

Sauvage, Michel and Miguel Campos. "Announcing the Gospel to the Poor: The Spiritual Experience and Spiritual Teaching of St. John Baptist de La Salle. [The Two Missing Chapters of the 1981 English Translation of *Annoncer l'évangile aux pauvres*.]" Translated by Cyril Ory. Edited by William Mann. 1999. *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 3, no. 1 (Minneapolis: Institute for Lasallian Studies at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, 2012).

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## ***SPECIAL ISSUE***

### ***Announcing the Gospel to the Poor: The Spiritual Experience and Spiritual Teaching of St. John Baptist de La Salle***

[The Two Missing Chapters of the 1981 English Translation of *Annoncer l'évangile aux pauvres*]

Michel Sauvage, FSC and Miguel Campos, FSC  
Translated by Cyril Ory, FSC. Edited by William Mann, FSC.

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## PREFACE

In 1981, an English translation of Michel Sauvage's and Miguel Campos' *Annoncer l'évangile aux pauvres* (1977) was translated by Matthew J. O'Connell and published by Christian Brothers Conference, Romeoville, Illinois, USA. The second and the third chapters of Part One of the original (pages 71-241) were unfortunately left untranslated and therefore not included in the publication. One can find on page xvi of that translation the following Editor's note:

A portion of the original work of Brothers Michel Sauvage, FSC, and Miguel Campos, FSC, has been omitted in this English language version, with the approval of the authors. This omitted section deals with the gifts that God has given to De La Salle to enable him to undertake his mission to the children of the poor, and the manner in which the saint developed these gifts so as to respond in a heroic degree to the call of God.

Two of the gifts of God are emphasized by the authors, the gift of Ministry and the gift of Faith. To develop these gifts De La Salle habituated himself to live in the presence of God, considering God as the all of his life while looking on earthly things as naught. He looked upon all things and considered all events with the eyes and the mind of faith, he attributed all to God, and he acted only in view of God. That he might not bear the name of Minister of Jesus Christ in vain, De La Salle endeavored to reproduce in his life the example of the Christ of the Gospels. He sought to realize in his life the ideal of St. Paul, "It is no longer I who live but Jesus Christ Who liveth in me," and he made a model for his life and for his Brothers the ministry of St. Paul, "On behalf of Christ, therefore, we are acting as ambassadors, God . . . appealing (to the children) through us."

Finally, De La Salle made it his aim in life to live and move by the action of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the author of the gifts given to John Baptist, the charism to announce the Gospel to the poor and abandoned children. It is the Holy Spirit Who gives to the Brothers an understanding of the designs of God, Who introduces them to the new life of faith, Who gives them the power to touch the hearts of those whom they instruct. The Holy Spirit is central to the spiritual teaching of De La Salle, so central that the role of the Spirit in the ministry of De La Salle and his Brothers will become a dominant theme.

What follows, then, is a translation by Cyril Ory, FSC, of these two missing chapters (these would have been found after page 41 in the English text). This translation was prepared for use in the study of Lasallian Spirituality at the Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies in the summer of 1999.

A word of thanks is also owed to Frederick Dillenburg, FSC, for his invaluable assistance in entering this material into the word processor and so helping to prepare this translation for use at the Buttimer Institute.

The original 17th-century texts of De La Salle were written for a group of Brother teachers working with young boys, and this is the story and these are the writings being analyzed by Sauvage and Campos and presented in this publication. However, the wisdom found in these texts has been judged to transcend their original context and so continues to inspire countless

men and women in our day in their work with students of all ages, young and adult alike. Consequently, it is hoped that you will find these two chapters helpful in your efforts to continue to understand better the writings and teachings of John Baptist de La Salle.

Authors:

Michel Sauvage, FSC (1923-2001)

Born near Lille, France, Brother Michel Sauvage 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, is very involved in the problems of today.

Miguel Campos, FSC (1938- )

Brother Miguel Campos was born in Guantanamo, Cuba in 1938 and entered into young adulthood at a time of revolution and the beginning of the Castro Regime. His educational journey throughout these turbulent times led him from home to the United States then back to Cuba where in 1959 he entered the novitiate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The political situation compelled Brother Miguel to complete his novitiate in Panama in 1961, whereupon he enrolled in the undergraduate and graduate programs in religious studies at the Lateran Pontifical University in Rome, Italy. Later, Brother Miguel earned his doctorate in Theology, also at the Lateran.

Over the course of his fifty-one remarkable years of religious life, Brother Miguel has distinguished himself as an excellent teacher, an outstanding retreat master, and an international scholar without peer. Our deepening knowledge of and appreciation for Lasallian spirituality and pedagogy are due in no small measure to Brother Miguel's extensive research and writings. His critical role in the insightful design of both the Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies and the Lasallian Leadership Institute, formation programs that have contributed greatly to the significant growth of Association for the Lasallian Educational Mission in our Region, might emerge perhaps as one of Brother Miguel's greatest legacies.

Brother Miguel is currently a distinguished professor of Lasallian Mission at La Salle University in Philadelphia, PA, a position he assumed after serving in Rome for seven years as a member of the General Council.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- Blain 1 John Baptist Blain. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Vol. 1, Book 1). Translated by Richard Arnandez. Romeoville, IL: Lasallian Publications, 1982. In CL 7 (1961).
- Blain 2 John Baptist Blain. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Vol. 1, Book 2). Translated by Richard Arnandez. Romeoville, IL: Lasallian Publications, 1983. In CL 7 (1961).
- Blain 3 John Baptist Blain. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Vol. 2, Book 1). Translated by Richard Arnandez. Romeoville, IL: Lasallian Publications, 1986. In CL 8 (1961).
- Blain 4 John Baptist Blain. *The Mind and Heart of St. John Baptist de La Salle* (Vol. 2, Book 2). Translated by Edwin Bannon. Oxford, England: De La Salle Publications, 1998. In CL 8 (1961).
- CAL Michel Sauvage. *Catechesis and the Laity* (Paris 1961). Translated by Edwin Bannon. Oxford, England: De La Salle Publications, 1998. In CL 8 (1961).
- Campos 1 Miguel Campos. *L'itinéraire évangélique de saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle et le recours à l'Écriture dans les "Méditations pour le temps de la retraite,"* Vol. 1. In CL 45 (1974).
- Campos 2 Miguel Campos. *L'itinéraire évangélique de saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle et le recours à l'Écriture dans les "Méditations pour le temps de la retraite,"* Vol. 2. In CL 46 (1974).
- CE John Baptist de La Salle. *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*. Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996. In CL 24 (1965).
- CL *Cahiers Lasalliens* (Vol. 1 – 65, 1959-2010).
- Da Jean-Baptiste de La Salle. *Les Devoirs d'un chrétien envers Dieu et les moyens de pouvoir bien s'en acquitter*, Vol. 1, *Expose en discours suivi*. In CL 20 (1964).
- DS *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*
- E Jean-Baptiste de La Salle. *Exercices de piété qui se font pendant le jour dans les écoles chrétiennes*. In CL 18 (1963).
- EM John Baptist de La Salle. *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*. Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1995. In CL 14 (1963).

