

For a Better Understanding of Lasallian Association

Michel Sauvage, FSC, S.T.D.¹

I have been asked to introduce this formation session on Lasallian association. To do that, I must first recall what association meant at the beginning of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. As a foreword to this talk, I would make three points on the parameters of my proposal with regard to the aim of these two days. For you, who are heads of establishments and responsible for educational institutions under a Lasallian trusteeship, this aim is to live out association better today.

So, my first point is that I will stick to the meaning of the word *association* and the realities that it had in the founding experience of John Baptist de La Salle and his first Brothers. I will thus at least go some way to addressing the sub-titles given in the program: *History, Origins, Characteristics*. It is not possible, however, even to sketch out a development that would relate to another subtitle: "*Experiences 'in the course of history.'*" Since I have not studied this question, I am not even certain of fully understanding what it means. The formula of vows made by the Brothers has for three hundred years certainly retained a promise of association. But when it is a question of being precise about the content of the religious consecration, the vow of association had disappeared after 1726. The General Chapter of 1986 – and the *Rule* of 1987 – wanted to restore it; I have no intention of speaking of this restoration. However, I hope that it was only the germ of a much more radical renewal.

My second introductory point touches on a difficulty which appears to me more serious: I wonder if my presentation will do justice to the suggested title, "For a Better Understanding of Lasallian Association." I will strictly limit myself to calling to mind the period of the origins of the Institute. In that way I will place myself in a human, social, ecclesial context that we find in our enlightened times. The differences will be obvious, I think, as I proceed with this talk. To limit myself from the start to a single, general fact – John Baptist de La Salle and his Brothers grew up in a Christian world. We live in a secular world; it is a truism to say so. But what makes an almost uncrossable gulf between him and us is that we ourselves are certainly still more imbued with secularization.

Secularization invades our thinking, our behavior, our values, almost without our realizing it. This is a fact, not a judgment, because I think that in the main, secularization is an inescapable social fact and an inroad into the faith. I fear, then, that my words may be greatly "disorienting" or may seem anachronistic to you – since the association lived and conceived by John Baptist and the first Brothers was specific, situated, and so limited – with regard to the list of workshops for the second day, for example. John Baptist de La Salle could provide no answer to any of the questions we are asking ourselves.

This article is the text of a conference presented to administrators of Lasallian institutions in France during a meeting of Association La Salle (La Salle Association), November 18-19, 1998, and published in *Lasalliana* 49-14-D (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools), September-December 1999, 115-120.

My last introductory remark offers three methodological explanations. The first concerns vocabulary. I have not studied it in depth. I am simply pointing out that the term *association* is found only seven times in the Lasallian writings. They are found in the context of the vow, which I am going to speak of. The term *Society* is used far more frequently – 92 times. In what concerns our point, the words *Society* and *Institute* are used interchangeably by John Baptist de La Salle. For example, in the primitive *Rule* (1718 text), in which the first article reads precisely, “The *Institute* of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a *Society* in which profession is made to conduct schools gratuitously.”²

The second methodological point: [In order] to treat the subject suggested to me, restricted though it is, I need to refer to the Lasallian foundation sequence as a whole. In spite of my effort to be sufficiently explicit, you might find some references too illusive. Please bear with me, and the talk will provide some clarification.

The last methodological point: [In order] to write this presentation, I have re-read the two fundamental studies of Brother Maurice-August Hermans very thoroughly: his work of 1961 on *The Vows of the Brothers of the Christian Schools Before the Bull of Benedict XIII* (that is, from 1686 to 1726) and his thesis, published in 1962, *The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools Seeking Canonical Status: From Its Beginning (1679) to the Bull of Benedict XIII (1725)*.³ The two articles entitled “Association” that appear in the first volume of *Themes Lasalliens*,⁴ add scarcely anything to Brother Maurice-August’s contribution, as far as our subject is concerned.

In the first more historical part, I will recall the main stages of association in the Lasallian foundation. Part Two will attempt to go deeper into the meaning and implications of Lasallian Association from its beginning.

PART ONE: THE STAGES OF ASSOCIATION IN THE LASALLIAN FOUNDATION

Stage One: Before Association – The Plan for Lasallian Community (1679–1689)

To recall the reason for the Lasallian plan and the stages of its realization between 1680 and 1690, I will remind you of four dates.

1680: John Baptist de La Salle comes, first by chance, then unwillingly, into closer and closer contact with the first schoolmasters employed by Adrien Nyel. With an awareness of the situation that grows clearer to him every day, he realizes “that the burgeoning schools are not producing the results hoped of them, because no uniform guidance is being maintained;”⁵ “each master follows his own particular spirit without concerning himself with what might bring about greater success.”⁶ To ensure the success of the schools for the common people in Reims, first of all, an educational community for the masters needs to be formed. To this end, De La Salle brings the masters together, has them live together, and teaches them how to harmonize their teaching skills. He accompanies them by drawing closer to them, going so far as to take them into his own home. Almost simultaneously, he is also aware of the need to unite them in a community that is evangelical in intention and in style.

1682: The founding plan of John Baptist de La Salle, seen in his *radical choice*, at the end of 1682 and the beginning of 1683. His heart-rending and liberating decision at the end of 1682 is to devote his existence as a priest henceforth to the establishment and guidance of a community of laypeople who are committed by an evangelical vocation to an ecclesial “ministry” realized in the largely secular “career” of schoolmasters in gratuitous schools that they keep as a group in the diocese of Reims for the children of the people, the laborers, and the poor, who up to then have been denied access to culture and to the Gospel.

Making a slight change to the remark I made about the world of Christianity in which the life of John Baptist de La Salle unfolds, I would note, without insisting on it, that the priest that he is passes from being a Church in himself to a Church become incarnate in the world. He used to spend six hours a day in the Cathedral; his preferred society was among the bourgeois people of the Church. Now he immerses himself in a community of schoolmasters; he shares their material insecurity; he spends hours discovering from the inside the basic realities of their profession, with the aim of improving their professional quality. The school must function well if it is to contribute to the “salvation” of the young people who have been abandoned up to then. His radical, evangelical option leads the former canon of the Cathedral into a kind of “secularization” in his new way of living the priestly ministry.

1686: The founding project of John Baptist de La Salle and his companions is seen in the First Assembly of masters in 1686: that this community “should take itself in hand”; that starting from the life of its members, it should define its identity and determine the important elements of its kind of existence. That is what happens in the debates of this Assembly. The Brothers together make a decision on the choice of an original habit, on a change of title (from *masters* to *brothers*), on an outline of a Rule. At the end of this Assembly, those who henceforth call themselves Brothers of the Christian Schools make a vow of obedience (which we can understand as a vow of community togetherness).

