrite a page that had been carelessly scribbled.

Large wall charts were helpful in teaching reading as was the blackboard for teaching arithmetic. The desks and benches were made according to precise specifications, so that every child should have a place suitable for his size instead of benches that were uniform for an entire class. Tastefully produced maxims decorated the walls of the classroom and helped to recall important ideas to the pupils. In addition to the "signal" already described, there was a long pointer which enabled the teacher to indicate to the pupils the sentences on the wall charts they were expected to read or the place on the blackboard that would show where they went wrong in their arithmetic.

LIVING AS A CHRISTIAN

The pedagogy of De La Salle was intended to bring young persons to maturity in conformity with the purpose God had in creating them. The secular aspect of life was neither neglected nor deprived of its autonomy, but neither was it divorced from its religious significance. The life of any baptized person attending a Christian school was looked upon as a life that, by its origin and in its development, was and ought to be thoroughly Christian. The perspective of De La Salle on the Christian education of the young children in his schools was conditioned by the community ideal described in the Acts of the Apostles: "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the Apostles and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer . . . All the believers were together and they had everything in common" (Acts 2:42-44). Each element in this biblical text played its part in the educational philosophy of De La Salle.

"They devoted themselves to the teaching of the Apostles." For De La Salle this meant that catechism should be taught daily, even

on Sundays. In the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* (Number 8-1), he insists upon the daily catechism. He reminded the Brothers of the texts in the Gospels and the Acts where it is indicated that this was the practice of the apostles and of Jesus Christ himself. In the Christian school the daily half-hour of religious instruction served to enlighten the minds of the students on the truths of faith. Memorization was considered important as it still is today in cultures where there is a high rate of illiteracy such as existed among the poor in seventeenth-century France. But the Brothers were encouraged to do more, to help the students to understand what they memorized, to accept it and embrace it with enthusiasm. De La Salle continually reminded the Brothers that it was not enough to communicate religious knowledge. It had to be translated into a Christian life.

"The fellowship." An introduction to Christian living was considered more important than theoretical knowledge. Consequently Christian practices were an important element in the Christian school: the practice of charity towards classmates, respectful conduct towards teachers and parents, acts of reparation for wrong done, training in willpower, self-mastery and all that is involved in the idea of making sacrifices, as well as many other such practical exercises in Christian living.

"The breaking of bread." This was interpreted to mean the Eucharist. Daily Mass was a common feature of the period and was considered part of the normal routine for schoolchildren who had no work to hinder them. This life of fellowship with others and communion with God was accompanied by the formation of a Christian conscience. Preparation for the examination of conscience fitted naturally into the prayer that marked the end of the last class in the afternoon. It involved a brief glance over the day, a thought given to the principal actions of the day, and a few questions from the teacher to help the pupils better understand their own character. The examination of conscience constituted an exercise of great spiritual and psychological value when performed in the presence of God and with the intention of pleasing him.

"Prayer." The words of the Gospel to pray without ceasing were not forgotten in the Christian school. At every hour and half-hour one of the pupils recalled aloud the presence of God. For a few moments all work ceased, everyone became quiet and recollected, an interior prayer of love for God was suggested, then a

vocal prayer of adoration or petition was recited by all. It was a moment to think of absent friends and relatives, of the unfortunate and the unbelievers and, perhaps, to pray that one might also come to possess those virtues which others had in a high degree.

"They had everything in common." Since the poor rarely had anything to eat before they set out for school, De La Salle decided that all the pupils would eat their breakfast at school before the start of the school day. To prevent excessive display by some and the humiliation of others, it was forbidden to bring expensive foods. To obtain what was needed for those who had no bread, the teacher would collect something from those who were well provided. This sharing was done in the spirit of the Gospel. It began and ended with grace. Once more, De La Salle refused to divorce the secular from the sacred, religion from education. While the children ate their breakfast, they were able to review their lessons. This simple procedure combined an education in charity, with training in good manners through the vigilance of the teachers. It was a practical example of the way to live as a Christian in a particular circumstance of daily life. It all contributed to help the child to learn how to rise above himself.

Thus, for John Baptist de La Salle, Christian education was not merely a matter of instruction; it was an apprenticeship for life.

*OF THE THINGS TO WHICH THE TEACHER MUST ATTEND
DURING BREAKFAST AND AFTERNOON COLLATION:*

The teacher must see to it that the pupils bring something every day for their breakfast and afternoon collation; a small basket will be put in a special place in the classroom so that, without being obliged to do so, the children may put in it the bread they have left over, when they feel so inclined, and this bread will be distributed to those who are poor. The teacher will take care that they do not give up so much of their bread that they do not have enough left for themselves; those who have bread to give will raise their hands and show the piece of bread they are giving, and a pupil whose duty it is to receive the alms will go and collect them and, at the end of the meal, the teachers will distribute the bread to the poorest, and will

exhort them to pray for their benefactors. They will also take care that they do not throw any kernels or shells on the floor, but they will oblige them to put them in their pockets or in their bags.

They must also tell them that if they are requested to eat in school, it is to teach them to eat correctly, politely and with moderation, and also to say grace before and after eating . . .

They will not allow their pupils to give anything to one another, even from their breakfast or to exchange their food.

Management of Christian Schools II, 1 (1720)

OF THE ALMONER:

There will be in each class a boy whose duty it is to collect alms, that is to say, the bread to be given for the poor during breakfast and the afternoon collation.

Towards the end of breakfast and afternoon collation, he will take the basket placed in the classroom for this purpose. He will go along the benches from one side of the class to the other, in silence, and taking care never to ask anyone for anything.

When he is going through the class in the performance of this function, he will walk slowly and quietly, and will take care never to look fixedly at any other pupil.

When the offerings have all, or nearly all, been collected, he will first bow to the teacher and then present the basket to him, for distribution.

Each teacher will take care that the one in charge of this office will be reverent and kind towards the poor, above all that he is not greedy and that he does not give anything to anyone, much less take for himself anything that is in the basket.

Idem. II, 3 (1706?)

Part Three

De La Salle Diary

(This section is a translation of the Répertoire chronologique prepared by Brother Léon de Marie Aroz, FSC, and published in Volume 41-1 of the Cahiers lasalliens (Rome, 1977). Here and there additions have been made from the manuscript version of a more detailed chronology prepared by Brother Léon to cover the period from 1661 to 1683. This is scheduled to appear in Volume 41-2 of the Cahiers.)

DE LA SALLE DIARY A CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF SAINT JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE*

1651, April 30	Birth of John Baptist de La Salle at Rheims in the mansion known as <i>La Cloche</i> .
1661, October 10	He begins his secondary studies in the Collège des Bons Enfants in Rheims.
1662, Before March 11*	He receives the sacrament of Confirmation.
1662, March 11	In the chapel of the Archbishop of Rheims he receives the clerical tonsure from Jean Malevaud, Auxiliary Bishop and Vicar General of Clermont.
1663, April 1	Dramatic presentation at the Collège des Bons Enfants of the tragedy entitled "The Martyrdom of Saint Timothy." John Baptist is one of the actors.
1664, May 23	Louis de La Salle, father of John Baptist, purchases a new house on the Rue Sainte Marguerite.
1665, April 12	Graduation ceremonies at the Collège des Bons Enfants. John Baptist is promoted with honors.

*In the absence of firm documentation, the asterisk indicates a presumptive date.