- IC Frères Bernard, Maillefer, and Blain. *Index cumulatifs des noms de lieux et des noms de personne*. In CL 9 (1974).
- IP Jean-Baptiste de La Salle. *Instructions et prières pour la sainte messe, la confession et la communion*. In CL 17 (1963).
- L *The Letters of John Baptist de La Salle*. Critical edition, Paris, 1954. Romeoville, IL: Lasallian Publications, 1988.
- M Jean-Baptiste de La Salle. *Méditations pour le temps de la retraite*. Original French edition, 1730. Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994. In CL 13 (1963) and CL 1 (1959).
- R John Baptist de La Salle. *Collection of Various Short Treatises*. Original French Edition, 1711. Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1993. In CL 15 (1963).
- Rayez 1 Andre Rayez. "Etudes lasalliennes," in *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 109 (Jan-Mar 1952): 18-63.
- Rayez 2 Andre Rayez. "La spiritualite d'abandon chez saint Jean-Baptiste de la Salle," in *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 121 (Jan-Mar 1955): 47-78.
- RB John Baptist de La Salle. *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*. Original French Edition, 1703. Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1990. In CL 19 (1964).
- RC *Regles communes des Frères des écoles chrétiennes*. CL 25 (1965) [Page number references following RC refer to English translation: *Common Rules and Constitutions*, Rome, 1947.]

References to the works of St. John Baptist de La Salle will be to the pages of the pertinent volumes of the *Cahiers Lasalliens*, except for references to the *Méditations*, which will be to the number of the meditation (1-208) and to the points (1, 2, 3). *Collection*, as used in the text, refers to JBD, *Collection of Various Short Treatises*.

## CHAPTER ONE<sup>1</sup>

### **The Gifts God Has Given You to Aid You in His Work**

That which first impressed De La Salle when he considered his Brothers is the fact that these men had joined him in community for a specific service. Experience had taught him that this encounter was not due to chance. Those who were accompanying him in this endeavor had freely chosen to give themselves to the work of the schools. His personal experience had also taught him that God had led him throughout his own existence. And these men themselves were here only because God had touched their lives. The presence of each one was, above all, the result of a particularly profound experience of God's involvement in his personal story. Their life in the community made no sense apart from this vital relationship. For this reason, De La Salle constantly reminds his Brothers of that primordial encounter with the living God.

At the same time, he reminds them that this gratuitous gift transforming their lives was not bestowed on them for themselves alone. They have the mission of sharing that gift with others; the first object of their ministry is that very experience of God's saving power that they once had and that they continue to have every day:

Beseech this Divine Spirit, therefore, to make known to you all the gifts with which God has favored you, so that you can communicate them, not in the words of human wisdom, but with those with which God's ministers are inspired.<sup>2</sup>

To the Founder, the Brother is thus a man whom God has predisposed and graced with spiritual gifts that will "aid him in his apostolate." He has received faith in order to communicate it to others, for his personal experience is part of salvation history. For this reason, he is called upon to interpret his entire life and to live his whole existence in the spirit of faith.

#### **I. The Gifts God Has Given You**

"It is likewise by the movement of God's Spirit that all those who announce God's kingdom speak even today."<sup>3</sup> Such a statement clearly shows that in De La Salle's eyes the Brother's ministry is definitely a spiritual activity. But the Founder's thought is still more profound it seems. For him, the Apostle does not just bring to others some kind of marvelous gifts, some exterior objects given to one by the Lord with the mission of passing them on. The Good News that one announces has profoundly first touched the center of one's being. One's enthusiasm to share it with others springs from the interior transformation one has experienced and continues to experience, thanks to one's intimate relationship with the Spirit. If one presents oneself as prophet, as a "man [or woman] of God," it is not in virtue of some kind of extrinsic delegation. It is in virtue rather of a personal relationship of love.

In a word, one's experience of God's entry in one's own life belongs to the Good News one announces; one proclaims to others a salvation that first touched and transformed one's life by snatching one from that egotistical turning in on self and by opening one to a solicitude for the salvation of poor abandoned youths. It is at this depth that De La Salle invites the Brother to

recognize his ministry as a spiritual gift, one that specifies the still more fundamental gift of faith, the principle of commitment and source of light.

### ***1. The Gift of Ministry: Called and Touched to the Heart by God***

Very frequently De La Salle reminds his disciples of "the call," the "choice" of God. Faithful to the biblical tradition of vocation, he never separates, so to speak, the mention of the end of the divine election from that of the Savior's call. The almost invariable use of the preposition "for" is very significant here. And the end of God's choice is often expressed in terms that apply to the precise ministry of the Brothers. God has "*called*" them to a holy ministry, in charging them "to teach children, to proclaim the Gospel to them"; He *chose* them "to aid Him in His work by announcing to these children the Gospel of His Son and the truths that are contained therein"; He has "*destined* them to proclaim His word to children."<sup>4</sup>

According to circumstances, De La Salle links this "election" either to God's providential action, to the direct intervention of Jesus Christ, or to the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup> The essential element of his teaching remains always the same: God has entered the Brother's personal history to make him His "cooperator":

Adore God's paternal Providence for you in having separated you from the world to dispose you to acquire the virtue needed to acquit yourself well in your employment and bring up a large number of children in the Christian spirit.<sup>6</sup>

Along this line, taking up again a Pauline expression which pastoral literature of that time used gladly to describe priests,<sup>7</sup> De La Salle often invites the Brothers to look at themselves as "Ministers of God and dispensers of His Mysteries."<sup>8</sup> This is just another way for him to invite them to look upon their state as a "vocation" from God and their employment as a collaboration in "the work of God."

At other times, it is in reference to Jesus Christ's actions that he presents evidence of their vocation. He does so especially when speaking of the election of the Apostles who encountered Jesus Christ and were invited to leave everything and follow Him;<sup>9</sup> but he sees equally Christ's intervention through the power of the evangelical word in the call of certain saints.<sup>10</sup> These recollections touch upon the experience of the Brother who was likewise invited to put himself in the way "of following Christ," according to a traditional expression in the theology and the spirituality of religious life: "those who live in community have left the world to follow Jesus."<sup>11</sup>

As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," He told him; and Matthew got up and followed Him . . . Have you been as prompt to follow Jesus as was St. Matthew?<sup>12</sup>

The *Sequela Christi* of the Brother is also specified by the goal of Christ's call, the proclamation of the Gospel. In the same way, De La Salle applies to his Brothers such titles as "ministers of Jesus Christ,"<sup>13</sup> "ambassadors of Jesus Christ,"<sup>14</sup> and "cooperators with Jesus Christ."<sup>15</sup> Finally, if De La Salle also invites the Brothers to look upon themselves as "ministers of the Church,"<sup>16</sup> he does not intend by that to turn them over to the sole public mission which the hierarchy confers upon them. Certainly, he in no way ignores the reality and the importance of this official



mission; it constitutes, in his eyes, the efficacious sign of being sent by God himself.<sup>17</sup> But, inspired by the Pauline vision and language of the epistle to the Ephesians and the epistle to the Colossians, his ecclesiology is vigorously "pneumatic." The Brother is a "minister of the Church" in order to lead the children to enter "the structure of the ecclesial edifice";<sup>18</sup> but this edifice is the "sanctuary where God dwells through the Holy Spirit,"<sup>19</sup> and the objective of the ministry is to contribute to enabling the children to live the life of the Spirit.<sup>20</sup> If the Brother is a "minister of the Church" because she chooses him and sends him, it is in reality the Spirit who is working in this ecclesial organization of ministers.

