



# The Messenger

A LASALLIAN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE



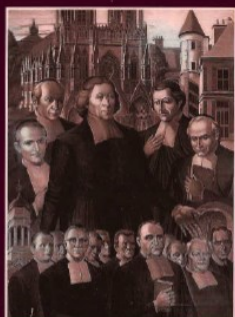
## A TIME OF EXPANSION

Dear friends, welcome to Issue Five of "The Messenger". As always, we begin by answering our discussion questions from the previous issue - A Time of Expansion. The first school established in Paris was at St. Sulpice, it was a charity school already in existence. The Brothers and De La Salle were invited to help with its running but encountered some reluctance with the local priest. After an inspection of the chaotic school was carried out, the local authorities pleaded with De La Salle to take over. De La Salle introduced many reforms to establish better order at the school, including locking the class doors to keep truants in and late comers out, having a fixed daily schedule, insisting on regular attendance, daily prayers and providing manual training. Problems arose with the Habit and the Novitiate, the local Pastor of the parish had issues with the Brothers Habit (styled robe) and believed they should wear

a plain black cassock along with the ecclesiastical mantle. DLS was unwilling to yield and stood his ground. This became a source of real tension. The same Pastor, Fr. Baudrand also tried to take young brothers in training under his control and this caused many to drift away from the ideals that DLS was trying to instil. Lastly, "Heaven was stormed with prayer" by the Brothers Community because DLS had a very near brush with death near the end of 1690 at only 39 years of age.

### THE WORK IS YOURS

The Life of  
Saint John Baptist de La Salle



Luke Salvo, FSC  
Second Edition

Issue 5: A TIME OF CRISIS

Live Jesus in our hearts!

Mr. Kane Raukura

Chairperson - NZMAC

(NZ Mission Action Committee)



**Q1. Who was Br. Henri L'Heureux? And what happened to him that broke DLS's heart?**

**Q2. What important event occurred at Vaugirard, Nov. 21st, 1691?**

**Q3. DLS received a very unusual cure for rheumatism. What was the treatment?**

**Q4. Why did DLS get upset with the Brothers over the election of a new Superior in 1694?**

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### Crises and Consolidation (1691–1698)

The years 1690 and 1691 that almost witnessed the death of the 40-year-old Founder were years that came close to witnessing the death of his Institute as well. The personal antagonisms that made the early years in Paris so difficult were now succeeded by organizational problems that threatened to overwhelm the entire enterprise. It looked for a while as if the newly born Society might not survive its infancy.

#### Brother Henri L'Heureux

De La Salle had realized for a long time that sooner or later he himself would have to be replaced as superior of the community. As early as the General Assembly of 1686, he had persuaded the Brothers that they should choose a successor from among themselves. The election of Brother Henri L'Heureux on that occasion had been quickly annulled by Archbishop Le Tellier, shocked to learn that a mere lay Brother had become the religious superior of a priest, much less of a doctor of theology who had been a canon of the cathedral. In order to forestall any such objection for the future, De La Salle undertook to teach Latin to Brother Henri, and then enrolled him in the theology program at the Abbey of Saint Denis in Reims with the intention of preparing him for the priesthood.

In making the choice of Brother Henri, De La Salle was not only following the expressed preference of the Brothers, but he discerned a person of high quality as well. Brother Henri had been one of the first to join De La Salle and so had shared with him all the deprivations and humiliations of the early years. A model of religious fervor and humility, L'Heureux also had an agile mind and he could speak well. At the Abbey of Saint Denis he had a reputation for being hesitant in replying to questions, but profound and eloquent in his responses once he penetrated to the heart of the matter. In a relatively short time he completed his studies, whereupon De La Salle brought him to Paris prior to presenting him for ordination.

It was at this time that De La Salle fell ill. Once his recovery was assured, he returned to Reims to complete some unfinished business. As was his custom, he left Brother Henri in charge of the Brothers in Paris at the Rue Princesse. No sooner had De La Salle reached Reims than a letter arrived informing him that Brother Henri had suddenly been taken ill. A second letter soon followed saying that the case was serious, and a third that the doctors had given up hope. At first De La Salle was inclined to consider these reports exaggerated since he had left the Brother in apparently good health. Once convinced that the case was indeed serious and the concern of the Brothers genuine, the Founder set out hastily for Paris. He arrived about midnight a day or two later, only to find that Brother Henri had been dead and buried for two days.

