



The Messenger

A LASALLIAN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE



Seclusion in the South

Dear friends, welcome to Issue One of "The Messenger" for 2015. We continue with our Lasallian Professional Reading and "The Work is Yours". We have only 3 chapters remaining and then we will be taking another direction. As always, we begin by answering our discussion questions from the previous issue - Seclusion in the South. DLS's renewal of tours of the South of France were difficult and dangerous because of rugged, steep mountains and deep cut canyons. There were also roving bands of Camisards / resistance fighters, who loved picking on travelling priests. "God be blessed, I am back from Rome," a statement DLS made after departing for Rome and only returning a few hours later after being persuaded to stay and open a new school in Accoules. A rare example that DLS had a sense of humour! Sainte Baume is a sacred grotto, 30 miles from Marseille, halfway up a vertical cliff where Mary Magdalen is said to have spent the last years of her life in repentance. It is here that

the biographers say DLS experienced his - "Dark night of the Soul". Conflicted by disputes with the Brothers and the authorities, DLS decides to withdraw. He first has an extended stay in Grenoble, endures the harsh winter of 1713-1714, and then makes a spiritual retreat to Parmenie (a hermitage built on a medieval monastery). There he receives great advice from Sister Louise - a devout and determined visionary. It is here at Parmenie, that DLS receives the "Command to Return" by his Brothers. They beseech his return and he acquiesces.

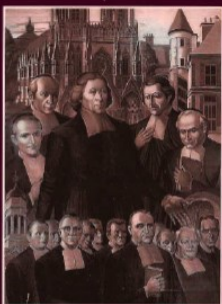
Issue 2: Return and Retirement

Live Jesus in our hearts

Mr. Kane Raukura (Chairperson - NZMAC)

THE WORK IS YOURS

The Life of
Saint John Baptist de La Salle



Luke Salma, FSC
Second Edition



Q1. On DLS's return to Paris, does he resume control of the society? What occurs?

Q2. What was the important event of 1717?

Q3. As DLS retires, what is his outlook on further participation in the institutes affairs?

Q4. Do the Brothers gain Saint Yon?



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Return and Retirement (1714–1718)

When John Baptist de La Salle reappeared at the house on the Rue de Barouillère in Paris in August 1714, he found the Brothers fully expecting that he would immediately begin to function again as Superior of the very troubled Society. Surprisingly, he did no such thing. He let it be known almost at once that he had no intention of assuming an active role in directing the day-to-day affairs of the Brothers. He was content to resume his sacramental ministry for them, give advice where it was needed and asked for, but otherwise to leave the details to Brother Barthélemy to work them out as best he could with the help of the senior Brothers. The presence of the Founder seemed to be enough to restore a semblance of stability and order where before there had been confusion and chaos.

A Backlog of Problems in Paris

During the two-year period that De La Salle was secluded in the South and out of contact with the center of the Institute, the situation of the Brothers, in Paris particularly, had degenerated to the point where the structure of the Society was threatened from within and from without. Although Brother Barthélemy had been appointed Director of Novices before De La Salle's sudden departure in 1712, it was only gradually and by default that he became more or less recognized as the lawful Superior to act in the place of De La Salle. Even then, several Brothers used this ambiguity as an excuse to go their independent way as Brothers, or to begin to look for a more stable situation outside the Institute.

Under these conditions, Brother Barthélemy could hardly be blamed if he was less than forceful in dealing with the pastor of Saint Sulpice, Father De La Chétardie, and his deputy, the nominal ecclesiastical superior appointed by the archdiocese, Father De Brou. Although not a Sulpician himself, De Brou worked closely with De La Chétardie to help further the plans to bring the Brothers increasingly under clerical control.

One step at a time, and using pressure tactics that included withholding the Brothers' salaries (or restoring them insofar as the Brothers cooperated), these clerics had managed to get the Brothers to agree to a plan that would have totally destroyed the Society as the Founder had created it. They envisioned the separation of the Paris schools from the rest of the Institute and a federation of independent houses with Brothers assigned permanently to one house. The central novitiate was to be suppressed; novices would be recruited only as needed within each house.