1688–1689: The founding plan is seen in the decision John Baptist de La Salle makes to answer a call from Paris: a community “without boundaries” (diocesan) or guarantees (ecclesiastical); a community that retains its unity by defending its internal autonomy.⁷

Thus, throughout these stages, the words “association” and “society” do not appear in Lasallian language.

Stage Two: Toward Association – The Crisis of 1690 and the First Vow of Association (November 21, 1691)

An absolute crisis at the end of the 1680s:

For almost fifteen years, he had been laboring at this thorny task, this garden watered with his sweat and tears . . . And yet, his undertaking was making only slow progress. Each time he got ready to lay a new stone during the construction of this edifice, he found new obstacles, and while with loving hands he built it up with so much effort, other hands, evil intentioned and actuated by malice, destroyed and tore down what he had built.⁸

Crisis in the Undertaking

Reims: disintegration. The *training school for country schoolmasters* disappears almost immediately. The *seminary for young Brothers* follows John Baptist de La Salle to Paris, but the young men, employed “to serve Masses” at Saint-Sulpice, lose their fervor and leave.

Paris: difficult beginnings for the school. The Brothers have to work with their predecessors, with whom the pedagogical objectives are at variance. When the Brothers take charge of the schools, they are successful, but their success antagonizes the previous masters in charge. Hoodwinked, the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice considers sending away De La Salle and his companions (in September 1688). When his eyes are opened, he thinks twice about it, and his successor, Baudrand, even suggests opening a second school, in the rue du Bac. This expansion upsets the corporate body of Paris schoolmasters. They fear for their future and begin unceasing attacks.

Crisis in the Community, More Serious

Departures: Eight out of sixteen Brothers in Reims depart. Two out of four in Paris depart without being replaced by new members.

Lassitude: Physical, moral, and spiritual lassitude [is evident] among those who stay. De La Salle’s illness takes him to death’s door. Brother Henri L’Heureux, for whom John Baptist de La Salle is building high hopes, dies.

Threats to the Community’s Internal Autonomy: Baudrand wants to impose an ecclesiastical habit on the Brothers. De La Salle is firmly opposed, so he draws up (end of 1689, beginning of 1690) the document *Memorandum on the Habit*. He is defending not so much an original dress but the principle of internal autonomy in the community and the independence of its self-government in relation to ecclesiastical powers. This is to be a fundamental issue throughout De La Salle’s life and innumerable conflicts.

Personal Crisis of “the Forty-year-old Man”

He seems to have failed at every level. He is disappointed by the men whom he has trusted: Brothers, clergy, laypeople, the young. From 1682, De La Salle has resolutely set his life on a new path, accepting a radical break for this purpose. As he reaches the age of forty, this new path seems to have led to a dead end. To describe his state of soul, the biographer, Blain, here uses the word *perplexity*:

Such was the disconcerting prospect facing the Founder at the end of 1690. After so many sacrifices, so much labor and trouble, after so many crosses and persecutions, after so much apparent success, he was back where he had been ten years earlier, with only a handful of Brothers. His undertaking had not made much progress, and he could fear that it would eventually die out. No doubt he felt much perplexity.⁹

The First Vow of Association: November 21, 1691

At this time of absolute crisis, when John Baptist de La Salle’s group of companions is dangerously weakened, when the survival of the community is in doubt, the Founder seeks to

ward off this death threat by an act of re-creative hope: the vow of association between De La Salle and two Brothers.

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 efforts the establishment of the Society of the Christian Schools in the manner which will seem to us most agreeable to you and most advantageous to the said Society.

And for this purpose, I, John Baptist de La Salle, priest; I, Nicholas Vuyart, and I, Gabriel Drolin, from now on and forever, until the last surviving one of us or unto 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 that we shall think in conscience and regardless of any human consideration to be for the greater good of the said Society.

Done on this twenty-first day of November, feast of the Presentation of Our Lady, 1691. In testimony of which we have signed.¹⁰

In this formula of commitment, we find four parts to the structure:

A Transcendent Step: The formula of vows opens by addressing the Trinity, which directs the entire content of the commitment. It is God who has committed John Baptist de La Salle to an educational vocation. The certainty of this vocation received from God does not seem to have deserted him: no matter how dark the night, he determines to follow the same path, but to forge ahead, he relies on this interior certainty. It is God's work that he is doing; he cannot give it up. The living God, who has been there at the start, who is ever present in that night and speaks to the heart, will always be at hand. God will continue to call to creative work and give the necessary strength and light to answer positively. In this sense the Lasallian step is truly "transcendent," an act of theological hope.

A Transcendent, Incarnate Step: "And for this purpose, I, . . . , I, . . . , and I, . . . , make a vow of association . . . to. . . ." The act of hope is already translated into a vow of association between De La Salle and two Brothers. It is a hope that rests on human signs: Brothers have remained, these two among them. How can he abandon them when they have dedicated their lives with him? How can he abandon these young people, the poor for whom his and the Brothers' commitment has caused the hope of freedom to well up?

His cause was also the cause of all the poor children and of the public. Their rights, too, were involved, not merely his. After taking charge of these poor, miserable, and ignorant boys, could he, without falling into cowardice and

pusillanimity, let them return to their first state of ignorance and lack of education?¹¹

The Vow of a Plan – “Wherefore we promise to do ...”: This commitment is seen as envisaging “the establishment of the Society” – a vow for a plan, a vow for community discernment, a prophetic vow of a visionary who speaks to share with others. Their common word turns into effective action. What is said in the vow formula is already being carried out; the vow begins to put into reality what it proclaims. The future of the little community is threatened, yet De La Salle, more than ever before, is aware of the urgent need to educate the most marginalized young people. He sees that his historical mission is to bring into Church and city a new religious Society consecrated to human development and the evangelization of young people, who are not faceless and nameless for him.

De La Salle refuses to contemplate the collapse of what he has undertaken. He doesn't simply stop at what remains of it. To two of the Brothers who have remained faithful, he suggests anticipating the Society he dreams of, becoming co-founders of the association, committing themselves from then on by a vow that will bind them together for life until death. In the trial, his visionary dream converts the future into a plan for “the future is not what will happen but what we are doing today to keep the promise of salvation glimpsed by these young people received into the Brothers' schools.”