In one of his few admissions that De La Salle ever showed any human emotion, the biographer Blain tells us: "The news broke his heart. Never in his whole life did it receive a deeper wound. The first onslaught of sorrow caused him to break down and cry." More typically, Blain continues: "He appeared ashamed of this weakness and reproached himself for it. The first movement of human grief was followed by a deeply religious response of resignation to God's will."

The shock of this tragedy did in fact compel De La Salle to ponder its providential meaning, what it was that God might be saying to him through this event. The Founder soon discerned that perhaps the Institute should not have priests among its members. He came to see with increasing clarity that the priesthood would be incompatible with the vocation and mission of a teaching Brother, that the introduction of the priesthood might well weaken the very foundation of the Institute. The presence of priests in the Society might also open the door to the ever-present possibility of external ecclesiastical control. In time, the exclusively lay character of the Institute would become one of its most distinguishing characteristics.

### **Trouble in Reims**

With his plans to groom a successor in abeyance for the time being, De La Salle had even more pressing organizational problems to deal with. Principal among them was the deteriorating situation back in Reims. When De La Salle left from there for Paris in 1688, there were three flourishing schools in Reims, three more in the outlying towns, a functioning juniorate for young candidates at the Rue Neuve, and a teacher-training program for rural teachers. Now, after two years of

successful operation, the teacher-training program had been terminated, mostly because there was no longer any need for it. As for the juniorate, that too came to an end when De La Salle brought the candidates to Paris to continue their formation there under his direction.

Only the community of teaching Brothers was left in the house on the Rue Neuve. In 1688 there had been 16 of them, not counting the two that De La Salle took with him to Paris. Three years later, only eight remained. What was worse, only one new recruit had been attracted to the community. The problem centered on the personality of the superior De La Salle had left in charge, a young man in his early twenties who was also known as Brother Henri. As a Director this Brother Henri was a man of piety and exact in observing the regulations, but he was harsh and indiscreet in dealing with the Brothers. His total lack of human understanding was more than many of them could endure, and so they left.

### Facing an Uncertain Future

Things were not much better in Paris. De La Salle himself was still recovering from the double shock of his own illness and the death of Brother Henri L'Heureux. He felt himself to be totally alone, with no clear plans for a successor in case his health should soon again fail. Most of the Brothers, too, were exhausted from overwork, and many of them were ill. Religious fervor and discipline were not at all as intense as had been the case in the beginning. The presence of the candidates in the crowded quarters on the Rue Princesse created more problems than it solved. And then there was Father Baudrand, the pastor of Saint Sulpice to deal with. Realizing that the Society was in a precarious position, he seemed to be all too anxious to take it over himself at the first opportunity.

As was his custom, De La Salle took his time in weighing the alternatives before deciding on a course of action. He spent long hours in prayer for divine guidance, convinced that his work would survive and prosper if that were indeed God's will. The plan that emerged was twofold. First of all, he would seek a property suitably located, somewhere near Paris, that could serve as a center for the physical and spiritual renewal of the older Brothers and as a novitiate for the training of new candidates. Secondly, he would associate with himself one or two Brothers capable of maintaining the Institute in case anything should happen to him.

## Vaugirard

After a careful search, De La Salle found the property he was looking for. It was in Vaugirard, at that time a small village just outside Paris, about a mile or so from the school on the Rue Princesse. On the grounds there was an unpretentious but sufficiently large house with a garden surrounded by ample open space and plenty of fresh air. It seemed ideal for the purposes De La Salle had in mind.

