



The Messenger

A LASALLIAN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE



Faithful till the End

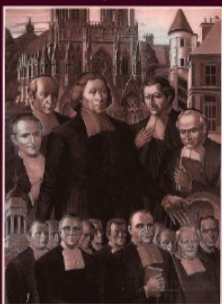
Dear friends, welcome to Issue Three of "The Messenger" for 2015. We continue with our Lasallian Professional Reading and "The Work is Yours". We have only one chapter remaining and then we will be taking another direction. As always, we begin by answering our discussion questions from the previous issue - Faithful till the End.

DLS's remaining years alive were not a quiet road to God's Kingdom, but his final months were instead full of activity, service, controversy and opposition. Just as much as any other period in his life. During August and September of 1718, two major future securing events for the Institute took place. August 11th saw DLS transfer all assets to Br. Barthelemy (the newly elected Superior General) and September 18th saw DLS do the same in regards to all legal documents pertaining to Houses owned by the Society. The final humiliation that DLS faced was on his deathbed.

An on-going vendetta between DLS and the Vicar General of Rouen resulted in DLS being relieved of his priestly duties by the Archbishop Claude-Maur d'Aubigne. On Good Friday, April 7th, 1719, De La Salle passed into God's Kingdom at about 4am. His last words were - "Yes, I adore in all things the guidance of God in my regard." The next day he was buried in the side chapel of the church of Saint Sever.

THE WORK IS YOURS

The Life of
Saint John Baptist de La Salle



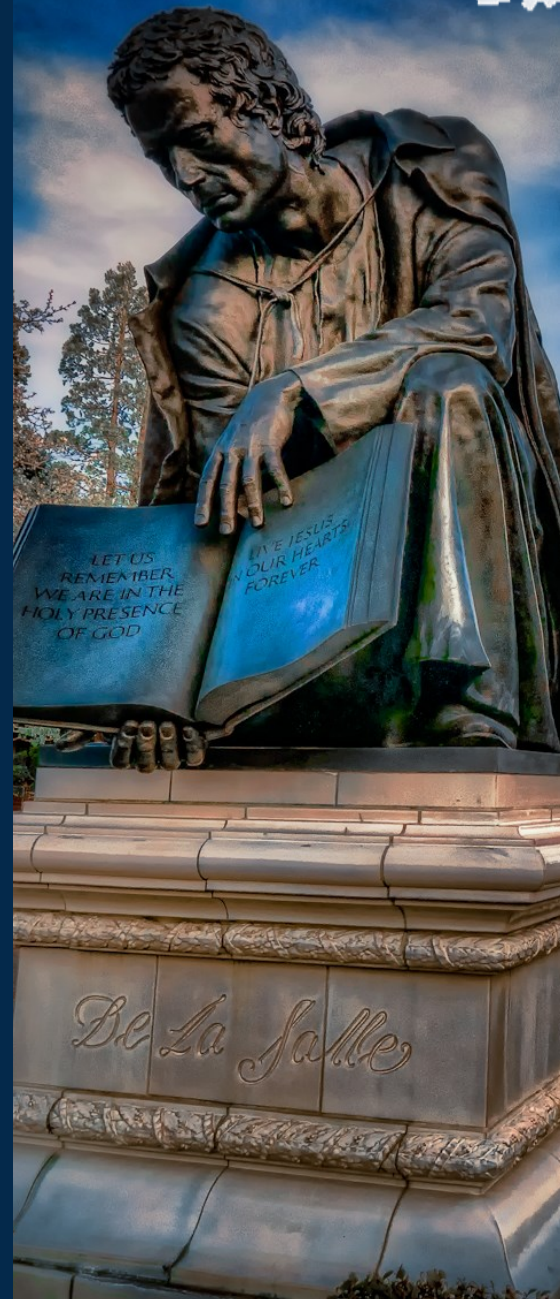
Luke Salma, FSC
Second Edition

Issue 4: The Enduring Legacy

Live Jesus in our hearts

Mr. Kane Raukura (Chairperson - NZMAC)

(NZ Mission Action Committee)



Q1. What were DLS's final words of advice to the Brothers?

Q2. How did Blain describe DLS's physical appearance?

Q3. Who lead the Institute until 1751 with vigor and imagination?

Q4. What was the 'Bull of Approbation' January 26th 1725?



The Enduring Legacy

John Baptist de La Salle did not die intestate. In his testament, signed only four days before his death, he provided for his needy nephews from what little he possessed by way of property, and then turned title to the rest over to the Brothers in the person of Brother Barthélemy. He also left to the Brothers some words of advice: be loyal to the Church, have a love for prayer and Holy Communion, be zealous and generous in service, and be obedient to superiors as a support for the community.

In the normal course of events, the material elements of such legacies are dissipated or transferred, the dying recommendations of the testator quickly forgotten. Such might have been the fate of the testament of De La Salle had he not left behind a more enduring legacy whose value and effectiveness would only increase with the passing of time, namely, his Institute. If the Brothers were the beneficiaries specified in his will, the Brothers themselves were to become De La Salle's legacy for the benefit of the Church and the world for generations to come.