The Vow of a New Departure, an Act of Hope: Today, starting from yesterday and for tomorrow (memory and hope): this twenty-first day of November 1691. Mention of the year 1691 is not an absolute beginning. For John Baptist de La Salle and the two Brothers, the vow gathers together in their minds the totality of the human experience that involves a religious experience: fraternity, service, struggle.

The vow of 1691 is an act that relaunches hope, there and then. It is not simply a ratification of the past; the vow reinforces the decisive aspect of an outlined pattern that has first been lived through. People affirm themselves, and through that they build themselves up. The community tells itself its plan, and in this way it brings the project into being.

The vow of 1691 opens this experience to a future of action. The vow outlines a precise plan but not a rigid one. It doesn't impose defined obligations that simply must be observed; in this way it expresses fidelity as a search to be carried out rather than a heritage to be passed on. With greater reason, the essence of this vow contains no prohibition but is constituted by a concrete desire to find good through perceiving it on a community level.

In fact, the mystical élan expressed and strengthened in the vow of association is not dissipated in an ethereal religious feeling, any more than it revels in sterile nostalgia. The consecration to the transcendent God opens John Baptist de La Salle and the others to a period of intense creativity and realistic planning to bring about what the vow foretells. This fertile tension between a mystical uplifting toward God and being firmly rooted in the reality of responsible actions appears, first of all, in a remarkable way in the formula itself, in terms that will not occur again, unfortunately: “To procure with all our efforts the establishment of the Society of the

Christian Schools in the manner which will seem to us most agreeable to you and most advantageous to the said Society.”

Blain, moreover, presents the vow as one of the elements in an overall plan – produced by the situation and the experience – whose fulfillment is binding:

After prolonged thought about the means for consolidating an edifice which threatened to collapse even as he was trying to erect it, he was inspired: 1) to associate with himself two Brothers whom he considered the most apt to sustain the fledgling Community and to bind them with him by an irrevocable bond to pursue the establishment of the Institute; 2) to establish somewhere near Paris a house where the sick and convalescent Brothers could go to recover their health; 3) to gather all his Brothers there during vacation and to have them make a retreat in order to help them recover, along with their first fervor, the spirit and grace of their state. . . ; 4) to establish a novitiate for the training of candidates.¹²

Stage Three: The Constitution, Consolidation, and Confirmation of Association

Three dates, three symbolic and effective word actions: the central and cardinal text for understanding the Lasallian association is that of the vow of June 6, 1694. Its immediate significance is clarified by the election the next day, June 7, 1694. Prior to this, its range is made clearer by the secret commitment by the vow of November 21, 1691 (above). Afterward, twenty years later, at a time when we might wonder whether he is being tempted to abandon the Institute, John Baptist de La Salle is invited by a letter from his Brothers (April 1, 1714) to resume a lived awareness of the association they have established among themselves.

The Vow of June 6, 1694: Foundation of Association

From Pentecost Sunday to Trinity Sunday, 6 June 1694, John Baptist de La Salle gathers twelve Brothers in Vaugirard. He chooses them from among the members of what he has been calling, up to then, the Community of the Christian Schools (about thirty Brothers, at the most). During this week, the Brothers and their Founder make a retreat. At the same time, they constitute a decision-making assembly: the first General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

The Founder’s avowed aim is to consolidate his young community by the definitive consecration to God of these twelve Brothers. Their discussions that week are centered on the content and the meaning of this step; they prepare themselves in prayer for this religious commitment. The Rome Archives of the Institute retain the thirteen manuscript formulas of consecration by which these twelve Brothers promise and vow “to unite themselves and to live in society” with one another and with John Baptist de La Salle “to keep together and by association gratuitous schools.” We even have the formula completely written by the hand of Monsieur de La Salle. I have three remarks about this formula:

- 1) The undertaking of John Baptist de La Salle begins in Reims fifteen years earlier, in 1679. It is not the first making of vows in the young Lasallian community, but it is the first formula of vows of which the text has come down to us independently of Blain’s

account. It is then that the expression “Society” makes its appearance to designate the group of Brothers of the Christian Schools.¹³

2) Since then, up to the present day, we have kept the structure of the formula of vows in four particulars:

- Invocation of the Trinity and expression of total consecration to God to procure his glory:

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 will be able and as you will require of me.

- Statement of the aim and the content of association (opened by the phrase “and for this purpose”):

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

- Explanation of the vows being made:

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 of stability in the said Society and of obedience I promise to keep inviolably all my life.

- Ratification of the signature:

*In testimony of which I have signed. Done at Vaugirard on this sixth day of June, feast of the Most Holy Trinity, 1694.
(signed) De La Salle.*

The commitment of association and the definition of its “content” form the core of this formula. Its structure reveals both the Christian, sublime, and incarnate source of this association and its priority with regard to the detail of the commitments by vow (which have been made in different ways for the past 300 years).

3) The Institute is this very association being made, thanks to the free joining of persons who in faith answer by the consecration of their life a call from the living God, who gathers these people together by the power of an objective and a plan that are inseparably “mystical” and “historic.”

The Act of Election of June 7, 1694: An Important Juridical Expression of Association

In De La Salle's thinking, the association will not be fully realized until the day a Brother, a layman, takes charge. So the Founder tries from the day after the vow of June 6, 1694, to hasten the progress of the group to this end. The Assembly is prolonged by one session to elect the Superior of the Society. Twice the voters elect De La Salle. However, this forced step is not a vain coup. The thirteen associates, in fact, draw up the act of election of the Superior of the Society. (The manuscript is in the Institute Archives.) The wording of this text makes evident, with forceful insistence, the central importance of association for the collective identity of this group:

We, the undersigned . . . after associating ourselves with Monsieur J. B. de La Salle, priest, to keep together the 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 Monsieur J. B. de La Salle . . . Our intention is that after the said Monsieur 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 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.¹⁴

The commitment of association expresses the awareness of the identity of the group of Brothers. The act of election reaffirms this identity, clarifies a fundamental aspect (the lay character of the Institute), and draws powerful consequences from it with regard to the desire for autonomy of the very young Society. De La Salle's attempt apparently fails, for he remains Superior of the Society, but everything changes, because now he is Superior, not because he is the Founder but, at least formally, by virtue of the free choice of all the associates.