The first Brothers to be moved into the new center were those who were sick or ailing. Then, when the school year was over in the late summer of 1691, De La Salle summoned to Vaugirard all of the Brothers from Reims, Laon, and Paris who had joined the Society during the previous three or four years. Many of them had experienced little by way of a novitiate, in some cases not more than a few weeks before they were sent into the classroom. The Founder wanted to make up for this lack and renew them in their first fervor with an intense spiritual retreat under his direction. The retreat had barely begun when De La Salle learned that his beloved grandmother and advocate, Perrette Lespagnol, had died on October 7. Whatever grief he felt, he kept to himself in the conviction that nothing was more important than the work he had in hand.

De La Salle soon realized that the time available for the renewal program was too short to accomplish all that he had hoped for. Rather than lose the momentum of what he had begun, he arranged to replace these Brothers in the classroom with student teachers and so prolonged the retreat until well into December. Thus Vaugirard served as a sort of "second novitiate" even before the novitiate proper could be opened. The project was so successful that over the years the Founder continued to call the Brothers by turns to Vaugirard for an annual period of spiritual renewal. Out of this experience there was established a practice that has endured in the Institute in one form or another to the present day.

When De La Salle sent the retreatants back to their schools and communities, he instructed them to write to him regularly to give an account of their behavior and of their interior dispositions as well. The Founder was faithful in replying, often at some length, to these "red-ditional letters," as they came to be called. Fortunately, some of his replies have been preserved. In due time, the practice of writing for spiritual direction to the Superior or his Assistant, in addition to the regular personal interview with the local Director, became part of the Rule of the Institute.

### The Heroic Vow

Once the morale of the Brothers had improved and religious discipline had been reestablished, the next step was to try to provide for the future of the Society in the face of the crises, opposition, and uncertainty that had been its experience thus far and that seemed likely to continue. For this purpose, De La Salle chose two zealous and courageous men who seemed to be the most committed to their vocation and on whom he thought he could depend. They were Brothers Nicolas Vuyart and Gabriel Drolin. He proposed that the three of them bind themselves by vow to establish the Society, no matter what it might cost them, and even if all the others should abandon it—a not unlikely possibility at the time.

At Vaugirard, on November 21, 1691, the feast of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple, the three men made their “heroic vow,” as it has been called, in these terms:

Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, prostrate with the most profound respect before your infinite and adorable majesty, we consecrate ourselves entirely to you to procure with all our ability and efforts the establishment of the Society of the Christian Schools, in the manner which will seem most agreeable to you and most advantageous to the said Society.

And, for that purpose, I, John Baptist de La Salle, priest, I, Nicolas Vuyart, and I, Gabriel Drolin, from now on and forever until the last surviving one of us, or until the complete establishment of the said Society, make the vow of association and union to bring about and maintain the said establishment, without being able to withdraw from this obligation, even if only we three remained in the said Society, and if we were obliged to beg for alms and to live on bread alone.

In view of which we promise to do, all together and by common accord, everything we shall think in conscience, and regardless of any human consideration, to be for the greater good of the said Society.

Done on this 21st of November, feast of the Presentation of Our Lady, 1691. In testimony of which we have signed. . . .

### The Novitiate at Vaugirard

The difficulties surrounding the opening of a formal novitiate were of a somewhat different order. When De La Salle informed Father Baudrand what he was planning to do, the response was emphatic and negative. The pastor told him not even to think about it. Once again this put De La Salle in a bind. Not only was Baudrand his pastor and confessor, but in one sense his superior besides. Yet from his recent experience De La Salle knew the unfortunate consequences that follow on an inadequate program of training and formation. Now that he had a suitable center for a novitiate, he was determined to take advantage of it. But Baudrand remained adamant.

In his customary way, De La Salle remained calm and had recourse instead to intensified prayer. In addition, he began to multiply his already much too austere penitential practices with a view to winning this favor from heaven. When Baudrand heard about it, he sent word that De La Salle might as well cease torturing himself since he had no intention of changing his mind. But De La Salle had an alternative. He enlisted the support of a former classmate from seminary days, Paul Godet des Marais, who was now Bishop of Chartres and who had great influence in Paris. After almost a year of waiting, in August 1692, permission finally came from the Archbishop of Paris, François de Harlay de Champvallon, for De La Salle to establish his community at Vaugirard.