His Portrait

It is customary on the death of a loved one for the survivors to treasure any available physical images that might help keep the memory of the deceased alive. No painted portrait of De La Salle made during his lifetime has survived, if indeed there ever were such a thing. A portrait made while his body was being waxed survives only in a poor photographic reproduction and an engraved copy. Several attempts at portraits were made shortly after his death with varying degrees of success. Both Blain and Maillefer provide toward the end of their biographies descriptive portraits that are almost verbally identical. Here is Blain's version:

De La Salle stood a little above average in height; his frame was well proportioned and solidly built. A wide forehead, prominent nose, and two large beautiful eyes, nearly blue, made up an arresting countenance. His features were gentle

and agreeable; his voice was strong and distinct. Exteriorly he appeared cheerful, serene, modest, and pious. His skin, somewhat tanned by his long travels, usually appeared slightly flushed. His manners were simple, gracious, and inviting, without affectation. His hair, chestnut and curly in his youth, had with the years become gray or white, and made him look venerable. Finally, grace enthroned, so to speak, on his countenance made him amiable and inspired piety.

It is understandable that any artist might find it difficult to capture all of these qualities in a portrait to serve as an adequate memorial of such a personality.

Succession

When De La Salle died on Good Friday, 1719, the institutional embodiment of his spiritual and educational vision was all but complete. The Institute had a governmental structure headed by a Brother Superior elected from among the Brothers. The Founder had left behind a detailed Rule that had been formulated in collaboration with the Brothers on the basis of their experience and reflection. The other writings of the Founder, some still in manuscript form, would help to preserve and interpret his charism. There was a growing body of oral and written policies and practices to guide the conduct of the schools. All that remained was to obtain the necessary papal and royal approvals for this new form of consecrated ministry within the Church and the kingdom of France.

Brother Barthélemy was called to his eternal reward early in 1720, a little more than a year after the Founder's death. That was time enough for the new Superior to demonstrate that the Institute could operate on its own. A new foundation was opened in Saint Omer on the basis of negotiations begun by De La Salle on his trip to Calais in 1716. Encouraged by their new Superior, the Brothers resisted mightily the pressures put upon them by the bishop and the Jansenist party in Boulogne. With an eye to the future, Brother Barthélemy gave orders to collect documents and personal reminiscences to serve as the basis for a projected biography of the Founder.

In a General Chapter convened for the purpose in 1720, Brother Timothée (Guillaume-Samson Bazin) was elected to succeed Brother Barthélemy. The new Superior General was 38 years old at the time and had been a member of the Institute since 1700. He had served as

the Director of the community and the novitiate in Avignon and had been in charge of all the communities in the South after the departure of Brother Ponce. It was he who had come to Mende after the demise of the Marseille novitiate to ask the Founder for a new assignment and to persuade him that the Brothers wanted him to return.

In a thinly disguised reference to himself, Canon Blain relates how "a canon, a friend of the Institute," had taken care to ask Brother Barthélemy on his deathbed "which of the Brothers he considered the best qualified to replace him:"

The dying Superior had indicated Brother Timothée, at that time Director of the house in Avignon, and had added that Brother Timothée was the one who, also in De La Salle's opinion, deserved to be chosen, and that the saintly Founder might have picked him to take his place, even during his life, if the Brother had been a little longer in the Society. . . .

Such was the testimony that this canon gave in his favor, relating the statement of the late Brother Barthélemy to some of the principal Brothers who had come for the election. They did not need to be persuaded on this point, for either because of a divine inspiration or a prepossession in favor of Brother Timothée, they were nearly unanimous in choosing him.

The choice proved to be a good one. Brother Timothée guided the Institute with vigor and imagination for 31 years until his death in 1751.

Letters Patent

The most pressing problem for the new Superior in 1720 concerned the title to the property at Saint Yon. Because the Institute had no legal corporate status, which could be conferred only by letters patent from the king, the property was held in the name of Brother Barthélemy and the ever-available and financially shrewd Brother Thomas (Charles Frappet). The death of Brother Barthélemy left Brother Thomas as the sole proprietor, and he was beginning to show the wear and tear of his 50 years. If anything were to happen to him, without the letters patent the title to the property would revert to the original feudal owners. To dramatize the urgency of the situation, Blain describes Brother Thomas as a "sick and infirm Brother," whose

death might come at any moment. In fact, Brother Thomas lived another 20 years, dying in 1742 at the age of 72.