1665, June 24	Louis de La Salle, Nicolle Moët, his wife, and their children leave <i>La Cloche</i> on the Rue de la Chanvrerie and move to their new home on the Rue Sainte Marguerite.
1665, October 10	The school year begins at the Collège des Bons Enfants. John Baptist begins courses in the liberal arts.
1666, September 3	John Baptist is godfather for Pierre de La Salle, his brother.
1666, July 9	Following the resignation of Pierre Dozet, John Baptist is named Canon of the Cathedral Church of Rheims.
1666, October 10	John Baptist begins courses in rhetoric at the Collège des Bons Enfants.
1667, January 7	He takes possession of his canonry, stall #21 on the right-hand side of the choir in the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Rheims.
1667, October 10	He begins courses in philosophy (logic and ethics) at the Collège des Bons Enfants.
1668, March 17	In the chapel of the archbishop's palace at Rheims, John Baptist de La Salle receives minor orders.
1668, October 10	Resumption of the school year at the Collège des Bons Enfants. John Baptist begins courses in the philosophy of nature and metaphysics.
1669, April 22	John Baptist is a legal witness to the burial of his brother, Simon.
1669, July 8	Sworn letters testifying to the successful completion of the courses in philosophy are issued at the University of Rheims.
1669, July 10	John Baptist is awarded the degree of Master of Arts, <i>Summa cum laude</i> , from the University of Rheims.

- 1669, October 1 John Baptist begins his studies in the School of Theology at the University of Rheims. He attends courses taught by Michel de Blanzzy and Daniel Egan.
- 1670, July 15 Report from Professors De Blanzzy and Egan that John Baptist has successfully completed the first courses in theology.
- 1670, October 18 John Baptist de La Salle enters the Seminary of Saint Sulpice in Paris. He attends the course of Guillaume de Lestocq on the Trinity and that of Jacques Despériers on the Incarnation.
- 1671, July 19 Death of his mother, Mme. Nicolle Moët de La Salle. She is buried the same day in the cemetery of the parish of Saint Symphorien.
- 1671, July 27 Report of the successful completion of the two courses at the Sorbonne: *De Incarnationis mysterio* and *De Sanctissimae Trinitatis mysterio*.
- 1671, October 18 Return to Paris after the summer vacation. John Baptist attends De Lestocq's course on Grace and Despériers' courses on the Sacraments in General and Baptism.
- 1672, April 7 Louis de La Salle, father of John Baptist, becomes ill.
- 1672, April 8 The last will and testament of Louis de La Salle names John Baptist as the guardian of his younger brothers and sisters.
- 1672, April 9 Death of Louis de La Salle and burial in the cemetery of the parish of Saint Symphorien.
- 1672, April 12 John Baptist withdraws from the courses at the Sorbonne because of the death of his father. The following week

	is spent at the Seminary of Saint Sulpice attending the Holy Week exercises.
1672, April 19	John Baptist de La Salle leaves the Seminary of Saint Sulpice for the last time.
1672, April 23	De La Salle arrives in Rheims to take charge as guardian of his younger brothers and sisters.
1672, after Easter	John Baptist returns to the School of Theology of the University of Rheims and the courses of De Blanzay and Egan.
1672, April 27	The fiscal procurator of Rheims confirms John Baptist as the guardian of his brothers and sisters.
1672, April 28	De La Salle begins an inventory of the movable properties, title deeds and documents pertaining to the will and testament of his deceased father.
1672, May 11, 12	Rose-Marie de La Salle, sister of John Baptist, is accepted as a postulant in the royal Abbey of Saint Etienne-les-Dames at Rheims.
1672, May 30	John Baptist arranges for the sale of the movable properties provided for in the will and testament of his deceased father.
1672, June 11	De La Salle is ordained subdeacon by Ladislas Jonnart, Archbishop of Cambrai.
1672, June 24	Marie de La Salle, sister of John Baptist, and Jean-Remy, his brother, go to live with their grandmother on the Rue du Marc.
1672, September 5	Notice in the name of John Baptist de La Salle to declare vacant the office of magistrate for the presidial court of Rheims, the office that was held by his late father, Louis de La Salle.

1672, October 10	Return to the School of Theology at the University of Rheims.
1672, December 6	Testimonial letters from the Sorbonne indicating the successful completion of the courses <i>De Gratia</i> , <i>De Sacramentis in genere</i> and <i>De Baptismo</i> .
1673, before February 6	Trip to Beaurieux (Aisne), Guyencourt (Aisne), La Neuville (Marne), and Gueux (Marne).
1673, June 18	Trip to Saint Quentin (Aisne) to collect back rent owed by the religious Sisters of Origny (Aisne).
1673, July 3	Testimony to the successful completion of the course in theology at the College of Saint Denis in the University of Rheims.
1673, October 10	Classes resume. John Baptist enrolls in the first-year program of the superior course in philosophy.
1674, October 10	John Baptist begins the second year of the superior course in philosophy.
1675, March 13	Court order of the State Council bringing judgment against John Baptist de La Salle and his associates in the lawsuit involving the monks and the convent of Chartreuve (Aisne) in the matter of the ownership of the Rouland mill and the course of the river running by it.
1675, May 24	De La Salle goes to Villette near Fismes (Marne) to inspect the mill belonging to him.
1675, June 2	De La Salle arranges to sell to his cousin, Louis Frémyn, the office of magistrate to the presidial court of Rheims that had belonged to Louis de La Salle, father of John Baptist.
1675, August ³¹	John Baptist defends his preliminary

thesis and is granted the degree of Bachelor of Theology.

- 1675, August 22 De La Salle purchases a house on the Rue Sainte Marguerite.
- 1676, January 20 At Châlons-sur-Marne (Marne), in the presence of Rogier, a royal notary of Rheims, John Baptist de La Salle, Remy Favreau and André Clocquet agree to have De La Salle exchange his position as canon for the office of pastor of the parish of Saint Pierre-le-Vieil. The offer was withdrawn by the incumbent pastor, André Clocquet, on the following March 3.
- 1676, after March 13 De La Salle leaves Rheims for Paris with dimissorial letters from the archbishop (March 9) and the metropolitan Chapter of Rheims (March 13).
- 1676, March 21 De La Salle is ordained deacon by Francois de Harlay de Campvallon, the Archbishop of Paris. He returns to Rheims to continue his theological studies.
- 1676, June 2 Nicolas Lespagnol is named legal guardian of younger brothers of John Baptist de La Salle.
- 1676, about July 15* De La Salle defends his thesis in patristic theology and in moral theology at Saint Patrice in Rheims.
- 1676, July 30 Judgment of the bailiff of the archdiocese of Rheims requiring De La Salle to render an account of his guardianship.
- 1676, October 2 De La Salle appears before Jean-Baptiste Barrois, the bailiff of the archdiocese and archdukedom of Rheims, to give an account of his guardianship.
- 1676, October 9 De La Salle is chosen as the elector rep-

- representing the University of Rheims for the election of the Procurator of the Nations of France and Lorraine.
- 1677, February 13 A judicial inquiry is undertaken at the request of De La Salle against André Malot, a master barrel maker.
- 1677, May 16 John Baptist de La Salle and his sister, Marie, lease for three years to Jean Vuiberg, a master barrel maker, a house on the Rue Vieille Serrurerie in Rheims.
- 1677, October²⁴ Jacques-Joseph de La Salle, brother of John Baptist, enters the novitiate of the Canons Regular of Sainte Geneviève in Paris.
- 1678, January²⁵ John Baptist de La Salle makes a spiritual retreat of ten or twelve days at the Seminary of Rheims to prepare himself for ordination to the priesthood.
- 1678, January 26 De La Salle delivers the customary eulogy and receives the licentiate in theology.
- 1678, April 9 De La Salle is ordained priest by Charles Maurice Le Tellier, Archbishop of Rheims.
- 1678, April 10 De La Salle celebrates his first Mass in the Lady Chapel of the Cathedral of Rheims with his family and a small group of friends attending.
- 1678, April 19 Nicolas Roland, spiritual director of John Baptist, falls ill.
- 1678, April 23 Nicolas Roland dictates his will. John Baptist de La Salle and Nicolas Rogier are named executors.
- 1678, April 27 Death of Nicolas Roland.
- 1678, April 29 Burial of Nicolas Roland in the crypt of the chapel of the Sisters of the Infant Jesus.