The advantages of the house and grounds at Vaugirard during the summer months soon turned into a test of virtue during the long Parisian winter. The old house was falling apart with the loose doors and windows no proof against wind, snow, or rain. There was only one small stove and, of course, no indoor plumbing. The furniture consisted of a few benches to sit on and, for beds, straw pallets laid on wooden planks stretched over saw horses. There were no facilities for cooking in the house; the coarse and scanty food was brought each day in a hamper from the kitchen on the Rue Princesse. Laundry was done once a week. The clean undergarments provided on Saturday morning were often frozen stiff. The only way to dry them out was to wear them.

In sum, the privations at Vaugirard were such that the name has become associated in the Brothers' tradition with unbearable living conditions whenever and wherever they had to be endured, which happened again and again in the Institute's long history.



As if the privations imposed by circumstances at Vaugirard were not enough, the Brothers there, novices and veterans alike, vied with one another in the practice of voluntary penance, especially in the use of the scourge or “discipline,” as it was called. Since no fixed policy had yet been set on the matter, permission had to be obtained to engage in such practices of corporal penance. The permission was eagerly sought and willingly granted. The customary time for taking the discipline was just before supper after the daily accusation of faults. The Brothers would inflict this punishment on themselves, each in some remote corner, often to the point of drawing blood. Some would get so carried away that they would miss part or all of the meal, which always began and ended at a specific time.

These penitential practices were but an adjunct and support of a regimen of intensive prayer over and above the regular religious exercises observed in all the Brothers’ communities. The Office of the Blessed Virgin was recited each day, meditatively and standing. There were supplementary periods of meditation preceded by an hour of spiritual reading both morning and afternoon. The novices were joined in these pious and penitential exercises by the school Brothers whenever they could get away, the Brothers from Paris over the weekends, and those from Reims and Laon during vacation periods.

The religious fervor and the austere rigor of the lifestyle at Vaugirard renewed the Brothers in the spirit of their vocation. In addition, it attracted a number of worthy candidates, some of them from rather well-to-do families. On the other hand, the rigorous regimen served as a screening process to separate out the fainthearted and the unworthy. On November 1, 1692, only a year after the house was opened, De La Salle gave the Brothers’ habit to six novices, one of whom was to be a serving Brother.

During the following two years there was a widespread famine in France that served to increase dramatically the number of candidates who applied. Relying on statistics supplied by the Founder, Blain tells us that only one or two out of every dozen who presented themselves remained, yet in the period between 1692 and 1694 a total of 35 novices persevered at Vaugirard.

It was at this time, incidentally, that the category of serving Brothers was introduced. This made it possible to admit those who had a strong sense of vocation and some manual skills but no aptitude for teaching; more important, it freed the school Brothers from



the burden of shopping, cooking, and cleaning that too often interfered with their school duties and regular religious observance. The serving Brothers wore a brown habit to distinguish them as they went about their functions in the streets and the markets, but in every other respect they were the equal of the other Brothers in the community.

### **Rheumatism and Its Remedy**

Inevitably, De La Salle's austerities caught up with him. This time it was a severe attack of rheumatism brought on by sleeping on the stone floors in the drafty old house, to say nothing of the lack of adequate nourishment combined with the other penances he inflicted on his poor body. He tried to ignore the intense pain as long as he could, but it finally got to the point where the man could no longer move about, so rheumatic had his whole body become. Forced to seek some relief in order to continue his work, De La Salle agreed to allow the Brothers to call once again for Doctor Helvétius.

The remedy proposed was painful in the extreme. The patient was laid on a grill of hardwood with iron pots of burning coals underneath. On the coals were placed leaves of juniper and other herbs so that the smoke might penetrate the pores of the body and draw out the inflammation. While one side of the naked body was exposed to the burning coals, the other was covered with blankets so as to concentrate the heat. The room was stifling and filled with smoke. When the Brother in attendance tried to adjust the wooden slats, he found them so hot he could not keep his hands on them. De La Salle suffered heroically through all this torture without complaint. Although the procedure proved effective, it would have to be endured again in later years.