The first application for letters patent was made in 1721 with the support of De Pontcarré, president of the Rouen parliament, and the new archbishop, Armand de Bezons. The petition was forwarded to the royal Minister of Justice, Chancellor Henri d'Aguesseau, who in turn, it was hoped, would obtain the approval of Philip of Orleans, the regent during the minority of Louis XV. Unfortunately, the chancellor's secretary, perhaps for reasons relating to the Jansenist crisis, opposed the petition on the grounds that it was unnecessary: the Brothers had already been authorized to teach. Teaching was not the issue, however; it was the right to own property. In any case, the regent accepted the secretary's view, and the petition was rejected.

When D'Aguesseau was replaced as chancellor, a new attempt was made and the process had to be gone through all over again, beginning with the authorities in Rouen. This time the petition was supported by powerful friends at court, including the Marquis de La Vrillière and Cardinal Du Bois. Still the regent temporized, and the death of the archbishop in Rouen provided an excuse for further delay in granting the letters patent.

The regent, Philip of Orleans, died in 1723. Once a new archbishop had been appointed for Rouen, and Louis XV became of age, there was reason to hope that a new try might succeed. Blain attributes much of the success to the role of Brother Thomas:

Tall, well-built, with a venerable air which won respect, he looked like one of the patriarchs of old, although his pallor and emaciation caused him to resemble one of the ancient desert abbots. His candor and simplicity won the favor of those whom he approached. So it was decided to send him in person to promote the affair in the hope that the sight of him might touch those responsible and hasten its conclusion.

Although he was not feeling well, Brother [Thomas] left for Fontainebleau, where the court was, and he did all that could be expected of him. His pale and drawn countenance, which seemed to warn those he spoke to that his death could not be far off, pleaded more eloquently than his words and gave visible testimony that it was urgent to guarantee the possession of Saint Yon to the Institute by letters patent, or else consent to the loss of the property and the death of the Brother.

There was surely more to it than that, but in time King Louis XV was won over and the letters patent were granted on September 28, 1724. After some opposition from the pastor of Saint Sever, who was reluctant to lose control over any source of revenue in his parish, the letters patent were registered by the parliament of Rouen on March 2, 1725.

The Bull of Approbation

While the complex negotiations for the letters patent were going on, a parallel process was under way to have the Institute approved by papal authority. The intermediary for Brother Timothée in this instance was a serving Brother named Honoré who had once worked as a menial in the household of the Prince of Soubise. In 1721 Cardinal Armand-Gaston de Rohan, a son of that prince, was appointed ambassador of France to the court of Rome. Brother Timothée, accompanied by Brother Honoré, paid a courtesy visit to the cardinal, who received the two Brothers graciously, expressed his pleasure at seeing the former family servant in the Brothers' habit, and promised to aid the Institute in any way he could.

On the eve of the cardinal's departure for Rome, Brother Timothée sent Brother Honoré and a companion to the cardinal with a formal petition seeking papal approval for the Rule and the Institute of the Brothers. The Brothers were received cordially by Father Jean Vivant, the cardinal's secretary, who promised to make the cause of the Brothers his own. Father Vivant's brother, François, as the vicar-general of Cardinal Noailles, had earlier come to the help of the Brothers by rejecting the proposal of Father De Brou to have the Rule changed during the absence of De La Salle. Brother Honoré died shortly thereafter, having faithfully played his part in providing access to the persons in the best position to assure the success of the enterprise.

Cardinal De Rohan and his entourage arrived in Rome only to find that Pope Clement XI had just died. After taking part in the election of Innocent XIII the cardinal returned to France. But there was enough time for Father Vivant to place the Brothers' petition into the hands of the important people in Rome. Negotiations were carried on over the next few years, as the Brothers were asked to explain the nature and purpose of their Institute, the vows they would take, and the principal rules by which they would be bound.

In March 1724 Pope Innocent XIII died, and Cardinal De Rohan and Father Vivant returned to Rome for the conclave that elected the

75-year-old Dominican, Cardinal Orsini, as Pope Benedict XIII. On July 28 of that same year, the Brothers' petition was ready to be sent to the Congregation of the Council, whose prefect was Cardinal Corsini, the future Clement XII. Shortly thereafter the authorities in Rome were notified that the letters patent had been granted. That fact, plus the favorable report of Cardinal Corsini to the Congregation of the Council in November 1724, was a guarantee of success, and the signature of the pope a foregone conclusion.

Shortly after the opening of the Holy Year, on January 26, 1725, the Bull of Approbation, known by its opening Latin words *In apostolicae dignitatis solio*, was promulgated *in forma gratiosa perpetua*, the most solemn form of a papal bull. The news came as a surprise to most of the Brothers, since the negotiations had been conducted in great secrecy, and only four or five of them were aware that they were going on.

In August of that year the principal Brothers assembled at Saint Yon in a General Chapter for the solemn reception of the Bull of Approbation. On August 15, the feast of the Assumption of Mary into heaven, the Brother capitulants, beginning with Brother Timothée, made their vows for the first time in accordance with the bull. The ceremony was presided over by the vicar-general of Rouen as the representative of the Holy Father.