Things got to the point where Brother Barthélemy was actually persuaded to arrange for the appointment of an ecclesiastical superior for each of the Brothers' communities. It was on this occasion that Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain became ecclesiastical superior of the Brothers in Rouen. Fortunately, most of those so appointed interpreted their role merely as intermediaries with the diocesan authorities. By and large they had the good sense to stay out of the way and not to interfere with the internal affairs of the communities or the schools.

By contrast, the more aggressive approach of men like De La Chétardie and De Brou constituted a genuine threat to the basic structure of the Lasallian foundation. De Brou went so far as to submit to the archdiocesan authorities for the approval of Cardinal Noailles a totally new set of rules for the Brothers, redesigning the Institute according to the ideas of De La Chétardie. Fortunately, the Brothers became aware of this maneuver and used what influence they had to counteract it. The vicar-general of the diocese, Father Vivant, wisely set the dossier aside and wrote to Father De Brou that it seemed best for the moment not to make any changes in the structure of the Society.

Meanwhile, all attempts to contact De La Salle in seclusion in the South proved to be in vain. No one in Paris knew for sure where he was. Most of the letters sent to him were never delivered; those that he did receive, he did not attempt to answer, whether by design or out of discouragement. It was this impasse that led the principal Brothers in Paris, in April 1714, to order the Founder to return in virtue of the vow he had made to obey the body of the Society.

While De La Salle was trying to decide how to respond to this command, the news arrived that Father de La Chétardie, the pastor of Saint Sulpice, had died on June 29, 1714. Commenting on this event, Blain remarks: "His great enemy no longer lived; God had called him while the servant of God was still at Grenoble. The news of the former's death which he had received there had hastened his return to Paris, for he would not have dared to come back if that man had still been alive. De La Salle himself stated this to some of the Brothers he trusted."

The Situation at Mende

One concrete example of the ambiguity that prevailed during the absence of the Founder was the degenerating situation of the community at Mende. It may be recalled that during his last visit to Mende, De La Salle was thwarted in his attempt to transfer the two malcontents, Brothers Médard and Isidore. They had so won over both the mayor and the bishop that neither De La Salle nor the Director, Brother Henri, could effectively challenge them in any way. Within a short time, however, Brother Médard left Mende without authorization to go to Avignon, but he died en route in the community at Alès. Brother Isidore went off to Paris, where he reported to Brother Barthélemy his version of the events, with special emphasis on his complaints against Brother Henri, the Director. Brother Barthélemy evidently believed him. Meanwhile Brother Henri was left alone in Mende.

In this crisis, Father Martineau, the pastor at Mende, passing over Brother Barthélemy altogether, wrote instead to Father De Brou at Saint Sulpice to get replacements for the Brothers who had abandoned the school. Fortunately, by this time De La Salle had returned to Paris and was able personally to deal with the situation. Two more Brothers were sent to Mende to work with Brother Henri in the school. Eventually, Brother Henri and one of his companions, Brother Nicolas, gave their lives working heroically with the victims of the plague that devastated Mende in 1721.

One Year in Paris

De La Salle resided with the Brothers at the Rue de Barouillère in Paris for just about a year, remaining as much as possible in the background, avoiding direct confrontation with Father De Brou, whose ascendancy over the Brothers was rapidly eroding in the presence of the Founder, and allowing Brother Barthélemy to continue to function for all practical purposes as the Superior.

On one quite dramatic occasion during this period De La Salle conducted an exorcism on a former officer in the German army, a convert from Lutheranism named Armestad, who had presented himself for admission to the novitiate. The young man had a history of dealing with satanic forces that apparently were unwilling to loosen their grip on the poor fellow. Old war wounds that had completely healed were reopened, the blood flowed freely, he went into contor-

tions; paralyzed with fear and pain he lapsed into unconsciousness only to be assaulted with dreadful visions.

The Brothers feared for his life and had the last sacraments administered. This helped for a time, as did the occasional invocation of Our Lady, but then the phenomena would recur. When he was given the habit of the Brothers in the hope that this would provide permanent relief, the demons seemed to redouble their fury. Finally, De La Salle, convinced that these were manifestations of diabolic power, quietly and without fanfare performed the ritual of exorcism prescribed by the Church. This left the young novice in peace at last, but shortly thereafter he decided to leave the Institute.