### **The Winter of 1693–1694**

Due in part to a scanty harvest, and in part to the drain on the food supply by the armies of King Louis XIV, engaged at the time in military adventures against the Hapsburgs in Spain, Austria, and Flanders, the winter of 1693–1694 brought another devastating famine throughout all of France. Vaugirard was no longer a safe place for the Brothers. Even in the best of times, it was not uncommon for thieves to rob the Brother who carried the food each day from the Rue Princesse.

Now it became an almost daily occurrence. Even the house itself was sometimes invaded by vagabonds in the mistaken notion that food, however scanty, was kept stored there. De La Salle, reluctant to leave his beloved retreat, nonetheless decided that it would be better to take his novices back to the Rue Princesse until the worst of the famine should be over.

Although the building on the Rue Princesse was more secure, there was no way to escape the impact of the famine that was especially severe in the city. The price of bread doubled and tripled, and it was not always available. Sometimes the Brothers had to make do with a thin soup made from cabbage leaves. Through it all, De La Salle was patient and urged the Brothers to take literally the Gospel maxim that they should not be anxious about what they should eat, that their heavenly Father would provide for them. Although they were all hungry most of the time, none of them starved. Relief in one form or another always came just as things were most desperate.

Throughout that terrible winter, the pastor, Father Baudrand, seems to have remained insensitive to the plight of the Brothers. It may be that he never quite forgave De La Salle for opening the novitiate that he had so firmly opposed. He may even have wanted to remind De La Salle of how dependent the young community was on his good will. At the beginning of 1694, when the famine was at its worst, he withheld the salary of the Brothers teaching on the Rue du Bac. On one occasion, a pious and influential lady of the parish spotted the Brother cook in a line of beggars seeking a handout. It was only at her insistence that the pastor sent some money to the Brothers to tide them over. When that ran out, De La Salle was forced to go to the pastor personally to beg as an alms for what his community needed and was entitled to. Baudrand had just received some emergency funds from the government, and these he shared with the Brothers. But later, he charged the sum against the money due to them for their salary.

The biographers are not agreed on how to interpret the apparent indifference of the pastor to the needs of the Brothers. There is no doubt that his own resources were strained throughout that difficult winter. At the same time, however, it does seem that he used every opportunity to try to keep the community of the Brothers, and De La Salle in particular, dependent on him in every way possible. Thus it was not long afterwards that Baudrand decided to move the school and the community from the Rue Princesse to the Rue Guisarde.

De La Salle did not consider the new location at all suitable. To force the move, the pastor refused to renew the lease on the Rue Princesse. Thereupon De La Salle signed the lease himself and kept the Brothers where they were. Baudrand is said to have remarked that De La Salle "was a stubborn man who always wanted to have his own way in spite of myself or the pastor who was here before me."

### **The Rule and Perpetual Vows**

Once the spring of 1694 arrived and there was some relief from the famine, De La Salle took the novices back to Vaugirard. There he had enough time to begin composing a Rule for the Brothers, a process that involved as many hours of prayer and penance as in the actual writing of the text. There was an opportunity now to reflect on and incorporate into a Rule the experience of the Society since the assembly of 1686. In submitting a draft text to the Brothers, the Founder made it clear that it was up to them to eliminate or to add whatever they considered necessary, and ultimately to approve the Rule he was proposing.

Another question that had been put on hold since 1686 was the matter of perpetual vows, whether some Brothers might be ready for this step and, if so, what vows they should take. Ever since the introduction of the temporary vow of obedience, some of the Brothers had been asking to commit themselves for life to the service of the Lord in the educational ministry proper to the Society. Unwilling to make such a decision on his own, De La Salle wrote to those he judged most dependable, asking them to consider the question prayerfully during the early months of 1694. Then he invited each of them in turn to come to Vaugirard to make a private retreat and to ponder with him the problem of when and how to introduce perpetual vows.

Finally, at Pentecost in 1694, he brought all 12 of these senior Brothers together at Vaugirard to decide the question in a solemn assembly—later to be known as the first General Chapter. There was much give and take in the discussion, and each was left free to express his own opinion on the matter. One area that needed to be addressed was the matter of vows, which in the circumstances would have to be "private" rather than "public" in the canonical sense. As with the vows of 1686 and the heroic vow of 1691, the focus would be on the need for stability in the community and the effectiveness of its mission. The Brothers in the chapter finally decided that they would express their consecration to God by perpetual vows of obedience, stability in the Society, and association to conduct the gratuitous schools.