In this way, within six years of the Founder's death, the Institute to which he had already given its definitive form achieved its corporate and legal status in the kingdom of France and its canonical status as a lay institute of pontifical right in the Catholic Church. This did not, however, constitute the Brothers as a religious "order" in the technical sense. It was not until the Code of Canon Law of 1917 created the category of a religious "congregation" with simple vows that the term "religious" could properly be applied to the Brothers' Institute. The revised Code of Canon Law of 1983 uses the word "institute" to refer to all forms of consecrated life whose members live in community under vows or similar sacred bonds.

The Mortal Remains and Immortal Glory

Almost immediately after the Founder's death, precautions were taken to preserve as much of his writings as possible, to obtain written recollections of the Brothers who had known him, and to commission a biography to make the vision and achievement of De La Salle more widely known. Part IV of Blain's biography, entitled *Spirit and Virtues*,

is actually organized to provide the evidence of heroic virtue required by the Vatican authorities of every candidate for canonization, a sure clue as to what the Brothers had in mind from the beginning. They were also well aware that one matter of special concern in such cases was the identification of the mortal remains of the saintly deceased.

The body of John Baptist de La Salle had been buried in the chapel of Saint Suzanne in the parish church of Saint Sever in Rouen on Holy Saturday, the day after his death in 1719. At the time there was no legal authorization for burial at Saint Yon. But once an expanded building program was under way on their property, the Brothers decided to erect a separate chapel that could also serve as a more suitable place to house the relics of the Founder. The work on the building was done for the most part by the Brothers themselves with the help of the inmates of the house of correction under the direction of Brother Irenée.

The building was going up as Canon Blain was completing his biography of the Founder. He devotes the last paragraph to a description of how construction was progressing, ending with a nasty remark on the stinginess of his fellow Rouenians:

The Brothers do most of the work themselves. They extract the sand, transport the materials, shape the stones, and do just about everything else. They live mostly on the produce of their garden, a dry and not very fertile spot, situated in a sandy bottom which they water with their sweat, and which they force by their hard and assiduous labor to reward its owners. Moreover, they drink only weak beer and eat only coarse bread. In this way they economize enough on food to be able to build, and their own work represents over half the building costs. The rest comes from the endowment of divine Providence, causing their work to progress only a little at a time. Up until now, public charity, which they serve in Rouen with such unexampled disinterestedness and generosity, has not helped them in any way.

With these words, Blain concludes the biographical section of his study on the Founder.

By the middle of 1734, most of the work on the chapel was finished. The solemn transfer of the relics of De La Salle from the church of Saint Sever to the new chapel at Saint Yon took place on July 16 of that year. The ceremony lasted from three in the afternoon until nine in the evening. Once the relics were exhumed and formally identified,

they were placed in a new lead coffin that was then enclosed in another of wood. The procession to Saint Yon was led by 80 Brothers carrying lighted torches, followed by the priests and seminarians of the diocese. The coffin was carried by 16 priests under the covering of a huge canopy. In the new chapel the reburial was presided over by the vicar-general and the eulogy preached by the pastor of Saint Sever. On the following day the Archbishop of Rouen came to bless the chapel and to celebrate the Eucharist.

During the French Revolution in December 1792, the house at Saint Yon was taken over by the revolutionary forces. For their refusal to take the oath of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, the Brothers were dispersed and the furnishings of the house confiscated or sold. Some months later, at the height of the anti-religious fervor, a gang of bloodthirsty ruffians invaded the chapel, demolished the altars, and broke open the graves. The stone slab covering the tomb of the Founder was smashed in pieces and the lead coffin taken away, probably to be turned into bullets. Fortunately, the bones were not scattered but were left buried in a recess in the cellar of the chapel, where they remained hidden for 42 years.

It was not until 1835 that the mortal remains of De La Salle were rediscovered, exhumed, identified, and placed under the seal of the Archbishop of Rouen. The reliquary was kept for many years in the chapel of the Brothers' normal school in Rouen on the Rue Saint Lo. At one point the Brothers hoped that the relics might be brought to the generalate, which was then in Paris, but the archdiocesan authorities in Rouen flatly refused to release them.

By this time, enough preliminary documentation had been prepared so that the cause for the canonization of John Baptist de La Salle could be introduced into the court of Rome in May 1840. The signed writings of the Founder were submitted for examination, and on January 12, 1852, they were officially declared to be in conformity with the doctrine of the Church. Another 20 years passed before the decree was promulgated acknowledging, to the surprise of no one who knew the story, that De La Salle had practiced virtue to a heroic degree. Finally, on November 1, 1887, three miracles attributed to the intercession of De La Salle were formally approved, and the way was clear for the beatification to proceed.

The ceremony of beatification took place in the large hall above the portico of Saint Peter's basilica in Rome on February 19, 1888, in the presence of cardinals, bishops, the Superior General and six of his Assistants, and representatives of the Brothers from around the world.