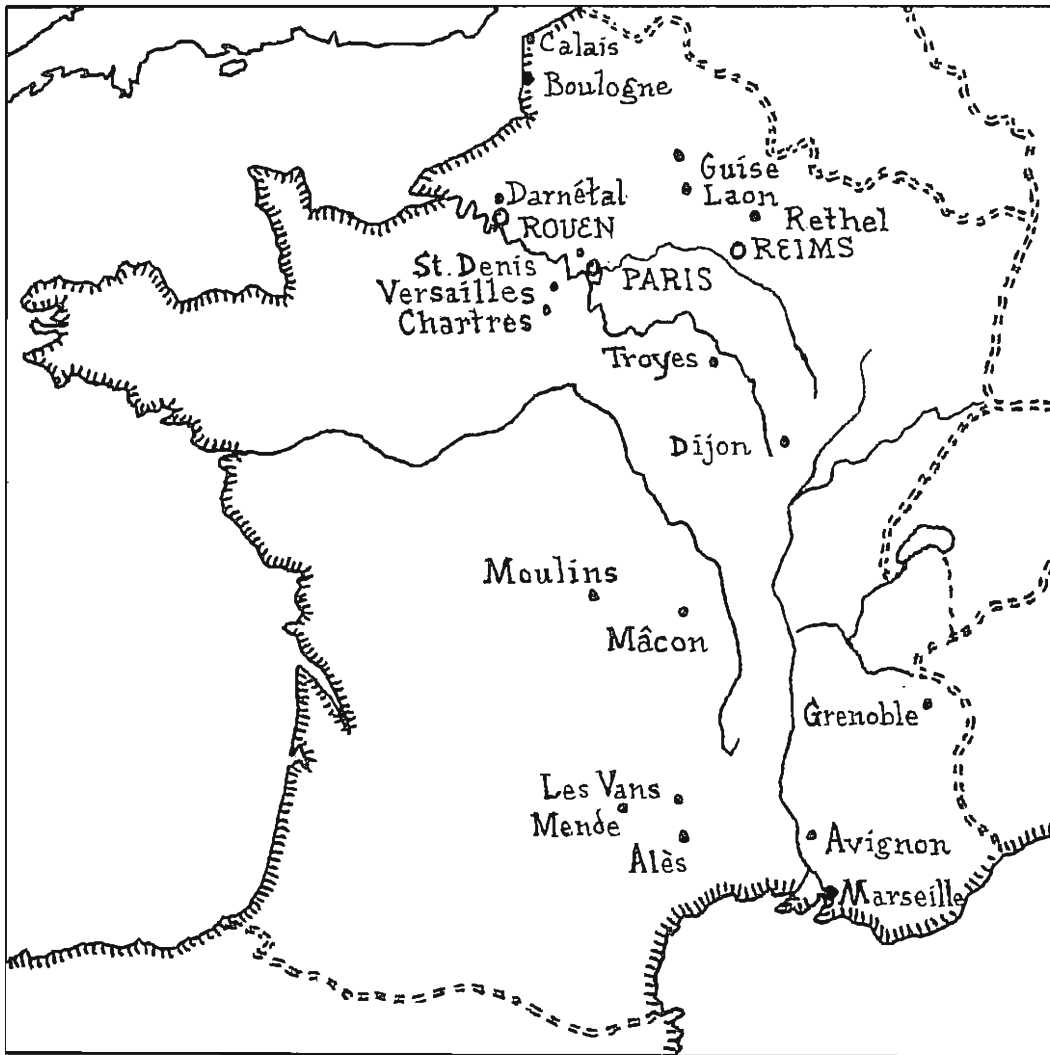
1678, June 29	De La Salle is granted faculties to preach and hear confessions in the archdiocese of Rheims.
1678, August 5	De La Salle is appointed canon of the week.
1678, August 7	He begins to perform in that capacity. He celebrates Mass in the chapel of the Vidame and assists at Matins there.
1678, August 7	He restores his tonsure and beard.
1678, August 9	He presides at the procession around the cloister.
1678, August 11	He officiates at the Mass of the Blessed Sacrament.
1678, August 11	Meeting of the city council. De La Salle reads the will of Nicolas Roland and explains the proposal to establish the Sisters of the Infant Jesus in Rheims.
1678, August 12	In accordance with the proposal of John Baptist de La Salle and Nicolas Rogier, the principal pastors of the city, the abbots of several of the abbeys and the superiors of religious houses, the deputy and the aldermen of the city of Rheims approve the establishment of the Sisters of the Infant Jesus.
1678, August 13	De La Salle sings the solemn Mass at the high altar of the Cathedral of Notre Dame.
1678, August 14	De La Salle goes in procession for the ceremony of the blessing of the holy water. This is the termination of his functions as canon of the week.
1678, October 13	Marie de La Salle asks Nicolas Lespagnol to send 1,500 livres to the monastery of Sainte Geneviève in Paris to defray the expenses of the religious profession of her brother, Jacques-Joseph de La Salle.

- 1678, December 27 John Baptist de La Salle receives the abjuration of heresy from Suzanne Périeux, a native of Elmoru (Marne).
- 1679, before March 15 Meeting between John Baptist de La Salle and Adrien Nyel, who had just arrived from Rouen, at the convent of the Sisters of the Infant Jesus on the Rue du Barbâtre (today #48).
- 1679, about March 15 John Baptist de La Salle invites into his home on the Rue Sainte Marguerite both Adrien Nyel and his fourteen-year-old companion.
- 1679, March 20 Marie de La Salle (1654-1711), sister of John Baptist, is married to Jean Maillefer (1651-1718) in the church of Saint Hilary.
- 1679, April 2 and ff. John Baptist de La Salle consults with Claude Bretagne and Jacques Callou and then holds a meeting of the principal priests of the archdiocese of Rheims to consider the possibility of opening a Christian school in Rheims.
- 1679, April 15* Adrien Nyel and his fourteen-year-old companion open the first Christian school for boys on the Rue Saint Maurice (today #12-14) in the parish of the same name.
- 1679, July Interview between John Baptist de La Salle and Madame Lévesque de Croyères (Catherine Leleu) to arrange for the opening of a Christian school in the parish of Saint Jacques.
- 1679, August De La Salle draws up a written account of the assets and income of the Daughters of the Community of the Holy Infant Jesus.
- 1679, August 16 De La Salle formally denounces César