The Return of the Center to Saint Yon

In 1715 the situation in Paris was becoming increasingly complicated: King Louis XIV died on September 1; Cardinal Noailles and the Jansenist party were gathering support to protest the Bull *Unigenitus*, which had finally been promulgated in France; Father De Brou continued his efforts to preserve a measure of control over the Brothers in the Paris schools; the cost of living in Paris, especially of food, was making it increasingly difficult to support the novitiate financially. In October De La Salle decided it was time that Brother Barthélemy should return to Saint Yon with the three or four novices that still remained.

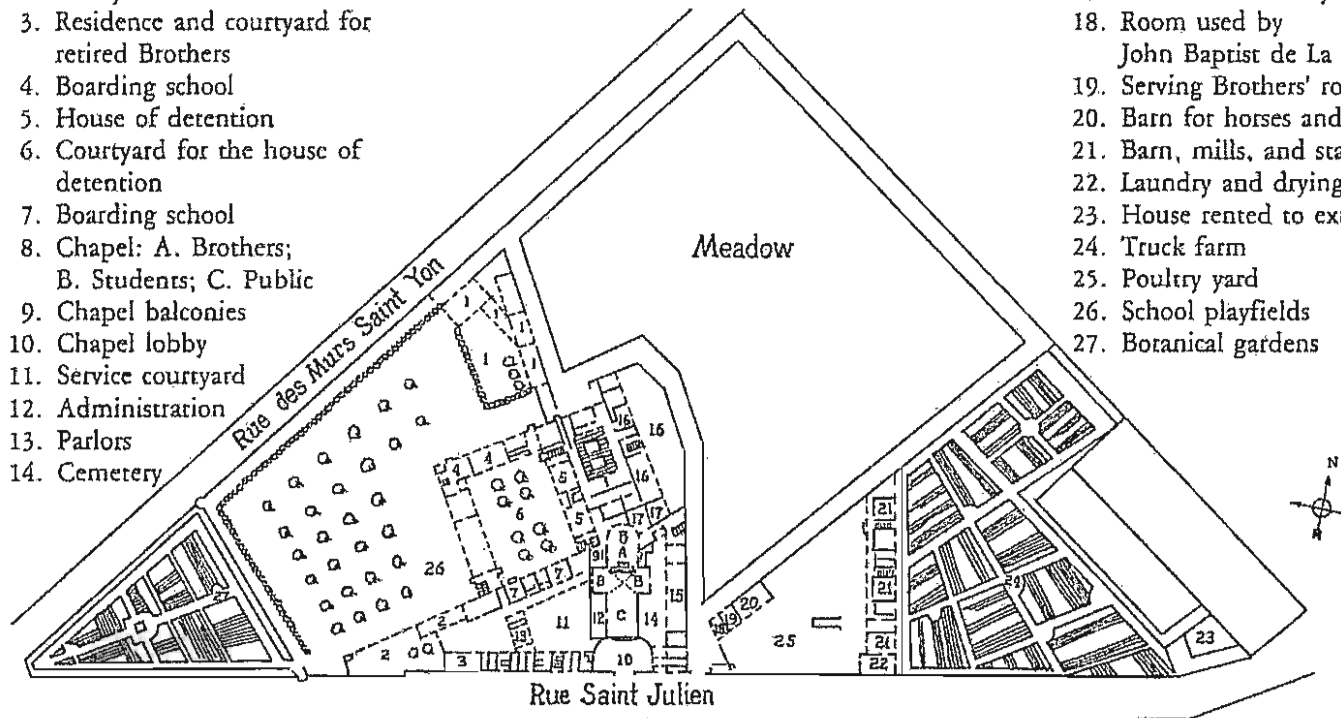
De La Salle himself returned to Saint Yon a month later, after being detained by Father De Brou, who still counted on his presence to stabilize the situation of the Brothers in the capital. Having arrived in Rouen, De La Salle presented himself to Archbishop D'Aubigné, who, ever since the encounters at Chartres, had remained cool to the Brothers in general and the Founder in particular. When the archbishop dismissed him summarily, the Founder accepted the humiliation with characteristic equanimity.