Pope Leo XIII himself did not preside, but he appeared in the afternoon to receive the customary gifts and homage of the Superior and his entourage. Among those present was Brother Miguel Febres Cordero from Ecuador, who would one day himself be raised to the honors of the altar. The celebration in Rome was echoed by similar events throughout the Lasallian world as the Founder of the Brothers was offered to the veneration of the universal Church.

The two additional miracles needed for canonization were not long in coming. One concerned the cure of a young student in the boarding school at Rodez in France who was dying from complications associated with pneumonia; the other was the sudden and dramatic cure at Communion time during Mass of a paralyzed Brother in Montreal. On May 24, 1900, in Saint Peter's basilica the aging Pope Leo XIII canonized John Baptist de La Salle, declaring him forever after to be numbered among the saints of the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1875, the relics of De La Salle had been moved to a large chapel, built especially for the purpose in the style of a Roman basilica, attached to the newly-opened boarding school on the Rue Saint Gervais in Rouen. In 1904 the religious teaching congregations in France were suppressed, and the relics had to be moved again to the relocated generalate in Lembecq, near Brussels, in Belgium. In 1936 the generalate of the Brothers was moved to Rome. After a sometimes furtive and sometimes triumphal journey, the precious remains of De La Salle were brought to the Eternal City and were enshrined in the chapel of the generalate on January 26, 1937. There, with some variation in their surroundings, the bones of De La Salle have, it is hoped, found at last their place of rest.

The Writings

An important part of the legacy of De La Salle that is more significant, perhaps, than his corporeal remains, and certainly more available for dissemination, is the body of writings that he produced in his lifetime. Of the manuscripts in the Founder's own hand that have survived, the most valuable are the draft of the *Memoir on the Habit*, written in 1689 or 1690 in response to the objections of Father Baudrand, the pastor of Saint Sulpice; the signed vow formula of 1694, and the collection of 53 manuscript letters that have survived out of the thousands that De La Salle must have written.

Among the texts that De La Salle composed for the use of the schools, the earliest seems to have been the *Rules of Christian Politeness*,

dating from Vaugirard in 1695. The longest of the school texts is entitled *The Duties of a Christian to God*. Published for the first time in Paris in 1703, it was extensively revised by the Founder while he was staying at Grenoble during the winter of 1713–14. In its final form this work comprises three volumes: a doctrinal treatise in expository form, a catechism in the form of question and answer, and an explanation of public worship in the form of a dialogue. In 1703 De La Salle also published for the use of the schools a short, three-part manual entitled *Instructions and Prayers for Holy Mass, Confession, and Communion*.

The treatise entitled *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* was developed over the years by the Founder in collaboration with the Brothers to serve as a guide for the policies and practices to be observed in the schools. It was progressively modified to conform to the experience of the Brothers and the need to experiment with new pedagogical methods. The oldest extant copy dates from 1706. The first printed edition appeared in 1720, a year after the death of the Founder.

Also in collaboration with the Brothers, De La Salle composed the book of *Common Rules* to guide the Brothers in their community and apostolic life. The oldest manuscript dates from 1705, but probably reflects the redaction made by De La Salle at Vaugirard in 1695. A copy has survived of the revision undertaken by De La Salle in 1718 and circulated to the Brothers with an introductory letter by Brother Barthélemy. The Founder's *Rule of the Brother Director* also dates from 1718 and served as the basis for what would eventually become the Rule of Government for the Institute.

The spiritual writings intended for the Brothers were written relatively late in the Founder's lifetime. Except for the short *Collection of Various Short Treatises for the Use of the Brothers*, published in 1711, most of the others were published only after the Founder's death: the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, published in 1730; the *Meditations for Sundays and the Principal Feasts*, published in Rouen at an unknown date; and the *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, published in 1739.

The original French editions of all the writings of De La Salle have been republished in anastatic copies by the Brothers' generalate in Rome in volumes 10 through 25 of the *Cahiers lasalliens*. Recently, a critical edition in French of the complete works of De La Salle in one volume has been published at the Brothers' generalate in Rome. This edition is also available on computer discs. Most of the major writings of De La Salle are now available in English in the Lasallian Publications series published by the Christian Brothers Conference, now located in Washington, D.C.

The Legacy of the Schools

The legacy that is the Institute of the Brothers, which now extends to the entire Lasallian family, assumes its most concrete form in the schools and other educational enterprises conducted by the Brothers and their colleagues who share the Lasallian mission. It should not be surprising that the schools of the Brothers assume a distinctive quality, one that is often remarked but difficult to define, a quality derived from a long tradition of religious consecration to a specific apostolic mission carried on in association and brotherhood. What is said here about the Brothers' schools extends as well to other educational works in which the Brothers are involved.

Religious and value-centered education has always been a high priority in the Brothers' schools. In the contemporary context, with due respect for religious freedom, the Brothers take into account the needs and experiences of their students to open them to Gospel values and to bring to maturity their personal faith commitment. The Brothers continue to do this, as they did in the Founder's day, not only by effective religious instruction, but also by the witness of their personal and community life and that of their associated colleagues.