Accordingly, on Trinity Sunday, June 6, 1694, De La Salle and the 12 principal Brothers made the first perpetual vows in the Institute. Since it was considered wise to keep the event secret for the time being in order to test its impact, the ceremony was held in a remote room in the house at Vaugirard. The formula of vows was similar in structure to that of the heroic vow of 1691. The text follows:

Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, prostrate with the most profound respect before your infinite and adorable majesty, I consecrate myself entirely to you to procure your glory as far as I am able and as you will require of me.

And for this purpose I, John Baptist de La Salle, priest, promise and vow to unite myself and to remain in Society with Brothers Nicolas Vuyart, Gabriel Drolin, and [the other ten names follow] to keep together and by association gratuitous schools wherever they may be, even if I were obliged to live on bread alone, or to do anything in the said Society at which I shall be employed, whether by the body of the Society or by the superiors who will have the government thereof.

Wherefore I promise and vow obedience to the body of the Society as well as to the superiors: which vows of association, as well as stability in the said Society, and of obedience, I promise to keep inviolably all my life.

Each of the other 12 pronounced his vows in exactly the same way. All 13 of the signed formulas are preserved in the archives of the Brothers' generalate in Rome.

This text has served as the pattern of the vow formula in use in the Institute ever since. The formula is so structured that the basic element in the commitment, consecration to the Triune God, is expressed prior to any mention of specific vows. Although the designation and the content of the individual vows have changed over the years, this fundamental expression of commitment to procure the glory of God has remained invariable from the beginning.

In the later paragraphs of the formula, this consecration becomes both personal and interpersonal: the Brother mentions his own name and then refers to his associates; it is total, without any thought of turning back; it is apostolic in its thrust and its specific commitment to the gratuitous schools. Taken as a whole, the vow formula integrates all the elements of the Brother's life: religious consecration is joined to association in community for an apostolic purpose.

Très Sainte Trinité, Père, fils, et Saint-Esprit Proster.  
 Dans un très profond respect devant votre infinie et  
 adorable Majesté, nous consacrons avec nous  
 prouvons vos gloires avec . qu'il me sera possible de que  
 nous le demander de moy et pour ab effect de Jean  
 Baptiste De La Salle. Petites promets et fait, vous des  
 Minus et demeure en société avec les freres Nicolas  
 Augart, Gabriel Drolin, Jean Cartier, Gabriel Charles  
 Rétigues, Jean Henry, Jacques Compagnon, Jean Vaquet  
 Jean Louis de Marichewille, Michel Barthelémy, Jacques  
 Edme Lequillon, Gilles Pierre, et Claude Roussel pour  
 tenir ensemble et par association les écoles gratuites  
 en quel que lieu que ce soit quand même de par oblige  
 pour le service de demander l'humane et de vivre de  
 pain seulement ou pour faire dans l'aditte société  
 ce a quoy le frere employé soit par le corps de la  
 société soit par les supérieurs qui en auront la conduite  
 cest pour quoy de promets et fait vous d'obéissance tant  
 au corps de cette société qu'aux supérieurs lesquels  
 nous en tant d'association que de stabilité dans la dite  
 société de d'obéissance de promets de garder inviolable  
 ment pendant toutes nos vies en foy de quoy luy signé  
 fait a vaugrain le 24 iours de Juin l'année mil six cent quatre  
 de la dite Trinité de l'année mil six cent quatre  
 quatorze / De La Salle

De La Salle's formula of perpetual vows, 1694

### The Election of a Superior

On the day following Trinity Sunday in 1694, De La Salle reassembled the Brothers who had made perpetual vows the day before to consider quite a different matter. He proposed that they elect one of their own as Superior. The reasons he advanced were serious and sensible: his own health was precarious, and death might claim him at any time; it would be better to be prepared for such a possibility in advance; the enterprise should not rely on one person alone, much less

himself; the election of one of themselves would strengthen the bond of union just forged by the vows they had made; it would protect them against having a priest superior imposed on them at some later time.