	Thurat, one of his fellow canons, for misconduct.
1679, September	The opening of two classes in the Christian school in the parish of Saint Jacques.
1679, October 31	De La Salle prepares a complete written account of the assets, houses, farms, rentals and income belonging to the Community of the Holy Infant Jesus.
1679, Christmas	The teachers in the Christian schools move into a house rented for them for eighteen months by John Baptist de La Salle.
1680, April 14-20	De La Salle has the teachers remain in his own home from morning prayer until evening prayer.
1680, April 26	A request for a hearing before the Cathedral Chapter by one of the canons, César Thurat, to answer the accusations leveled against him by De La Salle.
1680, after Easter	Final oral examination and the conferral of the degree of Doctor of Theology on John Baptist de La Salle.
1680, June 3	Official judgment against Canon César Thurat on the charges of misconduct brought against him by De La Salle.
1680, June 24	De La Salle invites Adrien Nyel and his schoolteachers to share the same table with himself and his brothers in the house on the Rue Sainte Marguerite.
1680, August 24	Property leased by De La Salle to Jean Pariset, a blacksmith in Beine (Marne).
1680, near Christmas	De La Salle goes to Paris to consult with Father Barré, his friend and adviser.
1680-1681, winter	While returning from the countryside in a blinding snowstorm, De La Salle loses his way and falls into a ditch (either at

	Champigny or on the road to Château-Thierry).
1681, March 21	His sister, Rose-Marie, dies in the convent of Saint Etienne-les-Dames.
1681, April 2-9	De La Salle conducts a spiritual retreat for the schoolteachers in the house on the Rue Sainte Marguerite.
1681, May 12	Judgment against Canon César Thurat on his appeal against the condemnation for misconduct.
1681, June 24	De La Salle brings the schoolteachers to live in his house on the Rue Sainte Marguerite.
1681, November 6	Visit of Louis XIV to Rheims.
1682, February 17	De La Salle promises indemnification for the Sisters of the Infant Jesus at Rheims.
1682, February 18	De La Salle offers to the city of Rethel the funds necessary to provide housing for the schoolteachers.
1682, March 1*	Opening of the school at Rethel.
1682, after March 28	De La Salle goes to Rethel to meet the Duke of Mazarin.
1682, June 20	De La Salle writes to the mayor and aldermen of Château-Porcien (Ardennes) concerning the possibility of a school there.
1682, June 24	John Baptist de La Salle and the schoolteachers move to a rented house on the Rue Neuve opposite the convent of Sainte Claire.
1682, June 30	Opening of the Christian school at Château-Porcien (Ardennes).
1682, July 30	De La Salle sells the house on the Rue Sainte Marguerite to François Favart, the younger.

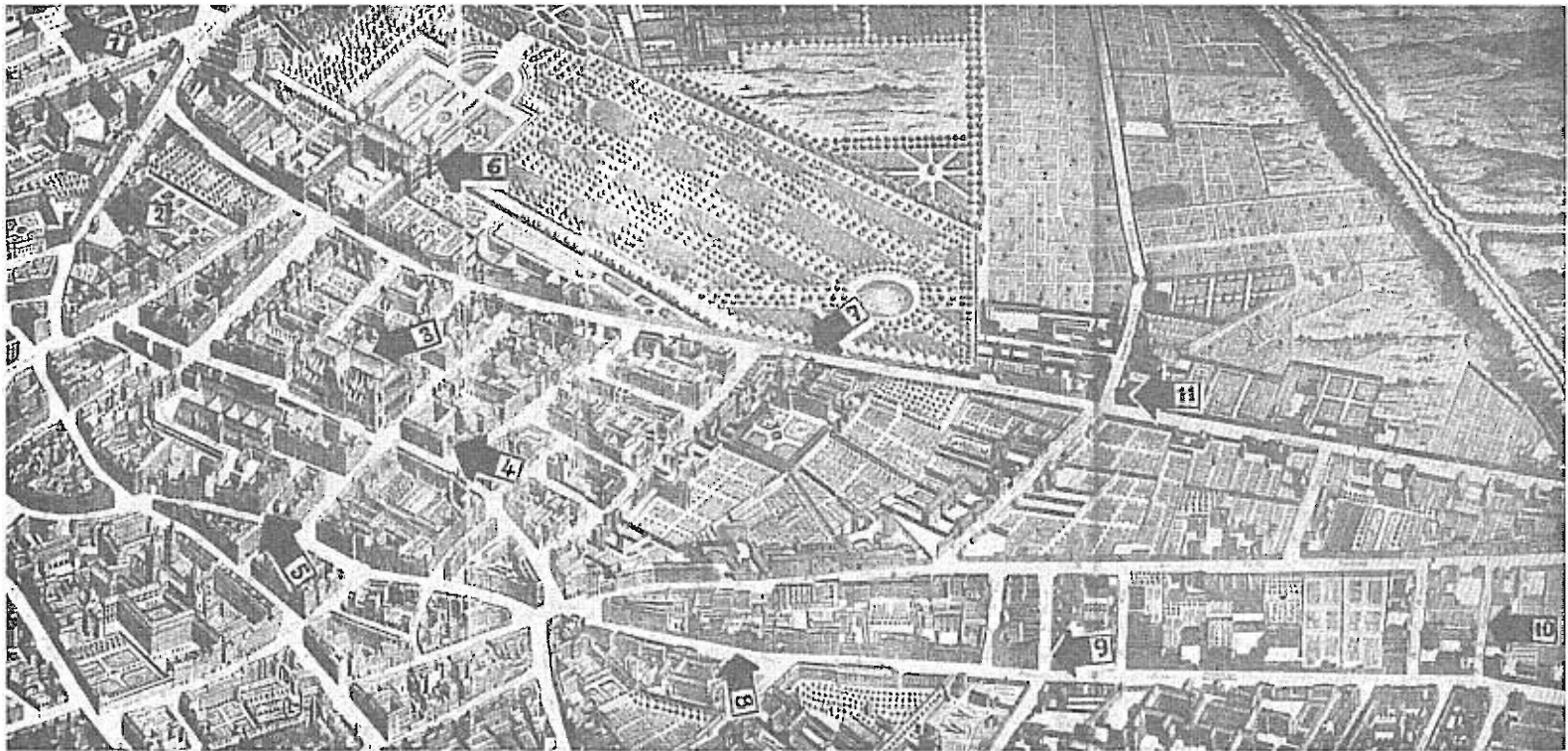
BROTHERS' COMMUNITIES AT THE DEATH OF THE FOUNDER (1719)



1682, July	Opening of the Christian school at Guise (Aisne).
1682, October	Opening of the Christian school at Laon (Aisne).
1682, October 16	De La Salle receives faculties to absolve reserved cases in the diocese of Rheims.
1683, March 23	Remy Favart, a priest of Rethel-Mazarin (Ardennes), secures a house there in the name of De La Salle with the purpose of opening gratuitous schools, providing accommodations for the teachers and, possibly, a training college for rural schoolteachers.
1683, July	De La Salle goes to Paris and stays at Saint Sulpice. There he meets his brother Jean-Louis de La Salle, and the pastor of the parish, M. de La Barmondière. He promises the pastor to open a Christian school in the parish.
1683, July	Jacques Callou, superior of the seminary at Rheims, authorizes De La Salle to resign his canonry.
1683, August 16	After securing the approval of the archbishop, De La Salle formally resigns his canonry in favor of Jean Faubert.
1683, November 12	Charles Maurice Le Tellier, Archbishop of Rheims, approves the constitutions of the Sisters of the Infant Jesus of Rheims.
1683-1684, winter	De La Salle distributes his personal fortune to the poor of the city.
1684, March 24	De La Salle is legal witness to the burial of Brother Cosme Boiserins.
1684, April 1*	De La Salle preaches a parish mission in Rheims.
1685, June 26	De La Salle is legal witness to the burial of Brother Jean Lozart.