Sensitivity to social issues is an important aspect of the Brothers' school. That is what brought the Institute into being in the first place. The Brothers continue to give priority to direct educational service to the poor where that is still possible. Where it is not, the Brothers try in all their educational endeavors to show special concern for the disadvantaged, and to make education for peace and social justice an important element in the curriculum and in extracurricular activities. That is why the Brothers still take a special vow of "association for the service of the poor through education."

Since the ideal of brotherhood is such a dominant theme in the Lasallian tradition, it is to be expected that the Brothers' schools would be noted for the quality of the relationships between the teachers and the students. De La Salle himself urged the Brothers to be with the students from morning to night, to be like an elder brother to them. On a deeper level he encouraged the Brothers to have a regard for each pupil as a person, to see in the students before them the person of Jesus Christ.

The fact that the Brothers renounce the possibility of entering the clerical state, and the title "Father" that goes with it, makes it easier for them to avoid the clericalism associated with ecclesiastical pomp and privilege. The exclusively lay character of De La Salle's Institute demonstrates the authenticity and effectiveness of a lay ministry and a lay spirituality in the Church.

Finally, the Lasallian schools feature quality teaching with a practical orientation. One of the principal achievements of De La Salle was to elevate the despised function of the schoolteacher to the status of a vocation worthy of the dedication of a lifetime. Devoted exclusively to the work of education, the Brothers bring to the school a sense of permanence, commitment, and competence that they share with the teachers associated with them. The result is a quality school. The Brothers are justly proud of the reputation they enjoy for conducting good schools.

This is not to say that many of these qualities are not to be found in educational institutions directed under other auspices. But somehow, all of them taken together seem to describe that elusive something that people everywhere who benefit from this aspect of the Founder's legacy can recognize as a Lasallian school.

The Spiritual Legacy of De La Salle

Although he authored a series of meditations, an introduction to the method of meditation, and a collection of short spiritual treatises, De La Salle did not develop what might be called a system, much less a school, of spirituality. The spiritual doctrine found in these writings, all intended for the use of the Brothers, was drawn from a variety of sources: the founders of ancient orders as well as the more recent ones; the classic spiritual writers current in seventeenth-century France; and, above all, the authors of the New Testament, especially Saint Paul.

There are, however, distinctive and enduring elements in the synthesis that De La Salle produced from these varied sources: the emphasis on the presence and the Providence of God, for example; the importance given to obedience and self-abnegation in union with the mystery of the incarnate Word; the reliance—unusual for its time—on the guidance of the Holy Spirit; the centrality of the Gospel message and its maxims; sensitivity to the divine voice to be discerned in the crying needs of the poor; the call to an apostolic mission and Christian ministry on behalf of young persons “far from salvation.”

All of De La Salle's spiritual writings were composed for and with the Brothers in the context of the life he daily shared with them. He wanted to give them a religious vision, a sense of vocation and mission, to sustain them in the often thankless and disagreeable tasks they were called upon to perform each day in the schools. In such a

context, the spiritual message had to be specific and practical while, at the same time, opening the minds of the Brothers outwards and upwards toward the reality and infinity of the Triune God.

The closest De La Salle comes to providing the framework for an organized system of spirituality is to be found in the Rule, where he speaks of the spirit, in other words, the spirituality of the Institute. Thus he writes:

That which is of the utmost importance, and to which the greatest attention should be given in an Institute, is that all who compose it possess the spirit peculiar to it; that the novices apply themselves to acquire it; that those who are already members make it their first care to preserve and increase it in themselves; for it is this spirit that should animate all their actions, and be the motive of their whole conduct. . . .

De La Salle identifies the spirit of his Institute in three distinct passages in his Rule. In chapter two he writes: "The spirit of this Institute is, first, a spirit of faith," and "Secondly, the spirit of this Institute consists in an ardent zeal for the instruction of children. . . ." Then in chapter three he writes: "A true spirit of community shall always be evident and preserved in this Institute."

Faith, zeal, and community are not three separate entities attached to the word spirit. In the thought of the Founder, faith overflows into zeal for the spread of the Gospel and is lived in a faith community. That is why the most recent revision of the Rule insists on the integration of the three essential constituents of the Lasallian vocation: consecration as an expression of faith, ministry as an expression of zeal, and community life.

The spirit of faith is the core of Lasallian spirituality. It is the spirit of radical faith in the Providence of God that leads the Brothers "not to look upon anything but with the eyes of faith, not to do anything but in view of God, and to attribute all to God." This God is the one, true, real, and Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, prostrate before whose "infinite and adorable majesty" the Brothers "consecrate themselves entirely to procure the glory of God as far they are able and as God will require of them." De La Salle urges the Brothers to nourish this spirit of faith by sensitivity to the presence of God, recalled frequently during the day; by fidelity to the practice of meditation; by self-discipline; and by serious doctrinal study and spiritual reading, especially in the Sacred Scriptures.