The Brothers' Letter to De La Salle, April 1, 1714: The Power of Association in an Absolute Crisis

Another crisis looms in which the Institute again seems threatened with death. The Founder has left Paris and seems to have abandoned his task of Superior. The living force of association moves a certain number of Brothers to hold an "Assembly," and they decide to recall their Founder. By a letter that is an "action" of the Assembly, they beg, even command, De La Salle to take up again "the responsibility for the government of our Society." They base this unusual step on their "association" (even if the vow they invoke is that of obedience to the body of the Society).¹⁵

Our very dear Father,

We, the principal Brothers of the Christian Schools, having in view the greater glory of God, the greater good of the Church and of our Society, recognize that it is of the utmost importance that you should again take up the care and general government of the holy work of God, which is also yours, since it has pleased the Lord to make use of you to establish it and to direct it for such a long time. Everyone is convinced that God gave you and still gives you the graces and talents needed to govern properly this new Company which is so useful to the Church, and it is only just for us to acknowledge that you have always governed it

with much success and edification. This is why, Monsieur, we very humbly beseech you and command you in the name and on behalf of the body of this Society to which you have promised obedience to take up permanently the responsibility for the government of our Society. In testimony of which, we have signed, done at Paris this first day of April 1714. We are, with most profound respect, Monsieur, our dear Father, your humble and obedient inferiors.¹⁶

In 1691, De La Salle reacts to a “mortal” crisis by an effective beginning of the association that he plans; it “takes flesh” by the vow of 1694. By the heroic vow, De La Salle “gives birth to” the association.

In 1714, the association reacts to a “mortal” crisis by re-expressing itself; it “takes flesh again” by the Assembly of the Brothers and by the Letter to the Founder. The association brings De La Salle to “a new birth” in his vocation.

PART TWO: MEANING AND IMPLICATION OF LASALLIAN ASSOCIATION IN THE BEGINNING

The formula of vows of 1694 expresses an experience that has already been lived for more than ten years in Reims (and environs) and in Paris. This experience is that of the “foundation” of the Institute. Very early on, De La Salle is aware of the necessity of gathering the masters into a teaching and evangelical community. He gradually accepts that God’s work for him will be to devote himself entirely to this foundation; he takes the decision in a radical way in 1682. He gives new impetus to his decision by the vow of November 21, 1691.

The association of Brothers, as “project” and progressive realization, becomes “the powerful reality of the Founder’s life.” The vow of 1694 relaunches the project and consolidates its realization. We can measure the strength and depth of this “word–action” represented by the commitment of the vow of 1694 and by the crisis of the years around 1710.

But what is this association? Here is an important reflection, first of all: it is a vow of society before being – and in order to be – a vow of community.

Next, I attempt to bring together the elements, the essential characteristics, of association, starting with three facts expressed by the following three prepositions:

- It is an association seen **by** together keeping schools.
- It is an association **of** Brothers.
- It is an association **for** the evangelization of abandoned youth.

A Vow of Society Before Being – and in Order to Be – a Vow of Community

I thought I had written the final text of this lecture in mid-September. The ideas I am now going to attempt came to me after various meetings – sometimes lengthy, always intense – that I had the opportunity of attending in October with several members of the Lasallian network. These meetings ranged from two gatherings of laypeople to an evening with very dear friends, heads of

institutions. In between, I read the advance Lasallian educational plan and stayed, at the height of the students' strike, in a community of Brothers, several of whom are involved in an educational establishment, and I attended the defense of a thesis on Saint John Baptist de La Salle, presented in Lyon by a layman who is currently head of an establishment.

To be truthful, the initial germ of this new development had been sown in the first text of this lecture, drafted in July. I had disposed of it because it had seemed vague at the time, and I have not forgotten these words of Cardinal Garrone at the time of the 1966 General Chapter: "Everything that is vague is useless." Before that, the Cardinal had said, "Everything that is clear is false." I hope that this preliminary section is useful while remaining sufficiently true.

I am expressing this preliminary thought in three points. The vow of association that John Baptist de La Salle and his twelve companions pronounced on June 6, 1694 was a vow of "society" rather than a vow of "community." However, this vow committed the members of the Society, which the vow made a reality and shaped, to communities that were situated in a specific locale to keep together one and the same school. The novelty of the vow of 1694 is to demonstrate and restart a fertile tension between "to keep together" and "to be associated" – if you prefer, a fertile tension between "local community" and "Institute."

The vow of June 6, 1694 is primarily a vow of "society" rather than a vow of "community"

Those who make the vow in 1694 belong to different communities. They commit themselves to form a society among themselves in which each will have the position assigned to him by the body or by his superiors and in the place to which he will be sent. The society will strengthen the bonds and enlarge the horizons of the limited teams that locally and together keep a school and to that end live together in community. Finally, not all the Brothers make a vow of association, although all live in community. Only twelve make the vow out of a probable thirty in 1694, and this distinction will persist in the Institute until 1923.

The vow of 1694 represents a decisive step forward in the realization of the Lasallian plan. John Baptist de La Salle initially wants to promote pedagogical, educational, and evangelical communities. The crisis of 1690 shows him the fragility of his work, but he views it as growing pains. In passing from Reims to Paris, "the" Community changes its form: it is no longer limited to one diocese; its vocation becomes national and, rapidly, international. It is important that the requirements of a strong local presence not exhaust the energy or limit the horizon of the members of each community. It is vital that the inevitable dispersion resulting from expansion be counterbalanced by a strong feeling of belonging to a reality that inspires and sustains the concrete incarnation, because this reality transcends the actual situation by recalling its own finality and spirit.

The vow of 1694 commits the members of the society, which it realizes and defines, to communities placed locally to keep together one school.

For a particular Brother, certainly what constitutes the aim of association (to keep schools gratuitously) is going to be a reality locally after being centered originally in the Brothers' community. For sure, the association, represented most often by the Superior who is in charge of it, is going to gather Brothers to "keep together" a gratuitous school. All of this is explicit in the vow formula.

The novelty of the vow of 1694 is to demonstrate and rekindle a fertile tension between “to keep together” and “to be associated” – if you prefer, between “local community” and “Institute” or “Society.”

The distinction between “to be associated” and “to keep together” seems clear to me, and I don’t think it is wrong. It seems useful to me, and I hope it is not purely for my intellectual comfort. I don’t believe there is any superfluity between the expressions “together” and “by association.” In Lasallian language, the word *together* appears 160 times. It is used to designate the concrete, local community: its members live together, pray together, relax together, go to school together, and so on. Fortunately, some rare writings in *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer* and *Meditations* bring out the spiritual sense of what may also be the source and expression of communion in the presence of God. Without further commentary on this persistent repetition of the adverb, I see in it that “together” certainly concerns only the local community.