- 1685, June-August* De La Salle replaces a Brother in the parish school of Saint Jacques and teaches class there.
- 1685, August 20 De La Salle goes to Renwez (Ardennes). He signs a contract with Armand-Charles, the Duke of Mazarin, to provide for the establishment of a training college for schoolteachers.
- 1685, September 22 De La Salle returns to Renwez, and the contract signed on the previous August 20 is canceled. A new contract is signed with the Duke of Mazarin to provide for the training of three young men in a house near the park De La Fère.
- 1685, October De La Salle goes to Paris to ask his brother, Jean-Louis de La Salle, who is a student there, to act as an intermediary with M. Compagnon in the matter of establishing a Brothers' school in Paris.
- 1686, June From Ascension Thursday until Trinity Sunday, De La Salle conducts a communal retreat and general assembly of the principal Brothers. At its conclusion, in the community oratory, De La Salle and twelve Brothers bind themselves for one year by a vow of obedience.
- 1686, June The Brothers make a pilgrimage to Notre Dame of Liesse. De La Salle celebrates Mass and distributes Communion to the twelve Brothers. They renew the vow of obedience made the day before.
- 1686, August-September* De La Salle goes to Louviers (Eure) and there goes into retreat at the Abbey of the Garde-Châtel with the discalced Carmelites.
- 1686* De La Salle resigns the office of superior. The ecclesiastical authorities reject the appointment of Brother Henry

- L'Heureux. De La Salle resumes the office of superior.
- 1687 De La Salle goes to visit the house at Guise (Aisne). When he embraces the Brother Director, who had been sick, the Director recovers instantly.
- 1687* The opening on the Rue Neuve in Rheims of a community of younger men as a sort of training school for postulants from fourteen to seventeen years of age.
- 1687 Opening on the Rue Neuve in Rheims of a training college for schoolteachers from the rural areas.
- 1687, July 1 De La Salle acquires the Bajot house on the Rue Montboyel in Rethel-Mazarin.
- 1688, February 24 De La Salle arrives in Paris accompanied by two Brothers. They take up residence in the Rue Princesse and begin to direct the school of M. Compagnon.
- 1688, April M. de La Barmondière, accompanied by M. Mettais, visits the school on the Rue Princesse. De La Salle is given charge of the school and hosiery factory of M. Raffond.
- 1688, September* M. de La Barmondière asks De La Salle to withdraw from the school on the Rue Princesse, but when the time comes to leave he begs De La Salle to delay his departure.
- 1689-1690* In response to M. Baudrand, De La Salle composes his *Mémoire sur l'Habit*.
- 1690, March 18 De La Salle obtains a court order restraining the Masters of the Little Schools.
- 1690, June 6 Judgment on appeal in favor of John Baptist de La Salle against the Writing Masters.



PARIS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

1. The Sorbonne. 2. Rue des Fossés-Monsieur-le-Prince. 3. Church of Saint Sulpice. 4. Seminary of Saint Sulpice. 5. Rue Princesse. 6. Luxembourg Palace and Gardens. 7. Rue de Vaugirard. 8. Rue de Sèvres. 9. Rue Saint-Placide. 10. Rue de la Barouillère. 11. The Grand' Maison.

- 1690 Opening of a second school in Paris in the Faubourg de La Grenouillère on the corner of the Rue du Bac and the Rue de Lille near the Pont Royal.
- 1690, June 28 De La Salle leases a room adjacent to the house on the Rue Princesse together with the yard connected to it.
- 1690, July 22 Judgment against De La Salle on the appeal of the Masters of the Little Schools. Order is sent to the lower court.
- 1690, July 22 Decision of the parliamentary court but its execution is delayed until after the feast of Saint Andrew. The books, tables and benches that had been seized are to be released to De La Salle and his associates on condition that they be used to teach the children in their schools as charity cases and that they receive no pay for it.
- 1690 De La Salle becomes ill. Despite his great weakness he returns to Rheims on foot. As soon as he arrives at the Rue Neuve he is confined to his bed. When his grandmother comes to visit him, he insists on going to the parlor to greet her there.
- 1690 De La Salle returns to Rheims a second time. When he learns that a Brother in Laon is seriously ill, he goes to comfort him in his dying moments. Back in Rheims, De La Salle learns that Brother Henry L'Heureux is ill and in serious condition. De La Salle leaves at once for Paris. After travelling for three days he arrives in Paris at midnight only to find that Brother Henry had been buried two days earlier. Once in Paris, De La Salle is again confined to bed for a period of six weeks with bladder trouble. He re-

	ceives the last sacraments. Finally, a Dutch doctor named Helvétius prescribes a treatment that he says will either cure the patient or kill him. De La Salle agrees to the treatment and recovers.
1691, September*	De La Salle rents a large and enclosed piece of property at Vaugirard near the church of Saint Lambert.
1691, October 8	De La Salle gathers together at Vaugirard the Brothers who have three or four years of experience in the Society in order to renew them in the spirit of their vocation. During the course of the retreat which lasted for ten days from October 8-18, De La Salle learns that his beloved grandmother had died on October 7.
1691, October-November*	De La Salle initiates the practice of reddition whereby the Brothers are required once a month to give an account of their attitudes and dispositions.
1691, November 21	John Baptist de La Salle, Brothers Gabriel Drolin and Nicolas Vuyart make a perpetual vow of association to accomplish and maintain the establishment of the Society of the Christian Schools.
1692, August 31	Bishop Paul Godet des Marais intercedes with Archbishop de Harlay of Paris to obtain formal recognition for the community of De La Salle and the authorization to open a novitiate.
1692, September 1	De La Salle acquires the Bonvarlet house on the Rue Montboyel in Rethel (Ardennes).
1692, October 31*	Opening of the novitiate at Vaugirard near Paris.

1692, November 1*	Ceremony of the taking of the habit for the first time at Vaugirard. Six postulants don the habit of the Brothers of the Christian Schools or the brown robe of the serving Brothers.
1693, June 23	An undivided share of the estate of his grandmother, Perrette Lespagnol, is allocated to De La Salle.
1693	De La Salle moves the novitiate back to Paris. The inconveniences and the lack of suitable living conditions at Vaugirard made the transfer inevitable.
1693, November 23	De La Salle acquires the Audry house on the Rue Grande-Rue in Rethel.
1694, May 30-June 6	De La Salle convokes an assembly of the principal Brothers at Vaugirard and obtains their approval of the nearly definitive text of the Common Rule.
1694, June 6	De La Salle, together with twelve Brothers chosen by him, makes vows of obedience, association and stability in the Society.
1694, June 7	An election is held to determine the Superior General of the Society. De La Salle is confirmed as Superior.
1694	Return of the novitiate to Vaugirard.
1694, July 9	De La Salle pays the back rent for the yard adjoining the Nau house on the Rue Princesse since the pastor of Saint Sulpice refused to pay.
1694-1695, winter	De La Salle suffers attacks of rheumatism. He undergoes the treatment prescribed by Doctor Helvétius who has him stretched out over an improvised grill. Once his health improves, De La Salle undertakes to visit all the houses of the Society.