If the spirit of faith were to remain fixed on these mostly other-worldly elements, Lasallian spirituality would be suitable only for contemplatives. De La Salle envisioned the energy that constitutes the spirit of faith as overflowing into a spirit of zeal for a specific mission: the overpowering urge to bring the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ to the educational world, specifically to those whose poverty in one form or another places them "far from salvation." Thus faith and zeal are two aspects of the same spirit or spirituality: faith overflows into zeal; zeal is rooted in faith.

The same is true of the relationship in Lasallian spirituality between the spirit of faith and the spirit of community. The spirit of community unites the Brothers among themselves, and the Brothers in association with their colleagues, in a faith community fired by a missionary zeal in an educational enterprise. The mutual brotherhood that builds the Lasallian community has its foundation in faith. Thus the Rule of the Brothers says: "The distinctive character of the Brothers' community is to be a community of faith where the experience of God is shared."

The spirituality that results is thus apostolic and not monastic, a lay rather than a clerical way of seeking the perfection demanded by the Gospel, a spirituality accessible to beginners as well as beneficial to the spiritually mature. The effectiveness of this approach to spirituality is seen in the person of De La Salle himself and the number of saintly Brothers, many of them candidates for formal canonization. Lasallian spirituality has had a significant effect as well in transforming the lives of the generations of students who have been exposed to its influence.

More recently, the distinctive features of the Founder's spirituality have proven useful and attractive to the professional colleagues who share the Lasallian mission and all those who constitute the Lasallian family. As the 1987 Rule puts it:

The spiritual gifts which the Church has received in Saint John Baptist de La Salle go far beyond the confines of the Institute which he founded. . . . The Institute can associate itself with lay people who want to lead the life of perfection that the Gospel demands, by living according to the spirit of the Institute and by participating in its mission.

The Institute of Brothers as Legacy

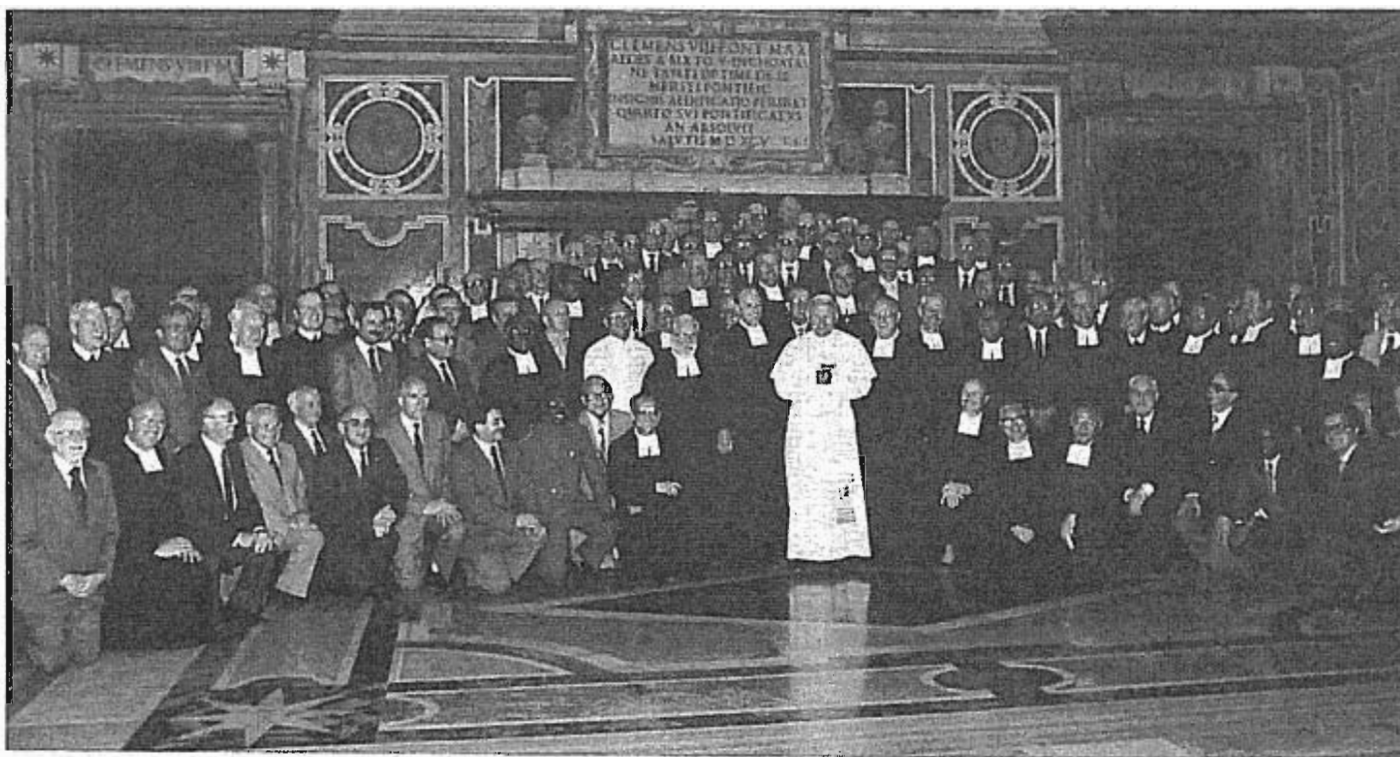
The spiritual vision of De La Salle could never have survived to enrich future generations of Brothers, students, and colleagues, if the Community had not achieved institutional form. Its formally approved and clearly defined juridical character is a necessary and important guarantee that the legacy of De La Salle will have stability and permanence, that the spirituality and the charism of the Founder can be kept alive, developed, and transmitted from one generation to the next. Thus it is the Institute itself that constitutes the total legacy of John Baptist de La Salle.