But the distinction becomes fertile in light of the formula of vows, if we are careful about the dynamic tension between the “to be associated” and the “together,” or between “the Society” and “the community.” From the Society, each community can expect and receive inspiration, impetus, help in discernment, examining or even questioning, opening up to a wider communion humanly and ecclesially – without forgetting (not insignificant or prosaic) that the Society sends the community new members for whom it has ensured a serious basic formation.

But the Society has no less need of the concrete contribution of each local community: their members are in direct, daily contact with the reality of young people and their needs. The local community can and should be creative, and its awareness of new calls, its finding of new ways of answering, enriches and stimulates the entire body of the Society. If the tension between these two realities, which are intertwined, weakens or disappears, there is a risk either of ideology or of the routine of the repetitive “all done” that Péguy denounced.

I am not going to dwell on the matter, and I come now to the three mentioned characteristics.

An Association that Manifests Itself by Together Keeping Schools

The schools that the Brothers together keep are a very definite type – elementary schools, gratuitous schools – and they have a pastoral objective.

The “keeping together” acts for a very definite type of school: elementary schools.

John Baptist de La Salle is open to various appeals: training school for village schoolmasters, evening classes, Sunday schools, the boarding school of Saint-Yon, reform school, house of correction. It remains no less true that the “little schools” are the Brothers’ principal theater: the principal numerically and the principal for defining the Society’s identity.

This fact makes the Brothers quite easily “interchangeable.” They do the same “basic” teaching; they ensure it in all subjects (limited in number). The transfer from one class to another causes no upset on the professional level. The transfer from one town to another doesn’t require a great effort to readapt. (Nevertheless, the Founder is aware that it is better to give children from the South teachers from that area, for which reason he opens a novitiate in Marseille. The schools in

towns whose inhabitants are engaged in maritime activity – Calais, Boulogne – adapt their curriculum to the young people who attend them.)

This “tremendous” fact will characterize the Institute for a long time, with slight changes according to the country. In France, when I entered the Congregation, the Brothers’ schools were still very much primary schools – some adorning themselves with a higher primary section. There were boarding schools, one per District in many instances, and the Brothers had created modern secondary teaching. There is no question of minimizing the Institute’s openness and creativity. It is simply a matter of remembering that the Brothers were largely employed in the primary sector. Evidently this was to the advantage of “association.” It gave the group an awareness of a common identity and permitted a largely collective “formation.”

This could lead to a certain coolness: it happened that some Brothers looked upon confreres employed in different establishments (a boarding school, a secondary school) with a certain “distance.” Was not one of the painful aspects of the disagreement concerning Latin in the United States caused by the difficulty, if not the incapability, of certain French mentalities to accept another schema, quite generally developed, without being sufficiently aware that it related to a real “need” in another context?

“Together” for a definite type of school: elementary schools.

According to the vow formula, the commitment of association is, first of all, a vow for a project, a purpose, a *raison d’être*. If someone makes a “vow of association,” it is to run gratuitous schools. Elsewhere in his commentary, Brother Maurice-Auguste retains as titles only the vows of obedience, stability, and gratuitous teaching.¹⁷ He stresses “the closest possible connection between ‘vow of association’ and ‘commitment to teach gratuitously.’”

We must give this remark its full value here. Association is not “vowed” simply “to keep schools” together. The society is not born or defined by “teaching” guaranteed in one and the same school by a team of “Brothers.” What motivates the activity of John Baptist de La Salle and his companions, what compels them to establish, maintain, and defend their “association” is, above all, the will to promote, in truth, gratuitous education.

Already in *Explanation of the Vows*, produced before 1725, the part allotted to gratuity is greater than that devoted to association. We find in Brother Maurice-Auguste’s thesis a more complete clarification of this question, with an analysis of the different emphasis between 1694 and 1717. Even when at the outset the accent is on association, no hesitation is possible. The schools they committed themselves to keep, resolving to beg for alms and to live on bread alone so as not to abandon them, can be none other than these gratuitous schools, the precise reason for the new association. This is why they make a vow of association. From the time of the Bull of Approbation, the formula of consecration no longer applies the term “vow” to association:

I promise to unite myself and to live in society with the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who are associated to keep, together and by association, gratuitous schools . . . Wherefore I promise and vow poverty, chastity, obedience, stability, and to teach gratuitously . . . which vows of poverty . . .

The “vow of association” is no longer mentioned. Restoring association to a place of honor as the object of a vow is relatively recent.¹⁸

We know with what intransigence De La Salle and his companions establish, maintain, and defend the absolute nature of effective gratuity. We recall the battles they have to fight to remain faithful to gratuity. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Brothers often have to fight to defend it, standing up to the city authorities who employ them, for the Brothers are most often teachers in public schools. When they have to give way here or there, they have recourse to the Holy See and obtain “indults.” It is possible to continue making a vow of teaching gratuitously because this vow corresponds both with their awareness of the identity of association and also, largely, with a practice that necessity demands.¹⁹

I was brought up as a novice and a young Brother in this awareness of identity, even if the effective practice of total gratuity had become the exception (for example, only for some students in a given school). The gratuity of the school was impossible, because of the economic situation of Catholic institutions. It remained on the horizon of our communal aspirations. It remained the norm for very specific matters (no gifts from students or their families).

The practice of gratuity shifted toward the effective poverty of Brothers and communities. The absence of an individual salary and the parsimony of the salary allocated to the community helped to keep school costs low, if not totally free. On the other hand – not without significance – association on the economic level was lived “from the source,” because the community, not the individuals, received the salaries.

“Keeping together” schools aims at a “pastoral” objective.

In these gratuitous primary schools, each Brother exercises a responsibility that can be called “pastoral” without violating either the spirit or the letter of a Lasallian reading of this founding experience.

On the one hand, the Brother is, in fact, in “his” class “from morning until night.” Thus he is responsible for the same group of children for a lengthy period of time. He teaches all the (rudimentary) subjects, but he wants to link initiation in knowing how to live with this apprenticeship in knowledge. The Brother can establish an *educational and personal relationship* with each student. He concerns himself with getting to know them individually as “persons”: the children are not, first of all, “students,” partakers of such and such a subject. The Brother also seeks to understand them better by trying to discover their social environment, family background, and so on. (Consider the psycho-sociological realism of *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, to which Sunday Meditation 33 provides the key to a “mystical” reading: the Good Shepherd knows his sheep, and they know him.)