- 1695 M. Baudrand, pastor of the parish of Saint Sulpice, refuses to pay for the support of the Brothers and tries to have them move to the Rue Guisarde. De La Salle is opposed to the idea.
- 1695, July 30 Negotiations between John Baptist de La Salle, represented by his brother, Jean-Louis, and Jean Maillefer concerning their share of the inheritance from the estate of Perrette Lespagnol.
- 1695, August 3 De La Salle receives from Françoise Audry the sum of 300 livres to pay for the house he recently bought on the Grande-Rue in Rethel.
- 1695, August 18 Antoine de Noailles is named Archbishop of Paris to succeed Archbishop François de Harlay who died on August 6.
- 1695, September 17th John Baptist de La Salle and M. Bauyn celebrate Mass in turn in the chapel of Saint Lambert at Vaugirard.
- 1695 At Vaugirard, De La Salle receives several priests and devout lay persons who ask to make a spiritual retreat under his direction.
- 1694-1695 De La Salle does extensive work on the *Common Rule*, the *School Management* and the *Rules of Christian Politeness*.
- 1696, February 13 Joachim Trotti de La Chétardye is appointed pastor of the parish of Saint Sulpice.
- 1696, February 20 De La Salle receives faculties to preach and to hear confessions in the archdiocese of Paris.
- 1696, March 19 Death of M. Bauyn, spiritual director of De La Salle.
- 1696, March 21 Claude de Précélles gives approval for

	the <i>Exercises of Piety for Use in the Schools</i> , written by De La Salle.
1696	De La Salle writes a manual for those in charge of young teachers.
1697, March 27	Permission is granted to John Baptist de La Salle, "a priest of the diocese of Rheims," to celebrate Holy Mass in the chapel of the novitiate at Vaugirard.
1697, April-May	The Count of Charmel presents to De La Salle an altar antependium and a chasuble for the novitiate chapel.
1697, June 16	Faculties are given to Paul Godet des Marais, Bishop of Chartres, to bless the novitiate chapel at Vaugirard.
1697, August 7	The Sorbonne gives approval for the <i>Exercises of Piety for Use in the Schools</i> . The diocesan censor gives the <i>nihil obstat</i> .
1697, September*	Opening of a Christian school comprising four classes on the Rue Saint Placide in Paris.
1698, January 16	Claude de Précelles gives approval for the <i>Instructions and Prayers for Holy Mass</i> written by De La Salle.
1698, April 18	Transfer of the novitiate from Vaugirard to the Grand-Maison near the monastery of the Carmelites.
1698, May*	Opening of a boarding school for about fifty young Irish students at the Grand-Maison.
1698, May-June*	Introduction of a course in vocational training at the Grand-Maison.
1698, July 3	The school in the parish of Saint Placide is vandalized by the Masters of the Little Schools. A letter of protest is sent to the president of parliament by Mme. de Maintenon.

- 1698-1699* Opening of a Christian school in the parish of Saint Martin in the Faubourg Saint Marcel. Two Brothers are assigned there.
- 1699 Opening of a "Christian Academy" or Sunday School for boys at the Grand-Maison.
- 1699 Opening of a Christian school on the Rue des Fossés-Monsieur-le-Prince.
- 1699 Opening at the Grand-Maison of the Saint Cassian house as a training college for schoolteachers in the rural areas. Brother Nicolas Vuyart is appointed Director of the school.
- 1699 Reorganization of the administrative structure of the Society. De La Salle appoints a Brother Secretary to the Superior, a Brother Procurator and Econome, a Brother in charge of the formation of young teachers for the rural areas and a Brother Infirmarian.
- 1699 De La Salle takes charge of the two classes in the school on the Rue de l'Ourcine in Paris.
- 1699 King James II visits the boarding school of the Brothers where the young Irish exiles are lodged. The Brothers entreat him to use his influence with the pope to obtain canonical approval for the Society.
- 1700, February 26 Death of Louis Tronson, superior of the Seminary of Saint Sulpice and spiritual director of De La Salle.
- 1700* De La Salle composes the *Rule of the Brother Director of a House of the Institute*.
- 1700, August 11 De La Salle and his associates purchase

- two adjoining houses on the Rue Neuve in Rheims.
- 1701, April 22 De La Salle signs a lease for the property on the Rue de l'Ourcine in Paris.
- 1702 De La Salle writes a memorandum to Paul Godet des Marais, the Bishop of Chartres, on the reasons for using French instead of Latin as a vehicle for instruction in the charity schools.
- 1702, summer De La Salle sends Brothers Gabriel and Gerard Drolin to Rome in order to show his fidelity to the pope.
- 1702, November 24 Ellies Du Pin gives approval for the *Exercises of Piety for Use in the Christian Schools*.
- 1702, 1st Sunday of Advent Visit of the Vicar General to the Grand-Maison.
- 1702, December Negative report of Edme Pirot, Vicar General, to Cardinal de Noailles. The archbishop notifies De La Salle that he may no longer continue as superior of the Brothers.
- 1702, December 4 Approval for the book of prayers and instructions for the sacrament of Penance written by De La Salle.
- 1702, December 26 Approval for the *Rules of Christian Politeness*.
- 1703, January 5 Approval by Ellies Du Pin for the *Hymnbook for Use in the Christian Schools*; Part III of the *Duties of a Christian*; and the *Book of Christian Instruction*.
- 1703 Visit to the Rue Princesse by the Abbé Bricot as the assigned delegate of the archbishop who names him superior of the Brothers. The Brothers object and

- then accept him but in total silence. Accusations against De La Salle continue.
- 1703, January 28 Royal approval authorizing the publication of several works by John Baptist de La Salle: *Duties of a Christian*; *Christian Instruction on the Duties toward God*; *Exercises of Piety for Use in the Schools*; *Christian Instruction on External Worship*.
- 1703, early July* Sale of the Grand-Maison because De La Salle is unable to pay the rent.
- 1703 De La Salle withdraws to the Rue de Charonne in the Faubourg Saint Antoine near the monastery of the Dominicans of the Cross.
- 1703, August 20 De La Salle moves the novitiate to the Rue de Charonne.
- 1703, October* Opening of a Christian school on the Rue de Charonne.
- 1703, November 25 De La Salle gives general and special power of attorney to Nicolas Barthélemy, his lawyer and proxy at Rethel, to acquire a house there across from the monastery of the Sisters of the Congregation.
- 1703, December Reopening of the Sunday School on the Rue de Charonne.
- 1704, January The Writing Masters and their lawyer, M. Barbier, lodge a complaint against the Brothers with the Lieutenant General of the police.
- 1704, January 15 Nicolas Barthélemy, attorney-at-law in Rethel, acting in the name of John Baptist de La Salle, purchases a house opposite the Sisters' church.
- 1704, February 7 Acting on orders from the Lieutenant General of the police, the commissioners

- Charles Bizoton and François de La Jare appear at the Rue de Charonne, seize all the classroom equipment and prepare a formal report.
- 1704, February 9 De La Salle is summoned to appear before the Chamber of police of the Châtelet.
- 1704, February 14 Judgment of the precentor of Notre Dame against De La Salle. He is forbidden to teach, to engage or assign teachers or to conduct schools without the express permission of the precentor of Notre Dame.
- 1704, February 22 De La Salle is condemned by default. He is allowed to accept into his schools only those students whose parents are genuinely poor. He is allowed to teach only those subjects that conform to the occupation of the parents. He is sentenced, besides, to pay a fine of 50 livres.
- 1704, February 22 Closing of the training school for teachers from the rural areas and the adjoining school in the parish of Saint Martin.
- 1704, March 19 De La Salle appeals the judgment of the previous February 14 given by the precentor of Notre Dame.
- 1704, April 6 De La Salle cancels the lease for the property on the Rue Princesse.
- 1704, April 22 Order of the parliamentary court authorizing the Community of the Little Schools of the city of Paris to proceed against De La Salle for conducting classes and schools where writing is taught.
- 1704, May 4 Petition from De La Salle to M. d'Argenson, Lieutenant General of the police, for the recovery of the school furnishings that had been confiscated.