Minister of God, cooperator with Christ, minister of the Church, the Brother receives "spiritual gifts" in view of his ministry. In many instances, De La Salle makes use of St. Paul's teachings on the charismatic gifts. Let us look at only one especially explicit text from the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, where the first epistle to the Corinthians is quoted at great length:

Reflect on that which St. Paul says, that it is God who has established in the Church apostles, prophets, and teachers, and you will be persuaded that it is also He who has established you in your employment; one of the signs the same Saint gives you is that there are various ministries, that there are different workings, and that the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in each of the gifts *for the common good*, that is for the good of the Church. One receives from the Holy Spirit the gift of speaking with wisdom; another the gift of faith from the same Spirit; you should not doubt that this is a great gift of God, this grace He gives you in charging you to instruct children, proclaiming the Gospel to them, and bringing them up in the spirit of religion.<sup>21</sup>

Elsewhere, making use of the same text from St. Paul, De La Salle exhorts the Brothers to work "according to the gift proper to them."<sup>22</sup> Definitely, this gift can be considered as that of "prophesy" in the original and biblical sense of the word. Called by God, as were the Prophets, it is under the movement of the Spirit of God that the Brothers can speak "to proclaim His Kingdom"; it is God "who speaks through them when they speak about Him and about that which regards Him."<sup>23</sup>

God, who through the ministry of persons, spreads abroad the odor of His doctrine throughout the world . . . has Himself enlightened the hearts of those He has destined to announce His words to children, in order that they can enlighten them by revealing to them the glory of God.<sup>24</sup>

"To enlighten hearts" calls for much more than an intellectual knowledge. De La Salle uses the word "heart" in its biblical sense; he is saying here that God's call to ministry produces a transformation in the chosen one – a conversion – the conversion of the "heart" without which "the conversion of the spirit is entirely sterile."<sup>25</sup>

De La Salle loved to contemplate the interior efficacy of divine action in the lives of saints: the Magi, St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Hilary, etc. . . . And each time it is to remind the Brothers of their own interior experience; for them, also, the Lord's passage has been unsettling, leading to a visible change of state. Thus, speaking of the conversion of St. Paul, who seized by grace

became in one moment an apostle and preacher of the Gospel whereas he had previously been its persecutor, the Founder concludes by challenging his disciples:

Rejoice with this saint at the special favor he received from God and thank Him for the grace He has given you in having withdrawn you from the world and having called you to so holy a ministry.<sup>26</sup>

Yet, as decisive as it is, this exterior change is secondary to the interior transformation that had taken place, and which De La Salle depicts in this manner:

It is necessary that the change which should take place in us should be interior and that we be altogether transformed by the light and the abundance of grace and by the possession of the Spirit of God. And if afterwards there appears some change in our exterior, it has to come only from the gushing forth of the happiness we enjoy in the depth of our soul, because it will be occupied only with God and with what we should do for love of Him.<sup>27</sup>

These last ideas often return to the pen of the Founder;<sup>28</sup> they point out the essential transformation, the radical conversion wrought by the Spirit's action in the heart of the one called; it is a total change of the center of vital interest; from now on, the one thus visited by the living Word is "possessed" by love, by the interior taste of God.<sup>29</sup>

This is, essentially, the "gift" received: that of conversion of the heart, of a change in outlook and in "passion." Nourished here, as always, by Pauline teachings, De La Salle often recalls that the liberating "gift" is definitely the indwelling of the Spirit Himself. This Spirit "who resides in you," he says to the Brothers, "should penetrate the depth of your souls"; and it is He who prays in you.<sup>30</sup>

At times De La Salle also makes explicit other components of this gift, other interior fruit of this action of the Spirit in the hearts of persons. The Spirit uproots sin and brings in its place the liberty of the children of God;<sup>31</sup> He makes the will steady and confirms it in good;<sup>32</sup> He enables one to understand and relish the message, giving the true knowledge of Christ;<sup>33</sup> He provides the talents needed by the minister to fulfill one's function<sup>34</sup> and confers upon the minister the assurance, enthusiasm, and intrepidity in proclaiming the gospel while confronting persecutions when necessary;<sup>35</sup> He it is who enables the Brothers to "touch the hearts" of children.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the gift of the Spirit to the Brother is likewise the same spiritual action of the minister of Christ by which the Spirit reaches the heart of young people in order to convert them.<sup>37</sup>

Accordingly, De La Salle never ceases recalling to his disciples this interior, visible "gift," not as a past and transitory event, but as an actual and dynamic reality. Without this living reference to and constant reviving of this personal relationship with the God who has captured one's heart, nothing makes sense in the life of a Brother. It is in this profound, interior assimilation into Christ by the Spirit who "acts upon" a person that one must accordingly understand definitively the meaning of the titles of "ministers," "ambassadors," and "representatives of Jesus Christ" that De La Salle confers upon the Brothers.<sup>38</sup>

## 2. *The Gift of Faith: Foundation of a Hope That Translates Itself into Commitment*

The personal experience of a Brother, that of his call, of his mission, is a faith experience. Faith engages him more deeply and consciously in a lively relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who give themselves to him and send him to others. And by all his activity, he contributes to realizing God's plan. The position from which De La Salle presents his proposals to his disciples is "the world of faith"; at the very beginning, one might say, without preamble, and apparently without many questions.

In this sense, it is the whole of the spiritual teaching of the Founder that speaks of faith. In most of his works, he does not give less than an important place to "faith" considered in itself, as a fundamental attitude of the Christian and of the Brother. The *Duties of a Christian* opens with an essay on faith. In addition, the first chapter includes the entire "first treatise" which deals with "the first duty of a Christian is to know God." Precisely, it is through faith "that we know God in this world."<sup>39</sup> The *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer* gives a large place to the "acts of faith" in parts one and two of the *Method*; they have by far the longest treatment.<sup>40</sup> Lasallian interior prayer is altogether an act of faith.<sup>41</sup> In the *Collection*, it is also faith that comes at the top of the list of the "principal virtues that the Brothers should endeavor to practice."<sup>42</sup> Many of the *Meditations for Sundays* detail various ways in which faith enters the Christian life.<sup>43</sup> Situated within the history of the people of the New Alliance, one can hear in the *Meditations on the Saints* the epic cantata celebrating the marvels realized by the great witnesses to faith in the Old Testament. The restrained thrill that one senses at times in the texts springs, without doubt, from the interior resonance produced in De La Salle by the melody of the epistle to the Hebrews.<sup>44</sup> More didactically, the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* evidence the need, the conditions, and the demands of faith.