Already in this sense, “association” of a group of Brothers “to keep a school” does not mean the absorption of each teacher into an undifferentiated, functional anonymity. The Brothers are easily interchangeable, certainly, but in fulfilling a set task, they establish a sustained personal relationship with a specific group of young people and with each individual.

On the other hand and equally necessary, each Brother in his class is a “shepherd” in the sense that he is not only the teacher of secular subjects at a basic level but also the “catechist,” the minister of the Word of God, as John Baptist de La Salle often recalls. This dimension of the Brother’s activity is important quantitatively, because he must teach Christian doctrine for four and a half hours per week. The Institute clings very insistently to these four and a half hours, a norm sanctioned by the Bull of Approbation. I have also known, if not a rigorous adherence to such a timetable, at least the explicit recommendation to strive to approach it.

Furthermore, the catechetical dimension of the Brother’s activity is qualitatively *essential* and *all-encompassing*.

It is *essential*, because in order of priority, it is first. No child is admitted into the school unless he follows the catechism lessons; no “teaching” Brother is not a catechist, first of all. The Lasallian texts, especially the *Meditations*, do not fail to stress this absolute priority of explicitly announcing the Gospel by catechesis. For John Baptist de La Salle, every Brother is primarily a minister of the Word of God: that is his main task. “You have been appointed by God,” he writes, for example, in the meditation on Saint James the Greater, “to succeed the holy Apostles in teaching the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and in confirming his holy law in the minds and hearts of those whom you instruct when you teach catechism, which is your principal function.”²⁰

The texts could be multiplied. It has even happened that the secular task of the Brothers has sometimes been belittled to extol even more, it was thought, their primary responsibility in the catechetical sphere.

Catechism is *all-encompassing* in the Brother’s accomplishment of his ministry, because it is not solely, or even primarily, a matter of communicating knowledge but of raising children as Christians, of “teaching them how to live well,”²¹ according to the expression in the *Rule*, often repeated and elaborated in Lasallian spiritual writings. We can then say that the preoccupation with Christian education is at the core of all the Brother’s educational activity; it acts as the mainspring of all his relationships with “the children entrusted to his care.”

I think that everything in Lasallian language, whether using the word *evangelical* or not, offers the Brothers their ministry as bringing to life the salvific presence of Jesus Christ, “the Good Shepherd,” for these young people. The Brothers are associated “together to keep schools,” but this “association” is one of “pastors,” first of all, especially concerned to be “for the children in their care, ministers of Jesus Christ, dispensers of his mysteries,” responsible for “announcing” the good news of the Gospel to them.

The Founding Experience of an Association of Brothers

Here again, association reveals itself in a truly generative way. It is exclusive. It implies pedagogical sharing. It acts within the fraternal “communion” of people who are committed to the same consecration.

An association to “keep” schools

By this expression I mean that there is a complete connection between the educational team and the religious community. It is the Brothers, and they alone, who keep the school. For a long time, there are no lay teachers, and the actual association of Brothers can certainly feel that the entire progress of the school depends on it. It is certainly still clearer as long as no external power intervenes in the school’s curriculum, schedule, and so on. Reading the *Rule* and *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* certainly communicates the feeling that the Brothers are the only masters on board.

This awareness of identity and of realistic ability “to keep schools together” profoundly marks the Brothers’ mentality. Even when it becomes necessary to accept the collaboration of “lay teachers,” the Brothers long continue to see and to treat them as “backup staff” rather than as true partners in association. To be aware of this, you only have to study the evolution of the official thinking of the Institute (General Chapters, Circulars of the Superior General) concerning the place of lay teachers in the school.²²

Two references correspond to moments in my life. Immediately after the Second World War, the General Chapter of 1946 is strongly conservative, if not reactionary. Concerning the presence of laypeople in educational institutions, it begins by declaring that the first priority is to dismiss all female staff where they were wrongly introduced. With respect to male lay teachers, if it is impossible to do without their services, the objective over time is also to do without them. Ten years later, the report of the General Chapter of 1956 states that the members of the assembly are divided about the place to give to lay teachers: a necessary evil for some, a providential opportunity for others. The Superior General, who issues the report, declares that he agrees with the second opinion.

For the sake of truth and balance, I will add this: I have just referred to official language. My actual experience is one of great friendship and mutual support between Brothers and laypeople.

The Brothers “keep” the school more as a connection between religious community and educational team, expressed with regard to school organization by an important identification of the religious superior with the school principal. Even in the exercise of the professional task, the Brother is dependent on the Director, to whom he owes “obedience.” The role of the Director is paramount for the association of Brothers to work properly in the entire running of the school.

For a long time this unity stamps the Brothers’ behavior and mentality, and I know confreres who had a severe problem of conscience when a lay teacher was placed in authority in the school where they were teaching. I can still hear one Brother saying to me in this respect – it was in 1957, and in the institution where he was teaching, a layperson had just been appointed as “department head” – “I did not make a vow of obedience to laypeople.”

Association works in the Institute in a very real way at the level of each school because:

- the Brothers are placed by their religious superiors, and their mobility isn’t hampered by factors unrelated to the internal life of the Institute;

- Brother Director is appointed by the major Superior; usually, the span of his “professional” mandate is set by the *Rule*,²³ which limits the time of his appointment as a religious superior;
- the major Superior exercises his authority, his control (or help), in the professional domain; the canonical visit implies, for example, a visit by Brother Visitor to all classes (including those of lay teachers, when there are any).

We are already touching on the community of pedagogical sharing.

An association that implies pedagogical sharing

In a sense, one reason for the precocious beginning of the “community” of masters under the Founder’s impetus is De La Salle’s awareness of the risks that the independence, even the anarchy, of the teachers poses for the success of the schools in Reims.

By so uniting them, he wants to synchronize their procedures, attitudes, and pedagogical and educational aims. He achieves this quite quickly: this convergence of viewpoint, behavior, and efforts – the continuity that it will facilitate in the progress of the children in school – will bring about the success and renown of the Brothers’ schools.

This convergence will further facilitate the functioning of association in the Institute, insofar as the Brothers’ pedagogical methods are characterized by common features.

Pedagogical sharing, then, is in the form of a certain consensus, and newcomers are usually initiated into a specific style and a standard number of pedagogical models, including details (for example, the use of the signal).