Although De La Salle had hoped to spend his remaining days in solitude and prayer, assisting as best he could with the formation of the novices, he soon found himself in continual demand as a confessor and spiritual director. Parish priests in particular sought his advice in dealing with hardened sinners, such was the reputation of De La Salle for ministering effectively to persons of this kind.

1. Vocational, technical shops
2. Boarders' infirmary and courtyard
3. Residence and courtyard for retired Brothers
4. Boarding school
5. House of detention
6. Courtyard for the house of detention
7. Boarding school
8. Chapel: A. Brothers; B. Students; C. Public
9. Chapel balconies
10. Chapel lobby
11. Service courtyard
12. Administration
13. Parlors
14. Cemetery

Ground Plan of the Manor of Saint Yon
Based on an Engraving of 1777

15. House of detention
16. Novitiate and courtyard
17. Brothers' infirmary
18. Room used by John Baptist de La Salle
19. Serving Brothers' room
20. Barn for horses and cows
21. Barn, mills, and stalls
22. Laundry and drying room
23. House rented to externs
24. Truck farm
25. Poultry yard
26. School playfields
27. Botanical gardens



Visit to Calais and Boulogne

Among those who came to pay their respects to De La Salle at Saint Yon were two laymen who had been instrumental in bringing the Brothers to the channel ports, Monsieur Gense of Calais and Monsieur De La Cocherie of Boulogne. Both were known for their religious devotedness and their zeal for orthodoxy. At Calais, Gense had become a veritable watchdog defending the orthodox faith; at Boulogne, De La Cocherie followed a routine of spiritual exercises that was all but monastic in duration and rigor. Blain tells us that De La Salle received them at Saint Yon and took them to a remote bower in the garden where he had a meal served to them. Their conversation lasted through the greater part of the day. It would not be idle to speculate that the problem of Jansenism, which was spreading in the channel cities, might have been one of the principal topics discussed.

The Jansenism question, as well as respect for the obligations of mutual hospitality, may have been part of the reason why these gentlemen were able to persuade De La Salle to come north and return the visit. He could then see for himself the work of the Brothers in the schools at Calais and Boulogne. Encouraged by Brother Barthélemy, the Founder agreed to make the trip.

At Boulogne De La Salle was received enthusiastically by the people of the town and by the dignitaries as well, including the Marquis de Colbert who had been so instrumental in providing the labor and the materials for building the school. The Founder might have stayed longer had not De La Cocherie prepared an elaborate reception and banquet in his honor, which only caused the humble priest acute suffering and embarrassment.

At Calais, he found that the schools were flourishing again. There had been a brief period following the death of Louis XIV in 1715 when public funds were withheld, and it seemed doubtful whether private funding would be adequate to keep the schools going. But the royal grants had meanwhile been restored, and the classes designed especially for the seafaring population were assured of a promising future.

Contrary to his usual custom, De La Salle agreed on more than one occasion to take meals at the home of M. Gense. He might have visited more often if that gentleman had not engaged an artist to try to paint the Founder's portrait from behind a screen. Once De La Salle became aware of what was happening, he made a hasty departure and did not return again.

Since De La Salle was still in Calais on August 15, 1716, he was invited by the Dean of Calais to officiate at the solemn High Mass.

The dean himself preached the sermon, but made no mention of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose feast it was. De La Salle was astonished at this omission and did not hesitate to make his displeasure known to the dean after the service. The dean promised to make amends at the evening Vespers and did so to the great surprise of the congregation. They were not accustomed to hearing their pastor speak so devoutly of Our Lady. The fact is that the dean was inclined to the Jansenist view that tended to belittle the role of Mary in the plan of salvation.

Jansenism continued to be a problem for the Brothers in the channel cities. The Bishop of Boulogne, Pierre de Langle, whose diocese also included Calais, was one of four French bishops—another was Cardinal Noailles—who publicly appealed against the papal bull *Unigenitus* condemning Jansenism. He tried to win the Brothers over to his cause, at first by flattery and then by threats, but the Brothers remained staunchly faithful to the directives of the Founder to avoid theological controversy and to adhere to the official papal teaching.