- 1704, May 30 Judgment of the Lieutenant General of the police of the city of Paris against John Baptist de La Salle, defendant appealing the sentence of the precentor of Notre Dame given on February 14, 1704.
- 1704, June 7 Petition of the Guild and Community of Writing and Arithmetic Masters of the city of Paris to the Lieutenant General of the police to allow them to cite before him De La Salle, Ponce, Nicolas and fifteen other Brothers, demanding the sanction of the King's household against them.
- 1704, July 11 The Lieutenant General levies a fine of 100 livres against De La Salle and 50 livres against the other Brothers.
- 1704, August 29 The Lieutenant General of the police confirms the decrees of the preceding February 22 and July 11. Under penalty of the law, the Brothers are forbidden to live together, to constitute themselves as a society or a commercial organization until such time as they receive and have registered letters patent.
- 1704, September 20 Claude Charlet sells a house on the Rue des Dames Religieuses in Rethel-Mazarin to "Monsieur De La Salle, a priest and Doctor of Theology living in Paris, as certified by his brother, Pierre de La Salle."
- 1704, September 30 Louis Lambert of the Guild of Writing Masters demands to have executed the decrees against De La Salle granted by the Lieutenant General of the police on February 22 and July 11.
- 1704, November* De La Salle leaves for Darnétal near Rouen.

- 1704, December 4 Second petition of the Masters of the Little Schools to have the judgment of the precentor of Notre Dame declared equally applicable to De La Salle and to Brothers Ponce, Jean, Joseph and the other Brothers.
- 1705, February 5 Notice to appear before the Council is sent to De La Salle as an appellant against the judgment of the precentor of Paris in favor of the Masters and Community of the Little Schools as complainants.
- 1705, February 27 The documents are served in the suit between De La Salle and the Masters of the Little Schools.
- 1705, March* De La Salle goes to Rouen and has an interview with the archbishop, Jacques-Nicolas Colbert.
- 1705, March 26 Petition by the Masters of the Little Schools against Brother Ponce and associates. They are summoned to show proof that they have nothing in common with De La Salle.
- 1705, April 3 M. Court, Vicar General of Archbishop Colbert, gives authorization to De La Salle to establish his schools in Rouen.
- 1705, April 13 Formal permission is given to print all the works prepared by De La Salle for use in the schools, including instructions and prayers for use at Mass and for confession, a hymnbook, school prayers, a catechism, office book, treatises on Christian duties and Christian politeness.
- 1705, May 19 De La Salle arrives in Rouen accompanied by two of his Brothers. They present themselves at the office of the General Hospice for the Poor.

1705, July 11	De La Salle rents a house known as Saint Yon in the Faubourg of Saint Sever in Rouen.
1705, August 4	In Paris the Writing Masters vandalize the school on the Rue Princesse.
1705, late August	De La Salle reconstitutes the novitiate at Saint Yon.
1705, September	De La Salle reinstates at Saint Yon the required annual retreat.
1705, September 22	Completion of the manuscript copy of the <i>Common Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools</i> .
1705, November 10	M. Sanadon, a notary at Rouen, witnesses a legal document concerning the use of the furnishings at Saint Yon.
1705, November 19	M. de La Chétardye, pastor of the parish of Saint Sulpice, intervenes against the Writing Masters. He arranges to have the confiscation of the furnishings from the Rue Princesse revoked.
1705, December 30	Paris is declared to be the legal residence of De La Salle.
1704-1706	De La Salle completes Part One of the <i>Management of the Christian Schools</i> .
1706, February 5	Court order issued by the Court of Parliament. It denies the appeal of De La Salle against the precentor of Paris. De La Salle is forbidden to conduct schools for the instruction of youth, to establish any community that could be called a training college for teachers in the primary schools, or to post any special title on the door of the schools. In addition a fine of 12 livres is imposed.
1706, March 22	An agreement is signed between De La Salle and Jacques Hecquet, pastor of the parish of Saint Sever in Rouen.

1706, May-June*	De La Salle enters into an extended retreat with the Carmelites on the Rue de Vaugirard.
1706, July	De La Salle withdraws the Brothers from the schools in the parish of Saint Sulpice.
1706, July 15	De La Salle deposits with M. Lemer-cié, a notary of Paris, the original copies of the lease for the property on the Rue Princesse.
1706, October 6	The Brothers once again take charge of the classes in the schools of Saint Sulpice.
1706, November 17	De La Salle attempts to keep his community attached to the parish of Saint Sulpice.
1706-1707*	Very early one morning, on his way to the church of Saint Roch near the Tuileries, De La Salle falls on an iron spike fixed in the ground. He is unable to walk for six weeks. He receives for the first time a visit from the young Abbé Jean-Charles Clément.
1707, January 10	In the will of Claude Pasté there is left to De La Salle, "living in Paris," a house on the Rue des Deux Anges in Rheims.
1707, August 2	De La Salle promises the office of the General Hospice for the Poor in Rouen to provide ten Brothers each year to conduct four schools for the poor and also to provide for the instruction of the poor boys confined in the hospice.
1707*	De La Salle sends to Jean-Charles Clément a memorandum on the finality of the Institute.
1708	Testimony is given by Jacques Raffy, a merchant of Rouen, concerning a mul-

- tiplication of loaves of bread at Saint Yon that was attributed to the intervention of De La Salle.
- 1708, February 11 De La Salle appoints Jean-Louis, his brother, as proxy to act for him in all that concerns the inheritance from the late Marguerite Bachelier.
- 1708, after April 14 De La Salle visits the Procurator General of the Lazarists who has just returned to France from Rome in order to inquire after Brother Gabriel Drolin.
- 1708, July 15 Written obedience given by De La Salle to Brother Joseph assigning him to make the visitation of the houses of the Institute in Champagne.
- 1708, July Scarcity of food forces De La Salle to transfer the novitiate from Saint Yon to the Rue de La Barouillère in Paris.
- 1708, September 15 A letter attests to the presence of De La Salle in Rheims.
- 1710, December 23 De La Salle goes to Troyes.
- 1711 De La Salle composes the *Collection of Short Treatises for the Use of the Brothers*.
- 1711, after February 26 De La Salle goes to Provence to make the visitation of the houses in the South.
- 1711, August 24 De La Salle is in Marseilles. He announces his intention to return to Paris.
- 1711, September 1 De La Salle leaves Marseilles for Avignon.
- 1711, September 2 De La Salle leaves Avignon for Alès, Les Vans and Mende.
- 1711, September²¹ De La Salle goes to Epernay "during the grape harvest of 1711."
- 1711, November 16 Obedience to Brother Joseph from De La Salle to make the visitation to the houses of the Society.

1711, December 11	Routine permission given to De La Salle for a new publication of almost all his writings.
1711, December 24	De La Salle appoints Brother Thomas as his proxy to arrange for the lease of two central buildings surrounding a large courtyard in the parish of Saint Nicaise near the house of the Minims in Rouen.
1712	Jean-Baptiste Blain is named ecclesiastical superior of the Brothers of the Christian Schools at Saint Yon.
1712, January 23	De La Salle is cited to appear in court to answer charges in the matter of his relation to the Abbé Clément.
1712	De La Salle writes a memorandum to explain the intent of some papers and thirteen letters of the Abbé Clément that had come to the attention of the authorities.
1712, February 18 st	De La Salle leaves Paris for the South.
1712, March 27 th	De La Salle is in the area around Mende and d'Alès.
1712, April th	De La Salle stays for a time with Pierre Meynier, the pastor of the parish in Gravières.
1712, April-May	De La Salle returns to Mende.
1712, May 5	The Châtelet annuls all the documents signed by the Abbé Clément, thus obliging De La Salle to cancel the debt of 5,200 livres, the sum advanced to the Abbé and to reimburse him for the 3,200 livres that the Abbé had spent out of his own money.
1712, May 31	Formal act of annulment petitioned by Julien Clément, father and guardian of Jean-Charles Clément, Abbé of Saint Calais, against the priest De La Salle who did not appear in court.