But it would be wrong purely and simply to confuse association to keep schools with pedagogical uniformity, with repetitive tendencies and the risk of routine. The danger of pedagogical conformity has certainly been a real one in the Institute, and it can happen that association does not sufficiently promote pedagogical creativity. *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* can be expressed in restrictive terms, as also can more than one presentation of the *Rule*.

But we cannot forget what represents a permanent force for adaptation and innovation, the structure of pedagogical sharing among the Brothers that resulted in *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*.

This guide has been prepared and put in order (by the late M. de La Salle) only after a great number of conferences between him and the oldest Brothers of the Institute and those most capable of running a school well, and after several years of experience. Nothing has been added that has not been thoroughly deliberated and well tested.²⁴

It would suffice to remember all that the Brothers have devised for the renewal of the school and for the creation of new school models over the course of the years. Thanks to sharing, association (in the Institute) proves itself to be fertile. (Simply think about the quality of so many school textbooks produced by “*Réunion de Professeurs*”: this label corresponds to a reality, as Brother

Yves Poutet's studies demonstrate.²⁵) This sharing in association constitutes the pedagogical effects of communion in the consecrated life.

An association acting within fraternal “communion,” people committed by the same consecration

I have already stressed the complete coinciding in the founding experience between pedagogical team and religious fraternity: it is truly the community of “associated” Brothers that runs the school, and it is the Institute that runs the gratuitous schools. Briefly, I must stress that the fact of being composed of men assembled by one and the same total consecration to God strengthens the association to keep schools. The opposite must not be forgotten: the strength of association to keep schools can often reinforce the links of fraternal communion, give substance to the consecrated life, and affirm fidelity to religious commitment.

Association draws new strength from the fact of the “mystical” dimension that nourishes and stimulates it. The mystical dimension is the awareness of a vocation, a call from God with the Brothers. The mystical dimension is nourished by community practices (prayers, formation, spiritual reading, retreats). The mystical dimension interprets and underlies Lasallian spiritual writings, produced specifically for the Brothers, which repeatedly invite them to discover the evangelical meaning of their work, endeavor to educate them in the interior life that is indispensable for an educator, and call them to commit themselves with renewed élan in an evangelical manner.

Most especially, the fraternal spirit that quickens community life expresses itself in a specific style of educational relationships. During an initial assembly held in 1686, De La Salle's companions take a certain number of steps that express the burgeoning awareness of their collective identity. One decision concerns the change of name of their community. They decide to change the name *Masters of the Christian Schools* to *Brothers of the Christian Schools*. They fully realize that this name change has a double significance: both in community life, in the manner of the first Christians, and in the style of educational relationships. This is how Blain ends his discussion of this topic:

[This name Brothers of the Christian Schools] tells them that as Brothers they owe each other mutual proofs of tender but spiritual friendship and that considering themselves as the elder brothers of the children who come to be taught by them, they should exercise this ministry of charity with truly loving hearts.²⁶

As we can guess, it's not a question here of painting an idyllic picture of the origins of the Institute but of showing the different aspects, the various dimensions, and the numerous implications of association for keeping gratuitous schools. We see that association clearly stamps everything we can call the “manner of being,” as much for the Brothers as for the Institute. Most of the highlighted elements can be considered as essential. In fact, the Institute's attachment to each one of them has often resulted in their being considered as very essential.

In reality, what is essential is not each element taken separately. It is more the global nature by which they form the dynamic totality in which each one takes part, the vital cohesion that makes

them indispensable to both identity and mission. We must go farther and state that the reason for being a Brother, rather than the way of being a Brother (and an Institute), is at the root of association.

Association for the Evangelization of Abandoned Youth

Association arises from the desire to answer an urgent need of young people who are far from salvation. It is sustained by this awareness in numerous times of crisis. Finally, what is essential to association is the dynamic link between the reason for being and the manner of being.

The desire to respond to an urgent need of abandoned young people “far from salvation” causes the birth of association

It is the experience of the Founder himself. His mission is engendered by his awareness of the distress of numerous young people and the urgent need to bring them the means of salvation by establishing a Society of ministers of God at their service.

It is the experience of the birth of the community, when young people wanting to follow Jesus Christ and fulfill the most useful ministry to the poor²⁷ come forward to replace De La Salle’s first companions, who are disconcerted by the evangelical views they did not have when they became schoolmasters.

It is the awareness that the ecclesial environment of the community rapidly expands, bringing in its wake numerous appeals and the relatively fast growth of the community, which makes it tend to become a “society.”

The awareness of responding to an urgent need of young people sustains association, particularly in numerous times of crisis

It is true for the Founder. From the moment he realizes with certainty that his “vocation” is to establish this community, he invests himself almost totally in this project. His action is inseparably one of “structuring” and “leading” the society. “The establishment and the running of the community is, for him, God’s work.”²⁸

We can add to the fundamental plan of establishing and sustaining the association:

- his concerns with regard to discerning vocations, initial formation of the Brothers, supporting them, and their spiritual sustenance;
- his special effort to clarify the common progress of the Brothers by nourishing their “spirit of faith, zeal, and community” by his spiritual writings;
- his vigorous reaction when he has to defend the activity and originality of association – from *Memorandum on the Habit*, to disagreements that can put him at variance with such and such a bishop, to enduring the struggle for gratuity, to school innovations;
- the criteria that during crises determine the reaffirmation of his definitive choice and the relaunching of his initiatives as Founder (for example, the four-part program at the time of the crisis of 1691).

It is [also] true for the Institute. In the first part of this presentation, I recalled how certain remarkable acts of association punctuate the foundation of the Institute. By virtue of the willingness of John Baptist de La Salle, the Brothers take in hand their way of life and their very destiny. This appears at the time of the vow of 1694 and the act of election of Superior that follows, and also in 1701, when the Archbishop of Paris wants to impose an ecclesiastical Superior on the community, and especially in 1714, at a critical time for the survival of their society, the decisive step of recalling the Founder by a group of Brothers who assemble together on their own initiative.

What is essential to association: the dynamic “link” between its “way of being” and its “reason for being”

Why schools? Because in the context, they seem to be a structure, both ecclesial and human, for “these” young people to have access to salvation in Jesus Christ. It is for this purpose that the Brothers associate to keep schools. This objective causes them to take to heart:

- promoting and defending the gratuity of schools;
- transforming the school both to adapt it to the reality of young people, with a cultural and a community plan, and to prepare them for life (human, social, professional, ecclesial);
- making the school a place of catechesis, a locale for proclaiming the Gospel.