Preparation for the Succession

Even though De La Salle did not concern himself directly with administrative affairs, his presence among the Brothers was sufficient to dissipate once and for all any thought of a basic reorganization of the Institute into a series of federated units under ecclesiastical control. All that was needed was to provide for an orderly succession to the superiorship, which, according to the solemn agreement of 1694, could go only to a Brother who had been vowed by association to the Society.

By this time De La Salle was 65 years old, but already physically weakened by chronic illness, arduous travel, and heroic austerities. In his last letter to Gabriel Drolin, dated December 5, 1716, he wrote:

I have had many disappointments during this time. At present I am living in a house in a suburb of Rouen. It is called Saint Yon and we have our novitiate here. . . . For nearly ten months now, I have been ill in this house where I have been living for a year. The vacillations of the Archbishop of Paris are causing concern among the bishops. I don't know what is thought of this in Rome. . . .

The Brothers had learned from hard experience that in the absence of De La Salle they would not be able to keep the Institute intact unless the succession had been fully provided for beforehand.

Brother Barthélemy

The obvious choice for a successor was Brother Barthélemy. During the long absence of the Founder in the South, despite the lack of a clear mandate and the importunities of the ecclesiastics who were trying to gain control, Brother Barthélemy had managed somehow to hold the Institute together. Ever since the return of the Founder, he had continued to handle the administrative details that De La Salle left completely to his care.

At this particular time, in 1716, Brother Barthélemy, born Joseph Truffet, was just 38 years old. His father had been a schoolteacher, and Joseph himself attended the Jesuit college in his native Douai. After a brief period in the seminary, his love for retirement and meditation led him to seek admission to the Trappists, but his delicate constitution proved incapable of sustaining the rigors of Cistercian life. In 1703 the 25-year-old Truffet came to Paris, where he met the Founder, who accepted him into the novitiate which was still at the Grande Maison. He was assigned to the primary class at Chartres, but both his rather advanced education and his physical limitations made teaching at this level difficult for him. Nevertheless he persevered with dogged determination to do his best for the education of the young boys entrusted to his care.

In 1705 De La Salle, who tried to place his disciples where they could do the most good, recalled Brother Barthélemy to Paris and put him in charge of the six or seven novices who had just been displaced from the Rue de Charonne to the Rue Princesse. Later that year the novitiate was moved to Saint Yon, where the number of novices doubled. It was when the novitiate had been brought back to Paris in the famine of 1709 that Brother Barthélemy contracted the case of scurvy, so debilitating that the Brothers tried to have him sent away. After an entire night spent in prayer the Founder decided instead that he should stay and be allowed to take his vows. When two years later the Founder suddenly decided to leave Paris, Brother Barthélemy was forced by circumstances and his position as head of the novitiate to assume the functions of Superior.

It was only natural, then, that De La Salle should now turn to this man as the likely successor. Years before, the Founder had been gravely disappointed when his first choice, Brother Henri L'Heureux, had suddenly died. Of the two associates of the Founder who had made with him the "heroic vow" of 1691 to found the Society, Nicolas Vuyart had returned to secular life, and Gabriel Drolin was far away in Rome and out of touch with the situation in France. Brother Ponce,

who had certain administrative skills, had been guilty of imprudence on more than one occasion and ended up leaving the Institute. The only other possible candidate might have been Brother Timothée, but he was needed to keep things together in the South. All indications were that the Brothers generally were prepared to go along with Brother Barthélemy as the man to succeed De La Salle.

Preparation for the General Assembly

Toward the end of 1716, De La Salle suggested to the Brothers at Saint Yon that the best way to assure the success of the upcoming assembly and election was to involve all the Brothers of the Institute in the preparations, to alert them to the problems that had to be solved, and to obtain their agreement beforehand to abide by what might ultimately be decided. For this purpose, they decided to send Brother Barthélemy to visit all the houses of the Institute.