But there is more still. Chapter Two of *The Rule* defines the spirit of the Institute as "that which is of the utmost importance, and to which the greatest attention should be given in the Community."<sup>45</sup> Now this unique spirit presents a twofold component:

The spirit of this Institute is, first, a *spirit of faith*, which should induce those who compose it not to look upon anything but with the eyes of faith, not to do anything but in view of God, and to attribute all to God...

Secondly, the spirit of their Institute consists in *an ardent zeal* for the instruction of children and for bringing them up in the fear of God . . .<sup>46</sup>

Evidently, neither the expression "spirit of faith" nor its contents belong exclusively to the time of De La Salle.<sup>47</sup> As usual; the Founder of the Brothers is here a tributary of a widespread current of thought. Is that to say that De La Salle sets himself to make a neat distinction between "faith" and the "spirit of faith"? Subject to a study of this matter in greater depth, which still remains to be made, we do not think so. There is no doubt that the Founder denounces as inadequate that "faith" which does not express itself in action; it is, moreover, in citing the epistle of James 2:17 or 2:26 that he speaks of faith without works as a body without a soul.<sup>48</sup> The definition that De La Salle gives to the spirit of faith in the *Collection* puts in evidence to the contrary its effects on "behavior":

The spirit of faith is a spirit, which, *in all things, is regulated and guided* by the maxims and sentiments of faith, taken especially from the Holy Scriptures.<sup>49</sup>

In the same way, the three effects of the spirit of faith deal with concrete existence: not to look upon anything but with the eyes of faith, not to do anything but in view of God, and to attribute all to God.<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, it seems to us that what follows in this study will show that in practice De La Salle used "faith" and "spirit of faith" as equivalent terms; he does not set them one against the other, as if the first were more speculative, and the second more practical; or as if "faith" concerned itself only with the intelligence and the "spirit of faith" touched the entire person. Most habitually, De La Salle attributes implicitly to the word "faith" the same weight that it has in Scripture. To live by faith is, above all, to receive graciously the presence of the living God, to surrender oneself unreservedly to His Love, and to rely with filial confidence on His fidelity.

In return, if it is necessary to speak of a certain originality in the Lasallian teaching on faith and the spirit of faith, it seems to us it consists, first of all, in the manner in which De La Salle applies to the particular situation of the Brothers an essential element of all Christian existence. He seeks to enliven the faith of persons who themselves have vowed their existence to bringing up poor and abandoned youth in the faith. Studying the spiritual teaching De La Salle addresses to his disciples on faith, we are led constantly to speak also of the ministry of faith in which they engage.

This bringing together is neither in addition to nor arbitrarily imposed upon Lasallian thought; nor is it either fortuitous or extrinsic to the teaching itself of the Founder. The faith of the Brother implies zeal, and his zeal implies faith. For the Brother, called by God to carry on God's work, faith, the active entry into the mystery of God, brings with it in the same movement his responsible commitment as God's "cooperator" in the salvation of others. And the Brother's activity has meaning and fruitfulness in proportion to which it is enlightened, inspired, and activated by his personal faith.

Moreover, De La Salle himself explained without any ambiguity this unity of the spirit of the Institute that expresses itself in two components, and the bond between the Brother's faith and his ministry. A text that is particularly significant by reason of the place it occupies and its content is that found in the prologue of the chapter in the *Collection* on the spirit of faith. The Founder's reasoning is one of simple logic: the Brothers' mission is to bring children up in the Christian spirit; now this spirit is that of the faith which should inspire all Christian behavior; and so the spirit of the Institute should be the spirit of faith:

Faith should serve as guide and light for all Christians to lead and direct them on the way to Salvation. It is that which makes St. Paul say that the *just*, that is the true Christian, *lives by faith* because they conduct themselves and act by views and motives of faith. It is for this reason that the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who have as the end of their Institute to bring up the children confided to them in the Christian spirit and to do whatever they can to procure it for them, should be so penetrated and so abundantly

imbued with the spirit of faith that they will look upon the sentiments and maxims of faith as the rule for their actions and of their entire conduct, and upon the spirit of faith as the spirit of their Institute.<sup>51</sup>

The mutual implication of the "spirit of faith" and of zeal is often recalled by De La Salle. In fact, for him, faith tends to radiate or to communicate itself; the "vigorous" preaching of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost and the efficacy of that proclamation of the Gospel are "the effect of his extraordinary faith."<sup>52</sup> *"For faith is the foundation of the hope we have,"* De La Salle reminds us following the epistle to the Hebrews; and he continues:

Thus, the knowledge that each should have and the instruction in it that one should give to those who are ignorant of it is one of the points of most consequence in our religion; this being so, how much, then, should you consider yourselves honored by the Church, being chosen by her for such a holy and lofty work. . . .<sup>53</sup>

From the first of the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, he had, in paraphrasing the famous reasoning in Romans 10, concentrated the attention of his disciples on the decisive importance of faith. God wishes all people to come to the knowledge of the truth, that is to say, of God Himself and of that which He has revealed:

God desires all of us to be taught this knowledge, that the light of faith may enlighten our minds. We cannot be taught the mysteries of our religion unless *we have the good fortune to hear about them*, and we cannot have this advantage unless someone preaches the word of God. *"How can they believe,"* the Apostle says, *"unless they have heard of Him? And how can they hear unless there is someone to preach?"* God . . . *kindles a light in the hearts* of those whom He has called to announce His word to children, *to enlighten them by making the glory of God known to them.*<sup>54</sup>

Here one has a presentiment of the kind of faith about which De La Salle intends to speak: it is that positive light which springs up in the secret of the heart by the gift of the Spirit, and which introduces one to a new world. It makes one enter a new universe; it turns one around; it "converts" one to the living God by tearing one away from one's idols. Without that faith, it is "impossible to please God."<sup>55</sup> And, in the same way, the prophet, the minister of God's Word, is, above all, a witness to this interior light that has converted them and led them from the mercenary concern to assure one's own security to enthusiasm for a disinterested service to youth by proclaiming, by example and by word, the Good News that has taken hold of them.