Such perspectives are at the heart of association, because it is only together that the Brothers can succeed in changing something in the situation.

Why a total consecration to God? Because we recognize God’s call, God’s presence, and God’s action in the history of the discovery of the need for “salvation”; because the educational service to these young people is also a concrete way to serve God’s glory; because we are engaged in an evangelical undertaking and must be “consistent” with the mission.

These perspectives are at the root of association, more and more understood and lived as requiring a communion in faith and the élan of zeal.

Yes, when all is said and done, why association? Surely to constitute in the Church a new body of people totally consecrated to God with the aim of allowing “abandoned” young people to have access to “the promises of God in Jesus Christ.”²⁹

Live, Jesus, in our hearts. Forever!

Notes

1. Brother Michel Sauvage (1924-2001) was born near Lille, France, and became a Brother at the age of 16. He made his theological studies at the Angelicum (Rome) and did his doctoral thesis in Lille (‘Catéchèse et Laïcat’ LIGEL, Paris, 1963, a text still used today). He was a professor at the Lateran Pontifical University in Rome (‘Jesus Magister’) and was theologian for

his brother, Bishop John Sauvage, at Vatican II. He also worked on the commentary for *Perfectae Caritatis* in the Unam Sanctam collection. He was an expert at the General Chapter of renewal of the Brothers in 1966 where he was elected Assistant Superior General for Formation. Subsequently, he was named Regional Superior of the Brothers of France. In the late 1980s, he was appointed Director of Lasallian Studies in Rome. His thought, strongly Trinitarian, remains very relevant to the problems of today.

2. John Baptist de La Salle, *Rule and Foundational Documents*, trans. and ed. by Augustine Loes and Ronald Isetti (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), 13.

3. *Cahiers Lasalliens (CL) 2 and 3* (Rome: Maison St. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle), 140 and 96 pages and *CL 11*, 414 pages.

4. *Lasallian Themes 1* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1992): “Association as a Style of Life and Action,” 38–44; “Association in the Early Days of the Institute,” 45–53.

5. Dom François-Élie Maillefer, *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996) Ms. Carbon, 24, Ms. Reims, 23–24; parallel account in Jean-Baptist Blain, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle, Founder of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, A Biography in Three Books*, trans. by Richard Anandez and ed. by Luke Salm (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), Book One, chapters 9 and 10, 78–94.

6. Maillefer, Ms. Reims, 24.

7. *Memorandum on the Habit*, in 1689, uses the expression “Community” forty times, sometimes referring to the small local community, more often speaking of all the Brothers in the areas of Reims and Paris.

8. Blain, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle, Book Two*, 287.

9. Blain, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle, Book Two*, 288.

10. De La Salle, *Rule and Foundational Documents*, 203.

11. Blain, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle, Book Two*, 268–269.

12. Blain, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle, Book Two*, 289.

13. See Maurice-Auguste Hermans, *Les vœux des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes avant la Bulle d’approbation. Cahiers Lasalliens 2*, 37–42. *L’Institut des FEC à la recherche. Cahiers lasalliens 11. Society*: use of the noun in the Lasallian texts, 51; 51, n. 4; the saint and two Brothers form a *S.* of three in 1691, 54; 54, n. 3. Societies of common life. Some examples in the seventeenth century, 5–6; 5, n. 6–8; 6, n. 1–8; a promise, an oath, a tacit commitment, one or several vows bind their members, 6; 6, n. 6–8. The vow of association, 190–191; 190, n. 4; 191, n. 1–5; the vow of teaching gratuitously is prior to the publication of the petition of 1722, 189–

192; 189, n. 4; 190, n. 1–4; 191, n. 1–6; 192, n. 1–5; this same vow is not mentioned in the *Abrégés* of 1722, 193; 193, n. 1; differences between the texts from Paris and the texts determined at Rome, 157. See whole table, page 441: juridical character of the vows, duration; the vows taken or not by the Brothers establish a criterion to distinguish the members of the Institute, 77. All these references would need to be studied closely.

14. Blain, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle, Book Two*, 339.

15. *Cahiers Lasalliens 2*, 67–68; and *Cahiers Lasalliens 57*.

16. Blain, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle, Book Three*, chapter 12, 657.

17. *Cahiers Lasalliens 2, Table des Matières*. But see *Cahiers Lasalliens 11*.

18. *Circular 406*, 21 Dec 1977, 126–127. See the formula of vows suggested in the *Rule* of 1987: “Wherefore, I promise and vow chastity, poverty, obedience, association for the service of the poor through education, and stability in the Institute according to the Bull of Approbation and the Rule of the Institute” (article 25).

19. Brother Bruno Alpago (Argentina) studied the Institute’s history of service of the poor; *The Institute in the Educational Service of the Poor* (Rome: Lasallian Studies 7, 2000) was presented to the capitulants of the 43rd General Chapter. Obviously the work has a lot to do with gratuity.

20. John Baptist de La Salle, *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*, trans. by Richard Arnandez and Augustine Loes, and ed. by Augustine Loes and Francis Huether. (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994), 145.3. See Michel Sauvage, FSC, “La place capital de l’enseignement religieux dans la vie du Frère,” in *Catéchèse et laïcité* (Paris: Ligel, 1962), 592–600.

21. To teach them how to live properly, to prepare them for work when their parents want to employ them: the educational objectives go beyond school time.

22. Here it is necessary to consult the studies on shared mission. Moreover, I remember that in my youth, a retreat was organized at the beginning of the school year for the lay teachers of the District of Lille. There were not many at the time, only one or two in each school.

23. Canon law is sometimes quoted, which limited the mandates of religious superiors, but in the Institute, the *Rule* set these term limits of three, six, and nine years. After nine years, an indult had to be obtained from Rome.

24. John Baptist de La Salle, *The Conduct of Christian Schools*, trans. by F. de la Fontainerie and Richard Arnandez, and ed. by William Mann (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), preface, 45.

25. I am here referring particularly to a presentation given in Montpellier, in 1980, I think, on the different activities of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in the twentieth century, under the guidance of Gérard Cholvy, Professor of History, co-author with Yves-Marie Hilaire, of *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine* (Toulouse: Privat, 1985–), in 3 volumes.

26. Blain, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle, Book Two*, 186.

27. Blain, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle, Book Two*, 162.

28. R. I. 8.

29. De La Salle, *Meditations*, 199.3, quoting Eph 2:12,19; 205.3, quoting Eph 3:6.