In a meeting held at Saint Yon on December 4, 1716, the following declaration, formulated in classic style in one long French sentence, was agreed upon:

We, the undersigned Brothers of the Christian Schools, being assembled in the house at Saint Yon, in order to make provision for those matters that are most pressing in what concerns the good of our Institute; and aware that for more than a year, Father De La Salle, our Founder, has been ill during all this time and in no condition to attend to its affairs; have therefore judged it fitting and even believe it necessary that Brother Barthélemy, to whom the guidance of our Institute has been entrusted for several years, should go immediately to visit all the houses that pertain to the Institute to learn what is going on in each of them and how they are being directed, in order that we will be able afterwards to discover, with the principal Brothers of the Society, the means to establish, to preserve, and to maintain union and uniformity in the Institute, to fix by decree the regulations to be observed and, at the same time, to provide for the general administration of our Institute, in an assembly which, as he will indicate, is to be held in the house at Saint Yon, from the feast of the Ascension until Pentecost.

The document was signed by the Director of the boarding school at Saint Yon, the Director of the schools in Rouen, the Director of the house of detention, and two of the teachers at Saint Yon. After the signatures of the participants, De La Salle himself added: "I believe that what the Brothers have decided in the above statement is appropriate." Then Canon Blain, acting in his capacity as ecclesiastical superior for Rouen, added his approval and gave Brother Barthélemy leave to be absent for several months to accomplish "what Father De La Salle and the Brothers considered necessary."

Brother Barthélemy set out at once. In each house the Brothers were asked to sign a statement agreeing in principle to the idea of a general assembly for the purposes stated in the declaration from Saint Yon. Since this signed and dated document has been preserved, it enables us to follow Brother Barthélemy as he made his rounds of the Brothers' communities. To follow him in his itinerary gives an idea of the possibilities of travel and communication available at the time, the spread of the Institute throughout France, and the names of the Brothers in the schools where they signed the document in 1716–1717.

Thus, Brother Barthélemy was already in Chartres on December 9, 1716. By December 16 he had gone as far as Moulins in the Bourbon country to the south. Travelling by horseback as winter was settling in, he fell from his horse on the slippery road en route to Mende. Although he was dragged for a considerable distance and was terribly frightened, he suffered no serious injury. He was at Les Vans on December 31. From there he went to Alès, where he waited out a storm until January 7, 1717. He was in Avignon by January 10, then went to Marseille, and from there to Grenoble, where the Brothers signed the formula on January 26.

Making his way back north, Brother Barthélemy was at Dijon on February 8, and Troyes on February 15. En route to Rethel, he was accosted by some highwaymen who followed him for a while, but they were somehow unable to force him to yield either his money or his life. Blain tells us, "They seemed to be restrained by an invisible hand." From Rethel he went to Reims, where the Brothers signed the declaration on February 28, and then to Laon. He made his way back to Saint Yon by way of Guise, Calais, and Boulogne, arriving home in time for Easter, which that year fell on March 28. After Easter the indefatigable emissary took off again for Versailles, Paris, and Saint Denis. By May 7, 1717, the tour was complete and the register closed with the signatures of 99 Brothers, not including De La Salle, Drolin, and Barthélemy himself.

The General Assembly of 1717: The Elections

The assembly opened, not on the feast of the Ascension as originally planned, but on Pentecost Sunday, May 16, 1717. There were 16 delegates altogether, all of them Directors of the various houses. The oldest was Brother Dosithée, 46 years old, Director at Rouen; the youngest was Brother Cosme, 29 years old, Director at Versailles. Unable to attend were the Directors of the communities in Moulins, Mende, Les Vans, Marseille, Dijon, and Troyes. Thus the Brothers in the South had to be represented by the Directors of Avignon, Alès, and Grenoble.

The election of the new Superior went smoothly after a day or two of prayer and preparation. The probable date would be Tuesday, May 18, 1717. De La Salle himself remained aloof from the discussion and the voting. When he was informed that Brother Barthélemy had been elected to succeed him, he only remarked that the new Superior had been already acting in that capacity for some time. Brother Barthélemy, after expressing his unworthiness, accepted the election as an expression of the will of God.

It is worth noting that in the subsequent history of the Institute, Brother Barthélemy is counted as the first Superior General of the Brothers. The purpose was to emphasize the special role of De La Salle as Founder while, at the same time, affirming the principle established in 1694 that his election as Superior on that occasion was a special case, that thenceforward no cleric should be accepted as Superior.