Faith is the foundation of hope in that *it is, first of all, conversion*; and the ministry of the Brothers ought to aim at this conversion of their disciples to faith. Without doubt De La Salle, at times, distinguishes the catechesis given by his sons from missionary preaching. They do not have to convert infidels;<sup>56</sup> nor do they have to make their students Christians, for baptism had already incorporated them into Christ.<sup>57</sup> To hold oneself to the strict sense of words, the students to be instructed in their religion are not "catechumens," since at the beginning of the Church the catechumenate prepared one for the reception of baptism and of the other sacraments of initiation. Nevertheless, De La Salle, at times, compares the task of his followers to that of those

preparing catechumens.<sup>58</sup> If baptism brought infants all the riches of Christ, it is necessary in order to enter into possession of these riches that they adhere to Christ by a personal act of faith.<sup>59</sup>

If the Brothers do not have to labor at "the conversion of infidels," they must bring up in the faith the young Christians to whom they address themselves.<sup>60</sup> Without contradicting himself, De La Salle can also talk of the need to convert the hearts of these young baptized.<sup>61</sup> In this perspective, some expressions of the Founder that at first sight seem surprising now become pregnant with meaning. He seems in fact to apply to these young children what the New Testament says of pagans who convert to the true God. The Brother, writes De La Salle, should exhort his pupils "to renounce their past life";<sup>62</sup> his ministry aims at "reconciling them to God," and it is the reconciling word that God has entrusted to him;<sup>63</sup> it is this word that "purifies" the Church in its young members;<sup>64</sup> by their activity, the Brothers work to "procure the Christian spirit for these children."<sup>65</sup> All these expressions converge. Nothing can begin in the Christian life without the faith that is its foundation; and faith is, first of all, conversion, that is, flight from the old world and entry into the new life that Christ came to bring to all people.<sup>66</sup>

This "conversion of hearts" is the work of God Himself; nevertheless, the Lord often reached the hearts of persons through the "word" of the prophets whom He has raised up.<sup>67</sup> De La Salle, frequently enough with a visible satisfaction, cites the passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews on the efficacy of the word. Alive and efficacious, it is capable of dividing flesh and spirit; it pierces the heart more deeply than a two-edged sword; it enters and penetrates the secret places of the soul; it insinuates itself between the soul and the spirit, even to the joints and marrow. All these formulas, taken into account by De La Salle,<sup>68</sup> shed light upon another expression of which he is fond: a minister of the Word of God the Brother must attempt "to touch the hearts" of the pupils.<sup>69</sup> The Brother will only succeed in this if he goes to the students as a "man of God," uniting with them from within a personal relationship with Him. It is here that the Lasallian teachings on attention to the presence of God, on interior prayer, and on the apostolic witness are brought together. We will return to this later.

### **3. *The New Light of Faith***

If faith is conversion, it is also, from the beginning, knowledge. De La Salle never forgets this. Through this knowledge of faith, the human spirit has access to a category of truth that reason alone can never attain; it is this that recalls one of the definitions of faith in the *Duties of a Christian*,<sup>70</sup> a definition entirely classical nevertheless. One cannot be saved without "believing and knowing distinctly a certain number of mysteries" that contain "the first principles and foundations of religion." And believing in these truths at the same time implies that one makes an explicit act of faith in these matters from time to time.<sup>71</sup>

In this same line, De La Salle occasionally presents the Brother's ministry in terms that can be called nationalistic: speaks of instructing the children, of having them learn the truths of faith and of religion.<sup>72</sup> *Duties of a Christian*, moreover, furnishes the catechist with the essential framework of this teaching of the faith. This teaching demands, on the part of the Brother, a serious doctrinal competence. He cannot content himself with only "simple faith" in the mysteries, which in a strict sense, would suffice for himself alone;<sup>73</sup> and piety itself, if it

"remains only within a person," is profitable only for oneself. To be "useful to the Church" in his ministry, the Brother should join knowledge to piety.<sup>74</sup>

His ignorance would be "criminal," because it would have consequences for those confided to him;<sup>75</sup> by speaking without knowing the doctrine, he would be a "false prophet."<sup>76</sup> In the same vein, if he should "leave learned disputes to the learned" and not become involved in delicate matters of doctrinal controversies,<sup>77</sup> his knowledge should be sufficiently extensive to enable him to comprehend clearly and to teach faithfully "the good and sound doctrine of the Church."<sup>78</sup> Therefore, he should apply himself to his studies in order to instruct himself thoroughly in the truths he must transmit to others.<sup>79</sup> It goes without saying that this doctrinal competence also requires a care for orthodoxy; De La Salle does not come back to this very often, but his teaching is so much clearer than that given in a context of agitation and doctrinal quarrels.<sup>80</sup>

Necessary as it is for faith, this dimension of knowledge is, nevertheless, far from sufficing for its plenitude and for its authenticity. First, this is because "orthodoxy," and *a fortiori* the only "orthology,"<sup>81</sup> does not constitute the unique or even the principal criterion of the authenticity of faith. Even if he does not use the modern term "orthopraxis," De La Salle does not miss a chance to remind his disciples that it is the evangelical quality of behavior which witnesses to the quality of faith. This is an idea that will be treated later.

In the second place, the adherence of the mind to new truths is far from exhausting the reality of faith, even when regarded from the angle of knowledge. Without quoting the angelic doctor, De La Salle knows very well that the act of faith does not bear so much upon the stated doctrines as upon the reality they envisage.<sup>82</sup> And reality is of a personal and historical order; faith makes one penetrate into a new universe that is not one of abstract ideas. Through it, one "enters into the knowledge of God and of His mysteries;"<sup>83</sup> the object of faith is less a theology than an economy, in the same way that the historical plan of the *Duties of a Christian* bears witness to it.<sup>84</sup> If eternal life consists in knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent on the earth, faith that is the prelude to that vision seeks to "know God in Himself and in all He has made, the Son of God made human and that which He has done for our salvation."<sup>85</sup>

Through his ministry of the word, it is to this knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ that the Brother should strive to more personally introduce the youth confided to him. For it is still less to the word of God than to the God who speaks that one pledges one's faith. The only reason there is a word of God is that the Lord has personally involved Himself in human history; Christian "mysteries" are first of all the salvific actions of God in Jesus Christ.<sup>86</sup> As for Christian morality, also the object of the Brother's ministry, it is summed up in the personal response to the loving advances of the personal God.<sup>87</sup>

De La Salle gathers in one Pauline formula the whole personal content of the Brother's ministry of the word. That which his zeal should inspire him to do is to bring it about that his pupils "no longer live for themselves but for the one who died for them."<sup>88</sup> The knowledge of faith thus amounts to that of the "paschal mystery." It deals with the gratuitous love of the Father that goes to the extent of sending His Son to sinful humanity; to the self-sacrificing love of the Son for the Father and on behalf of humans that leads Him to obedience unto death for the salvation of humanity; for His death becomes, by the resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the

source of life for all. And Christian existence consists in living the new Christian life, of which the Holy Spirit is the source, in consenting to die to self.

We come to a third reason for which, according to De La Salle, the new knowledge brought by faith - that entry into the world of God and His plan for salvation - is not reduced to an assent of the mind to truths. An encounter with a personal God who has thrust Himself into history, faith is the *response of adherence* to a person; and that adherence involves one's entire self. De La Salle thinks less of theorizing about faith and more of presenting its realization in the great believers. Thus, commenting on the journey of the three Magi, "setting out from a faraway region to look for Him whom they knew not and who was not even known in His own country," he says that the light that guided them was not solely that of the star, "it was more that of faith." Also, they became capable of announcing the Messiah in the very place where He was born, but where others did not know how to recognize Him. They alone possess the "true light," for "it is by faith alone, according to the expression of St. Paul, that one makes one's way to Jesus Christ."<sup>89</sup>

Thus has humanity been predisposed by the gratuitous love of God even in the free response one brings to Him, and one's journey toward the Lord for whom one searches gropingly is already the evidence that the Spirit is at work in one's heart. If one moves toward Christ by faith, it is also by faith that one will encounter Him and cling to Him. That is one of the lessons De La Salle invites his Brothers to draw from the story of St. Peter. It was faith, he says, that led him to renounce all things to follow Jesus Christ and to attach himself completely to Him.