1712, end of May*	De La Salle is in Vans. He visits M. Jauffret, a painter, who wanted to do his portrait.
1712, after June 8 th	De La Salle arrives at Marseilles with the intention of setting out from there to Rome. The bishop of Marseilles asks him to remain to discuss the possibility of a new foundation.
1712, June 15	Judgment of the Châtelet against De La Salle assigning the ownership of the house at Saint Denis to Louis Rogier and requiring De La Salle and the Brothers to leave the house, pay the rent and satisfy all the demands of the Clément family.
1712, July	De La Salle again makes plans to go to Rome.
1712, August-September	De La Salle opens the novitiate at Marseilles. He makes a pilgrimage to Notre Dame de la Garde together with the young candidates for the religious life.
1712, December	De La Salle again makes plans to go to Rome.
1712, December 12	De La Salle receives faculties to hear confessions, except for those of regular religious, to absolve reserved cases, and to preach, except in Advent and Lent, in the diocese of Marseilles.
1713, March 9	A draft version of the daily schedule is prepared for inclusion in the <i>Common Rule</i> .
1713, April*	De La Salle experiences "the dark night of the soul." He spends forty days in retreat at the monastery of Sainte Baume on the plain of Saint Maximin.
1713, June-July*	De La Salle is at Mende. He stays with the Capuchins. He visits Mlle. de Les-

	cure and provides her with a model rule for the "Ladies of the Christian Union" which she had just founded.
1713, early August*	De La Salle arrives in Grenoble. He reworks the text of the <i>Duties of a Christian</i> .
1713, August 9	De La Salle sends the text of the <i>Duties of a Christian</i> to the printer in Grenoble.
1713, September*	De La Salle sends Brother Jacques to Paris as his delegate to find out what is happening there. During this time he replaces Brother Jacques in the classroom.
1713, September*	De La Salle stays for three days at the monastery of the Grand-Chartreuse.
1714, March*	De La Salle suffers attacks of rheumatism. He spends several days at Parménie, one of the country places owned by the Abbé de Saleon.
1714, April 1	The principal Brothers of Paris, Versailles and Saint Denis command De La Salle "in the name of the Body of the Society" to which he had vowed obedience "to resume without delay the responsibility for the general governance of the Society."
1714, April*	De La Salle consults Sister Louise of Parménie on the question of his return to Paris. She tells him: "This work is your responsibility. Persevere in it until the end of your days."
1714, June*	De La Salle confers the religious habit and the name Brother Irenée on Claude-François du Lac de Montisambert. De La Salle then leaves for Mende and from there goes to Lyons where he venerates the relics of Saint Francis de Sales.

- 1714, June* After leaving Lyons, De La Salle goes to Dijon. He teaches school there for four days.
- 1714, June* After his return from Dijon, De La Salle arrives in Rheims where his presence soon becomes known.
- 1714, August 10 De La Salle arrives at the Rue de la Barouillère in Paris: "Here I am. I have come. What do you want of me?"
- 1715, October* De La Salle leaves Paris and goes to Saint Yon.
- 1716 De La Salle goes to Calais to visit M. Gense.
- 1716, March-December Illness incapacitates De La Salle for a period of ten months.
- 1716, May* De La Salle receives M. Gense and M. de La Cocherie at Saint Yon.
- 1716, July At the request of Brother Barthélemy, De La Salle visits the houses of the Brothers in the North.
- 1716, July M. de La Cocherie and the Marquis de Colbert, the governor of Boulogne, receive De La Salle with great ceremony and honor.
- 1716, August 15 At the invitation of the Dean of Calais, De La Salle celebrates the Mass of the Assumption of Our Lady. In the sermon, the Dean fails to make mention of the feast and De La Salle chides him for this.
- 1716, December 4 With the approval of Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain, the ecclesiastical superior appointed by the Archbishop of Rouen, De La Salle signs the papers authorizing Brother Barthélemy to visit all the houses of the Society.
- 1717 De La Salle has the chapter on regular observance inserted in the *Common Rule*.

1717	De La Salle goes to Rheims where his presence soon becomes known.
1717, May 16	De La Salle convokes an assembly at Saint Yon of sixteen Brother Directors of the twenty-two houses of the Society for the purpose of electing a Superior General. De La Salle yields the presidency of the meeting to Brother Barthélemy.
1717, May 23	Trinity Sunday. De La Salle and the Brothers renew their vows. Brother Barthélemy is elected Superior General and the assembly is formally closed.
1717, October 4	De La Salle goes to Paris to take over the Rogier legacy. He stays at the Seminary of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet.
1717, November 25	De La Salle acquires the Champion house on the Rue de Montboyel in Re-thel.
1717, December 11	De La Salle issues a sworn statement concerning the title to four rental agreements for property in the city of Rouen.
1718, January 30	De La Salle sends to Brother Barthélemy the four rental agreements granted by the city of Rouen.
1718, February 19	De La Salle suffers renewed attacks of rheumatism that become increasingly more painful.
1718, March 5	De La Salle leaves the Seminary of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet.
1718, March 7	De La Salle returns to Saint Yon.
1718, June 12	On Trinity Sunday, De La Salle renews the vow of obedience. He refers to himself as "priest, Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and officiating chaplain of Saint Yon."

1718, August 11	De La Salle turns over to Brother Barthélemy, the Superior General, all of his books that had been kept in the Brothers' library in the parish of Saint Sulpice.
1718, August 17	De La Salle revises the <i>Method of Mental Prayer</i> for the benefit of the novices.
1718, September 5	De La Salle hands over to Brother Barthélemy, Superior General, all of the contracts, notarized documents, wills, letters, agreements and other materials relevant to the houses of the Society of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.
1718, October 31*	The bakery at Saint Yon is destroyed by fire. The spread of the flames is arrested by the prayers of De La Salle.
1718, November 14	De La Salle hands over to the Superior General the title to all the furnishings at Saint Yon.
1719	M. Louis Dujarier-Bresnard, the pastor of the parish of Saint Sever in Rouen, accuses De La Salle of breaking the agreement of March 22, 1706.
1719, February	De La Salle realizes that his health is declining.
1719, March 19	De La Salle celebrates Mass for the last time.
1719, April 3	De La Salle revises his holographic will.
1719, April 5*	Archbishop d'Aubigné of Rouen notifies De La Salle that his faculties in the diocese of Rouen have been revoked. On the same day De La Salle receives Holy Communion in the form of Viaticum.
1719, April 6	De La Salle receives the last sacraments and makes his final recommendations to the Brothers. As he begins to lose consciousness, the prayers for the dying are

- said. From midnight until 2:00 AM he endures a cruel agony but regains consciousness.
- 1719, April 7 The agony begins again at 3:00 AM. At 4:00 AM De La Salle makes an effort to rise as if going to meet someone, then joins his hands, raises his eyes to heaven and dies. He is twenty-three days short of being sixty-eight years old.
- 1719, April 7-8 The body of De La Salle is laid out until the afternoon of April 8 and is surrounded with burning tapers.
- 1719, April 8 The body of De La Salle is buried in the Saint Suzanne chapel of the church of Saint Sever in Rouen.
- 1719, April 17 Quasimodo Monday. A solemn Mass for the repose of the soul of De La Salle is celebrated by the clergy and students of the minor Seminary of Saint Patrice.
- 1734, July 6 Exhumation of the remains of the late John Baptist de La Salle, priest, former Canon of the Cathedral Church of Notre Dame at Rheims, Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