Brother Barthélemy let it be known at once that he would need help to carry out the duties imposed upon him. Accordingly, the assembly agreed to elect two aides with the title of "Assistant," provided that they continue to reside and to function in their former communities. The two chosen were Brother Jean (Jacot), one of the survivors of Vaugirard and Director of the Brothers in Paris, and Brother Joseph (Le Roux), who had entered the Institute in 1697 and was serving as Director in Reims.

Discussion of the Rule

Once the elections were over, the delegates turned their attention to a discussion of the Common Rule of the Brothers. Strange as it may seem, the topic that took the longest time and caused the greatest disagreement was the matter of the community recreations. Blain devotes

ten full pages to summarizing the various points of view. It was the custom of the Brothers to take recreation together twice daily, after the noon and the evening meals. The recreation was restricted to conversation on pious topics, beginning with the subject matter of the book read during the meal. Frivolous topics were forbidden, as were references to personal matters, gossip of any kind, or even friendly banter, to say nothing of criticism or uncharitable talk.

Over the years abuses had crept in. Some Brothers easily excused themselves when they thought they had something better to do. Others thought that if it were to be recreation, it should not be so restricted, that greater freedom and relaxation should be allowed. This was the point of view defended by some of the delegates, citing with approval the fact that in some other religious communities, games such as bowling, tenpins, and quoits had been introduced.

The matter was considered serious enough for the assembly to send delegates around to the religious houses in the neighborhood of Saint Yon to seek advice. Apparently this topic was much discussed in religious communities at the time, stimulated in part by a spate of writings deploring the abuses that had become common in the recreation periods of certain monasteries of men and of women. The final conclusion was that the Rule of the Brothers as it had been practiced from the beginning should remain in force.

There was not sufficient time for the assembly to come to definitive decisions on all the details of the Rule. Instead, it was decided that De La Salle himself should prepare a revised version based on the discussions held in the assembly in which each delegate was free to express his opinions openly. To the original Rule De La Salle added three new chapters: one on the serving Brothers; one on regularity, citing the Rule of Saint Augustine; and one on modesty, taken in large measure from the Rule of Saint Ignatius. Two paragraphs that the Founder added have special significance: an introduction to Chapter II on the “utmost importance” of the spirit of faith; an introduction to Chapter XVI on the love of God and neighbor as the “foundation and support” of regular observance. De La Salle completed this work in the following year, 1718. A copy of the revised Rule, authenticated and signed by Brother Barthélemy, was sent to all the communities. It was this Rule with only minor adaptations that guided the Institute for 250 years until the thorough revision of 1967, mandated by Vatican Council II.

Brother Irenée, Director of Novices

To replace Brother Barthélemy as Director of Novices, it was decided to appoint Brother Irenée, Claude Dulac de Montisambert, the aristocratic soldier of fortune who, after mending his ways, had come to De La Salle while he was still at Parménie. After several unsuccessful attempts at teaching assignments in Avignon, Paris, and Laon, Brother Irenée had been brought by De La Salle to Saint Yon to assist with the novices. In addition to his responsibilities as Director of Novices, he was appointed Director General at Saint Yon, and eventually was elected as Assistant to the second Superior General, Brother Timothée. He continued as Director of Novices as well, a position that he held until his death in 1747. By reason of his ascetical and contemplative spirit, the influence of his position at Saint Yon, and the fact that he had been personally close to De La Salle, he would be a major influence on all the candidates in formation during the first half of the eighteenth century.

De La Salle in Retirement

From the moment Brother Barthélemy was elected Superior, De La Salle took the lead in showing him all the marks of submission and deference. When Brothers continued to come to him seeking advice or permissions, De La Salle would say, "I am nothing; go to the Superior." At first he refused even to answer letters addressed to him. When Brother Barthélemy insisted that he reply, according to Blain, De La Salle would add at the end: "Take care not to address yourself to me on such topics again. You have a Superior; you should lay your difficulties before him. As for myself, I do not wish to interfere any more in anything; I want only to think of death and bewail my sins."