In a certain manner, the total adhesion of the person precedes and provokes the knowledge of faith; it is because he attached himself to Jesus Christ that Peter was capable of perceiving in Him that which escaped the others:

It was the faith with which he was imbued that led him to make that generous act; and because Jesus Christ was, according to the worldly view, a worthless man, without renown at that time, it was only a lively faith that was capable of making him leave all to follow Him, not having, according to appearances, anything to be gained from Him.<sup>90</sup>

Arriving at a new knowledge through the personal involvement of his faith, Peter penetrates still further into the "mystery" of Jesus, in pledging himself daily to a more full following of Him. He lives in His company, and on Easter morning he will be the first to run to the tomb "there to search for the body of his beloved Master, a fact which testifies to his great attachment to Jesus." And at Caesarea, he is the first to confess the unique presence of God in this man he loves:

His faith shone far more vividly than that of the other Apostles, moreover, when Jesus asked them what others thought of Him. And when Jesus asked what they themselves thought, St. Peter, enlightened as he was from above, as Christ Himself declared, exclaimed: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*"<sup>91</sup>

Such is the knowledge of faith: the adherence of person to person. Thus understood, faith truly gives direction to all existence by its own dynamism. It involves one notably in a daily effort to "conform" oneself to Christ; or rather, it opens one every day to an interior welcoming of that



Spirit who Himself, little by little, conforms one to Christ. A passage from the *Collection* summarizes the essence of what De La Salle never ceases to recall.

The first effect of faith is to lead us to attach ourselves strongly to the knowledge, love, and imitation of Christ, and to union with Him. Faith leads us to the knowledge of Christ, since this is eternal life. Faith leads us to the love of Christ, since anyone who does not love Him is a reprobate. Faith leads to the imitation of Christ, since the predestined ought to conform to Him, and to union, since we are to Jesus Christ like branches to a vine, dead when separated from Him.<sup>92</sup>

## **II. Depositories of Faith In Order to Announce It to Children**

Whatever might be his insistence on the spiritual interiority of a dialogue of love, of call, and of mission, which is priceless, never does Lasallian teaching turn into self-centeredness. Neither does it encourage any kind of spiritual individualism. At first, beyond doubt, this is because De La Salle constantly links the vocation of a Brother to his being sent to others to labor for their salvation. But also, and more fundamentally, because, at the same time, he never ceases to root his disciples ever more deeply in the specific soil of their daily ministry – for the gift God has bestowed on them concerns at the same time "these children" that He has confided to them – De La Salle roots them in their reality by making this gift shine constantly.

De La Salle thus calls them to understand their ministry as the actualization of the unique history of Salvation, of the design of God. In this perspective, he invites them to nourish themselves with Scripture in order to introduce the youth confided to their care to it. As a last resort, it is the Brother himself who is called to become, with regard to his disciples, a living gospel.

### ***1. Correspond to God's Designs for You***

De La Salle uses the expression "design of God" in only two contexts where he specifies it for the Brother:

Adore God's fatherly Providence in withdrawing you from the world in order to prepare you to acquire the virtues you need to do your work well and to educate a great number of children in the spirit of Christianity. Are you faithful to correspond with God's designs in your regard?<sup>93</sup>

Nevertheless, in emphasizing for each of his disciples that God had plans for each of them personally, the Founder at the same time reminds them that this plan of God "for each one" is part of "God's unique work" and forms it. The *Meditations* present a life-giving interpretation of the Brother's ministry in the light of the mystery of the Savior God who never ceases to act. However humble it may be, their daily reality belongs to that unique mystery. The *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* especially propose this dynamic reading of call and of the mission in situating it in this unique Son of God, accomplished in Jesus Christ, and in the course of being realized in the Church.<sup>94</sup>

To this purpose, it seems significant to us that the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* open by recalling the creative work of the bountiful God and close with a vision of the celestial Jerusalem described in the book of Revelation.<sup>95</sup> The daily work of the Brother takes on meaning and dynamism within the grandiose movement of the history of salvation, from Genesis to its ultimate consummation. The Brother is enlivened by the present action of the Holy Spirit who touches his heart associating him to the realization of the new creation in favor of that youth unaware of the good news of the alliance.

Thus locating his disciples in the totality of God's design, De La Salle educates them in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* in the constant journeying in a "spiritual life" directed by faith: of the reality lived in and by the scriptures in their concrete existence. This deepening is brought about through three dimensions stressed successively that can be summarized in three formulas. God, who wills the salvation of all, *chooses you* for the salvation of *these children*. You work in your employment at the *building up of the Church* on the foundation laid by the Apostles. Your disciples are *your hope in Jesus Christ*. Apply yourself to your employment.

*Meditations* 193-198 highlight the "gift" made by God to the Brothers and "the work of God" that they realize within the "salvific design" of God. In calling them and sending them by the action of this Spirit, the Lord actualizes His universal salvific will in favor of the children confided to them.<sup>96</sup> The Brothers put at their level the mystery of the liberating and illuminating action of God manifested powerfully in Christ whom they represent in the measure to which they "conform" interiorly to Him.<sup>97</sup> Placing themselves in the physical condition of the youth, they are visible angels of God to reveal the "secret" of His plan<sup>98</sup> and to "build up the body of Jesus Christ."<sup>99</sup> The totality of salvation history does not distract them from their prosaic "today"; it roots them in it. This amplification involves them more seriously in their daily labor which they are called to accomplish as ministers of God and dispensers of His mysteries.

The movement of *Meditations* 199-204 is in the opposite direction: starting from the particular ministry of the Brothers, De La Salle insists on *its ecclesial character, its sacramental import*. In their ministry, the work of God is visibly wrought today by the establishment of "foundation of the edifice of the Church."<sup>100</sup> They participate in this way in the visible mission of the Apostles, and in that of Jesus Christ Himself, by which the Father manifests His saving love for humanity.<sup>101</sup> They are called, therefore, to live as worthy ministers of the New Testament,<sup>102</sup> to put the goods of the new covenant within the reach of these abandoned children.<sup>103</sup> The gift they receive is the call "to imitate God" handing over through love His only Son.<sup>104</sup> Zeal for the new covenant compels them to snatch children from the slavery of sin,<sup>105</sup> that they might live in filial freedom,<sup>106</sup> in union with Christ.<sup>107</sup>

Before being a virtue, their zeal is participation in the gratuitous and prevenient love of the father of Christ and the visible manifestation of that love. The taking seriously of the details of professional life is strengthened by the abundance of perspectives opened that way: in the *Meditations* on correction, De La Salle shows, through a particularly delicate example, the significance of the educational relationship in the liberating design of God.<sup>108</sup> He recalls under what conditions of love and abandonment to the Spirit the teacher who "corrects" is faithful to this design.<sup>109</sup>