At the same time, it might be said that the language of institute and institutionalization is not the best way to describe the totality of the legacy left by De La Salle. It is not even the language that the Brothers used from the beginning to describe themselves. The corporate term that they preferred was Society or Community rather than Institute.

Implicit in the words society and community is the fact that the Institute is an association of persons, of persons who call themselves Brothers. It was in 1682, at the moment when the small band of schoolteachers moved with De La Salle into the Rue Neuve and formed themselves into a community, that they began to call themselves Brothers. It soon became their custom to post a wooden placard over the door of their schools announcing for all to see that they were the Brothers of the Christian Schools: not a school, not an institution or an institute, but Brothers, Brothers to one another and elder brothers to the young lads they would serve. It was this same sign over the door at the Rue de Charonne in Paris that was interpreted as a challenge to the educational establishment of the day.

The Brothers are not only the sons and heirs of De La Salle, but they are themselves part of the legacy. Thus the *Declaration on the Brother in the World Today*, issued by the 39th General Chapter in 1967, affirms that "the wealth of the Institute is nothing less than the Brothers who compose it."

This awareness that the Brothers are at the same time part of the legacy and entrusted with it is expressed in the same document in these terms:



Delegates to the 41st General Chapter, received in audience by Pope John Paul II just 300 years after the first assembly in 1686

The charism of the Founder involves institutions only through the mediation of persons. Saint John Baptist de La Salle founded a living community of Brothers with whom he shared his apostolic ideal and who in turn passed on this ideal to their successors. Fidelity to the specific intentions of the Founder and to the tradition of the Institute is confided to us as living persons. It is we who carry on the task of discovering how fidelity to his charism can be lived in the present time.

More recent general chapters have come to realize that the brotherhood lived in the Institute is an open concept: that brotherhood implies relationships that transcend canonical categories. More and more the concept of the Institute extends beyond the Brothers to include all the members of the Lasallian family. The legacy of association, community, and brotherhood is to be shared not only with colleagues but with students, parents, and former students as well. Thus the Institute that De La Salle left as his legacy becomes an inheritance available to the Church and the world through an ever-widening association of legitimate heirs.

The testamentary document of the legacy of De La Salle in this wider sense is the Rule, revised in the post-Vatican II General Chapter and approved by church authority in 1987. A superficial comparison with the Rule written by De La Salle in 1718, looked at from the point of view of external practices and obligations, would reveal striking discontinuities, as if the testament had been changed after the death of the testator. Looked at in terms of an enduring legacy, however, all of the essential elements are still there: the spirit of faith and zeal, apostolic mission, consecration, community life, prayer, formation, government, and the vitality of the Institute itself.

With that in mind, this Rule can say of itself: "The Rule defines the meaning of the Brothers' life. It translates into modern terms and reaffirms what Saint John Baptist de La Salle intended in his Rule." There can be no better way to conclude this study of the life and the enduring legacy of John Baptist de La Salle than to quote the final article of the Rule:

The Brothers bear witness to their love for Saint John Baptist de La Salle as their Founder. They imitate him in his abandonment to God, his loyalty to the Church, his creative apostolic spirit, and his definitive commitment to the evangelization of young people.

The life of an Institute is a continual challenge to be creative while remaining faithful to its origins. It can sometimes call for difficult commitments, as John Baptist de La Salle discovered at various points in his life. Today, as in the past, he challenges the Brothers, not only as the one who established the Institute but as the Founder who continues to inspire and sustain it.

Filled with the spirit which he left them as their legacy, the Brothers grow in the living tradition of the Institute. In communion with those who have gone before them, they continue to respond with ardent zeal to the appeals of the Lord, the Church, and the world, in order to procure the glory of God.

In these words, the life of a man who lived more than 300 years ago, and left as his legacy an Institute that has been a force for good ever since, becomes a challenge for the future. That future is in the hands of God, the God whom De La Salle himself often addressed in these words: *Domine, opus tuum*—Lord, the work is yours.