But the Brothers would have none of it. When De La Salle insisted more strongly, they agreed to an election, but the ballots turned into a unanimous affirmation of the Founder as Superior. Upset by this deception and even a bit angry, he called for a long period of prayer, after which he proposed that they have another ballot. The result was the same. This time they pointed out to him that his resistance seemed to be contradicting the will of God. He finally had to give in, but not before having them all sign the following declaration:

We, the undersigned [the names follow], after associating ourselves with John Baptist de La Salle, priest, to keep together gratuitous schools, by the vows which we pronounced yesterday, declare that as a consequence of these vows and of the association which we have formed by them, we have chosen as our Superior John Baptist de La Salle, to whom we promise obedience and entire submission, as well as to those whom he will assign to us as our superiors.

We also declare that it is our understanding that the present election will not have the force of a precedent for the future. Our intention is that after the said John Baptist de La Salle, and forever in the future, no one shall be received among us or chosen as Superior who is a priest, or who has received Holy Orders; and that we will not have or accept any Superior who has not associated himself with us, and has not made vows like us and like all those who will be associated with us in the future.

Done at Vaugirard on June 7, 1694.

### Relative Peace

Having survived so many crises, and with its internal structure more fully consolidated, the Institute was able to enjoy a few years of relative peace. The Brothers had a Rule, a core group committed by perpetual vows, an elected Superior in the person of the Founder, and a formal decision to remain forever exclusively lay. Meanwhile the communities and the schools continued to prosper.

Life at Vaugirard went on as before with prayer, penance, and deprivation the characteristic lifestyle. During the years from 1691 to 1698, De La Salle was able to concentrate on his writings, especially a series of Catechisms, the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*, and the *Rules of Christian Politeness*. He was also able to obtain ecclesiastical approval for the *Exercises of Piety for Use in the Christian Schools*.

In August 1695, Louis-Antoine de Noailles was named Archbishop of Paris to succeed François de Harlay de Champvallon, who had just died. In the beginning, the new archbishop seemed favorably disposed to De La Salle. Up until that time, there had been no chapel in the house at Vaugirard, with one of the rooms serving as a simple oratory for community prayers. The Brothers had to go to the nearby church of Saint Lambert, where De La Salle celebrated Mass for them privately, except on feasts when they attended the parish Mass. In 1697, once again through the influence of his friend Paul Godet, Bishop of Chartres, contrary to archdiocesan policy at the time and over the objections of the pastor of Saint Lambert, De La Salle obtained from Archbishop Noailles permission to celebrate Mass and reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the novitiate house. Bishop Godet presided at the formal blessing of the chapel in June of that year.

As De La Salle's reputation for sanctity spread far and wide, and the community became known as a rival to the Trappists for its austerity of life, Vaugirard attracted more and more priests and laymen who came there to make a retreat under De La Salle's direction. The holy priest and former canon seems to have had a special gift for dealing with hardened sinners and fallen-away priests; many miracles of grace were attributed to his ministry to such persons in distress. Devout persons, too, profited from his guidance and example. On one occasion, the Count of Charmel, a nobleman who lived nearby, was greatly impressed by his visit to Vaugirard. On his return home, he sent to De La Salle a richly decorated antependium for the altar and a chasuble to match.

Back at the Rue Princesse, there was a new pastor of Saint Sulpice. In 1696 Father De La Chétardie was appointed to succeed Father Baudrand, who had to resign as pastor because of ill health. At first, the attitude of the new pastor was very favorable to the Brothers. Soon after he assumed office, he visited the school to see the situation first hand. Surprised by the lack of even basic necessities, he made it one of his first concerns to see that the needs of the Brothers were provided for.



As the seventeenth century was coming to an end, it seemed that a new era for the Institute of the Brothers was on the horizon. The years ahead were indeed destined to bring new growth and expansion. But there would also be new crises and struggles to be overcome in the face of continued misunderstanding, opposition, and outright persecution.