*Meditations* 205-208 concentrate rather on the *eschatological perspectives* of the life and work of the Brother. The hope for a heavenly reward sustains him, but this hope is already a reality. His recompense, in fact, will be to find the children confided to him associated with him in the eternal glory of God.<sup>110</sup> It is these children who constitute his hope, and the vision of heaven impels him to take more and more seriously his earthly ministry.<sup>111</sup> Enthusiasm for the fulfillment of the promises leads him to anticipate God's judgment in the now of his activity, by examining every day what is the proper conduct in his employment.<sup>112</sup>

This is how De La Salle invites his disciples to follow God's plan for them. Using the Word of God, he little by little leads their hearts "from earth to heaven itself at the same time that the creating breath of that Word little by little fills the earth itself with realities truly heavenly." Thus he helps them understand that "sacred history is not an extraordinary history," but their daily history as educators of the children of the common people, and that sacred history is not a story of the past that took place "in a small corner, without organic relationships within itself nor with human development," but that through their involvement of love for their pupils, it is God Himself who retakes "little by little, possession of the history of all humanity as well as the story of every human"; it is Christ, who by His Spirit, "takes hold of all peoples to form a single people, of all people to free a single man, the heavenly Adam."<sup>113</sup>

## **2. *To Fill Oneself from the Sacred Books, in Order to Communicate Their Secrets***

From the unique design of which God is the source, the protagonist and the meaning, Scripture lays out the stages and reveals the meaning of Jesus Christ. That is why De La Salle interprets the vocation, the mission, the work of the Brothers – their story – in light of Scripture. Through Scripture, he places their vocation and their mission "in the continuity and unity" of sacred history, at the same time that he helps them come to a better awareness of their participation in "the perpetual creation of this sacred history – that is to say, of the history where it is God who acts."

There is nothing surprising, therefore, about the fact that the Founder often sends his Brothers back to scripture as the content and the source of the exercise of their ministry. The unity of the same spirit "of faith and of zeal" is constantly suggested anew in this preference. The Brothers must proclaim the word: they must, therefore, nourish themselves with it. Assiduously frequenting scripture, they will be impregnated with it; and they will announce it spontaneously.

In order to enter into this spirit, the Brothers of this Society shall, first, have a most profound respect for the Holy Scriptures; and in proof thereof, they shall always carry the New Testament with them and pass no day without reading a part thereof, through a sentiment of faith, respect, and veneration for the divine words contained therein, regarding it as their first and principal rule.<sup>114</sup>

The explanation in the *Collection* places this respect for Scripture at the head of even means "which are given to us and which are the best suited to aid us in acquiring the spirit of faith."<sup>115</sup> Speaking of the "gift" of ministry and of the "gift" of faith, we have met the Scriptures at every step. We know that it – the New Testament especially – is the essential source of the Lasallian

spiritual doctrine.<sup>116</sup> We will not discuss this aspect now, but will limit ourselves to considering the Lasallian teaching on the love and the diligent study of Scripture.

Alongside general formulas that point out the object of the Brother's ministry through doctrine, De La Salle utilizes others that point out rather the scriptural aspect and especially the evangelical aspect of the content of his religious teaching. The Brothers must speak, must announce the word, the word of salvation; announce the gospel; announce, teach the truths, the gospel maxims.<sup>117</sup> In a word, their mission is to give the knowledge of the gospel to those who have not yet received it.<sup>118</sup> At times, De La Salle explains himself further with regard to this biblical content. To announce the gospel is to teach the "mysteries Jesus Christ accomplished on earth"; it is to allow children access "to the incomprehensible riches of Christ."<sup>119</sup> The Founder insists especially on the scriptural character that should clothe moral teaching; the Brother should "exhort" students with the very words of God.<sup>120</sup>

The works that De La Salle has composed for the practical exercise of his disciples' ministry are faithful to this orientation that he has given them in the *Meditations*. It is true for the *Duties of a Christian* and the *Instruction and Prayers*.<sup>121</sup> *Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* themselves insist in the Preface on the gospel inspiration of Christian civility<sup>122</sup> and the work itself very often refers to scripture.<sup>123</sup>

His constant use of the words of the Bible and his long interior familiarity with the spirit of scripture explain for the most part, we believe, why De La Salle plans to propose to the pupils – poor children with no culture – the same evangelical perfection, with no sugar coating, that differs in no way in its essence from that which he presents to the Brothers. The entity of themes and the similarity of language that De La Salle writes for his disciples or for the children that "God confides to them" is in fact striking. This ideal has nothing abstract about it; he calls upon them, Brothers and pupils alike, to become that which they are by the gift of the Spirit – and which Scripture reveals – children of God, brothers [and sisters] of all, those who believe in Christ and are on the move, living members of the people of God. And besides, the gospel traces general directions that are precise but which one must internalize and translate in one's own situation.<sup>124</sup> It is from the difference in situations that arise the diversities of concrete moral exigencies and not from the hierarchy of a morality in two stages, nor from a difference between precepts and evangelical counsels.<sup>125</sup>

The importance given to the text of scripture in the catechetical teaching of the Brothers is linked, in the thinking of the Founder, to the efficacy proper to the Word in the awakening and growth of faith:

See of what consequence it is to you to know well Holy Scripture, since St. Paul assures us that the one who is ignorant of the Scripture will oneself be ignored, and that it is *Scripture that confirms one in the Faith* and in the practice of virtue; for, as the same St. Paul says: it is Scripture that instructs us for salvation through Faith in Jesus Christ and which, being inspired by God, is useful to instruct, to reprove, to correct, and to lead one to piety and justice, in order that the person of God be perfect and well-disposed toward all kinds of good works.<sup>126</sup>

Then, too, De La Salle asked his Brothers that they retreat, after a fashion, behind the Word of God; it is neither their own thinking nor their own doctrine that they should transmit, but rather God's message. That is what is underscored particularly in declaring to his followers that, in imitation of the Precursor, they are merely a "voice" that God chooses to use, without doubt, but which has value only through God's action:

Let us humble ourselves, considering that we are nothing more than a voice, and that of ourselves we are incapable of saying anything that will do the least good for souls.<sup>127</sup>

Moreover, he calls upon them not to sweeten the message lest they "change the word"<sup>128</sup> and, in particular, to proclaim the gospel of the cross in all its unadorned harshness.<sup>129</sup>

The call to have recourse to the Word of God itself in the exercise of the ministry is most often bound up with, in Lasallian texts, the urgent invitation to the Brothers to nourish themselves diligently with the scripture. The *Rule* of "not passing a single day without making some reading in the New Testament" is in this way often amplified.