Brother Barthélemy, for his part, did not hesitate to turn to the Founder when he felt the need of his advice. One such notable instance was occasioned by a visit of a zealous layman from Canada, Monsieur Charon by name, who asked for four Brothers to be sent to Canada to take over the schools. Brother Barthélemy was favorable to the project, and De La Salle himself at first seemed to agree. Brother Joseph, the Assistant, came from Reims to help choose the Brothers for the mission. All the arrangements were complete, and even the tickets for the voyage had been purchased. It was only at the last minute De La Salle intervened. "What do you think you are doing?" he asked. This was stated so strongly that the Brothers decided to back

away from the project. Soon thereafter Charon admitted that he had planned all along to put the Brothers in separate localities, each under the direction of a different parish priest, an arrangement totally opposed to Institute policy.

The Purchase of Saint Yon

The peace and isolation that De La Salle so eagerly sought at Saint Yon was interrupted in October, 1717, when he had to go to Paris to deal with the legacy left by Rogier as restitution for the 5,200 livres that this lawyer had acquired as part of the judgment in the Clément affair. De La Salle discovered that he was described in Rogier's will as the "Superior of the Brothers of the Christian Schools," and the lawyer insisted that he so sign himself. De La Salle refused, preferring to renounce the legacy rather than employ a title that was no longer his. After a delay of three months, the lawyer finally agreed to accept his signature without the title.

The legacy came at an opportune time. The Marquise of Louvois, who owned Saint Yon and had rented it to the Brothers for a rather reasonable sum, died. Her heirs were anxious to sell the property at its true value, a price the Brothers could not afford. But the Brothers were anxious to hold title to the property. The Rogier legacy proved to be the providential source for part of the down payment. A few smaller legacies, and the sale of some other assets from investments that De La Salle had made over the years, provided the rest. The Abbé Louvois, the son and executor of his mother's will and the nephew of Archbishop Le Tellier, aware of the work of De La Salle and the Brothers, proved to be helpful in obtaining for them the best possible terms.

Sojourn at Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet

De La Salle remained in Paris from October 1717 until March 1718. During all this time he lived in seclusion at the Seminary of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet, a vibrant center for clerical renewal and reform. In this way it would be easier for the Founder to keep from being involved in Institute business and to avoid marks of honor and deference from the Brothers. His presence made a profound impression on the priests and seminarians studying at Saint Nicolas, as attested in a long letter that the superior of the seminary wrote to Brother Barthélemy after the Founder's death.

One paragraph from that letter gives an idea of the daily routine of De La Salle during the five months that he spent at Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet:

He made at least three hours of meditation every day. He was more faithful to the house regulations than the lowliest of seminarians, obeying with admirable promptness the first sound of the bell which announced the exercises. He was so submissive that he wearied the prefect by coming to ask him for permissions, even for those which are not required of the seminarians themselves, as for instance to speak with persons who came asking to see him; to bring them to his room, as you yourself noticed more than once; to go out on free days; and even to write letters, for he never wrote a single one without express permission. He was so willing to accede to the requests made to him to take part in a funeral procession without a stipend, or to conduct the funerals of children, that it seemed as if that was something he valued very much. In a word, retirement, prayer, charity, humility, mortification, a poor and hard life seemed to be what delighted him.

Evidently, if De La Salle had his way, he would have remained at the seminary until his death. He felt that his work for the Institute was finished. The Brothers had one of their own as Superior, and now they owned a commodious center at Saint Yon. There was nothing more that he could do for the Society. If he were to go back to Saint Yon, he felt that he would be occupying a place uselessly. At least that is what Blain tells us the Founder replied to the Brothers who begged him to return. In response to one such request he went so far as to say, "After serious reflection, I am much inclined to end my days here."

Neither the Brothers generally nor Brother Barthélemy were prepared to allow this to happen. The only recourse they had was, once again, the command of obedience. In this, they had the collaboration of the superior at the seminary. Once he received the formal order, De La Salle reluctantly agreed to leave the place he had apparently chosen to end his days. He went from the seminary to stop over briefly at the Brothers' community at the Rue de la Barouillère, where Brother Barthélemy awaited him. After giving the Brothers in Paris his last blessing, he left with the Superior for Saint Yon, where he arrived on March 7, 1718. He had little more than a year to live.