In these sacred books are to be found the inexhaustible treasures of the knowledge and wisdom of God. *These books, according to the expression of the prophet, must "be eaten" by all true servants of God, that they may subsequently be able to communicate and explain their secrets* to those whom they are called upon to instruct and to form in the spirit of Christianity . . . If you wish to be filled with the Spirit of God, and fully competent in your employment, let your chief study be the holy books of Scripture, and especially the New Testament, that it may be the guiding rule of conduct for you and for those whom you have to instruct.<sup>130</sup>

This general recommendation, suggested very naturally by the meditation on the example of St. Jerome, is often taken up again and made more specific with regard to various New Testament texts.<sup>131</sup> De La Salle in no way minimizes the intellectual demand; he talks of "instructing oneself," of "studying," of "learning." But he insists even more upon necessity of an internal assimilation, of a meditation in depth that allowed the Word to impregnate the spirit and the heart, to imprint itself in some way on one's being: "nourish your soul with the holy maxims contained in this precious book, and let them sink into your mind by frequently meditating thereon."<sup>132</sup>

Over and above the necessary study, De La Salle invites the Brothers to enter into the monastic tradition of the *lectio divina*.<sup>133</sup> It is known that this essential practice of Monachism has been defined for today by Thomas Merton as the "meditative spiritual reading" consecrated above all to holy scripture and to the Fathers of the Church "who comment on it."<sup>134</sup> This reading is thus called "divine" because of the preferential subject to which it applies itself, the scripture; likewise, because of the interior dialogue between God and the person into which it introduces the reader and into which it develops. The prescriptions of the *Rule* in the Lasallian origins about reading scripture beyond doubt had in view facilitating this familiarity with scripture and this dialogue with God.<sup>135</sup> Daily spiritual reading likewise tended to this end.<sup>136</sup>

But, as always, De La Salle does not limit himself to the statement in *The Rule*. He explains the sense and the spirit of this exercise, for it is not the mechanical performance of the law that nourishes the heart. Thus speaking of spiritual reading in the *Collection*, he describes it according to the "traditional manner in which one made the *lectio divina*."<sup>137</sup> One put oneself in the presence of God and asked Him for His light and His strength. Do not read through curiosity, and take the time to relish the message and relate it to one's life, etc. The "spiritual" book is not only the scripture, though this should without doubt have a privileged position. It is, above all, his purpose that they perform this reading as a kind of dialogue with God. De La Salle here returns to a spiritual "technique" often formulated by the Fathers.<sup>138</sup>

Read your book as if you were reading a letter that Jesus Christ Himself would have sent you to make known His will; and, above all, if it is the Holy Scripture, read it with a very profound respect.<sup>139</sup>

This interior and spiritual approach to scripture already shows that the relationship between the "reading" and the "ministry," however intrinsic it may be, was neither perceived nor presented by De La Salle from a utilitarian perspective. Certainly, at the deepest level, that which the Brother should "transmit" is what he "contemplates." Nevertheless, the exercise of spiritual reading is in no way a direct preparation for catechesis; it is rather a constant undertaking to open oneself to God and to hear His Word with docility, a progressive impregnation which will not fail, at the right moment, to shine forth, since the process of which it is the essence desires to be gratuitous, like the God who speaks and saves. We will enlarge upon this remark later on in speaking of the search for God in prayer.<sup>140</sup>

For the style of the study and the reading of the Word that De La Salle suggests is already one of meditative prayer, of interior prayer.<sup>141</sup> In fact, Lasallian spiritual reading is normally a preparation for interior prayer. And as it is not an intellectual activity, Lasallian interior prayer follows, in its development, the same movement that the Founder proposes for spiritual reading: recalling the presence of God; the invocation of the Holy Spirit; a long consideration to imbue oneself with the subject, to relish it and fill one's spirit with it; and, finally, its application to one's concrete existence. And it is God's Word that forms the whole substance of Lasallian interior prayer.

At first sight, in its object, it is for the first as it is for the second part. Putting oneself in the presence of God is accomplished in reality by recollecting oneself before (and within, if one dares to say it) the God of the economy of salvation who reveals Himself in the scripture.<sup>142</sup> It is the same in the second part of interior prayer, which considers the mysteries of Jesus Christ, a virtue to be practiced, or a gospel maxim to be absorbed.<sup>143</sup>

Nevertheless, in referring the Brothers to the scriptures, Lasallian interior prayer does not turn the Brother toward the past; its object definitely is the actual manifestation, in the present salvific action, of a living God for us today: the Father, author of all good, who never ceases manifesting His love and calling humanity to filial intimacy; the Son who became one among us, delivers Himself to humanity unto death, heals them, saves them, incorporates them into Himself; the Holy Spirit who is given to believers, makes them children, prays in them to the Father, joins them together in the Church, animates them so that they act in God and for God. In a word, the

object of Lasallian interior prayer is the "mystery" in the Pauline sense of the term. Likewise, meditation on the scripture is inseparable from regard for life in the concrete.

But scripture also constitutes the matter, if one can express oneself in this manner, of Lasallian interior prayer. In fact, on each page of the *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, one encounters the invitation to "penetrate oneself interiorly" with a biblical text.<sup>144</sup> And the diverse acts of the *Method* that De La Salle suggests to his Brothers – not as models to reproduce but as examples from which one can freely inspire oneself – are often literally weavings from Biblical texts.<sup>145</sup>

De La Salle himself very clearly explains this incessant recourse to scripture in interior prayer:

Occasional passages from the Holy Scripture are often very useful in assisting us to make these short reflections; besides, being the words of God, as revealed to us by faith, they possess in themselves a divine unction. In themselves, they lead us to God, help us to have God present before us, cause and preserve in us a relish for God.<sup>146</sup>

This text testifies to the role scripture plays in interior prayer: the words of God, which "lead us to God," help to "preserve in us a relish for God." This function of scripture as mediator shows its unique value but also its limit. The Word puts one in contact, not with religious ideas, or the historical past, but with God living and active. From this we see that it (the Word) has no meaning and produces no fruit apart from an interior relationship that it can vivify but cannot replace.

It is also true that scripture speaks of God only to one who is unattached, poor, and silent in order to welcome and to listen to the God who speaks to one in the Word. Multiplying "reflections and reasonings," desiring in some sense to conquer the mystery and to appropriate it into oneself is to shut oneself within oneself instead of opening oneself to God.<sup>147</sup> More even than a biblical prayer, Lasallian interior prayer is a prayer of faith. It aims to turn one even more to God, to enter more intimately into the knowledge of God, to change one's attention to what is real, to animate even more the entire life of faith. Above all, it seeks to intensify the inner meeting of God and the person, and that is why it tends to move from multiplied reasonings to rare and prolonged reflections that result in "simple attention." One presents oneself "before God" and "in the presence of our Lord" in silence, "without discourse or reasoning."<sup>148</sup>

If it is without words, Lasallian simple attention is not without an object; it does not substitute a subjective idea or a vague image of God for God Himself. It is rather listening to an "interior word," as De La Salle says. In this sense, scripture is present and active to the highest degree. But at the same time, meditation tends to give way; every explicit word becomes useless, since, in faith, one unites oneself more directly with Him of whom the Word treats.

In Lasallian interior prayer, the Word also plays one of its habitual roles: the two-edged sword that penetrates to the heart of one, judges one, and calls one to conversion. As in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, the reference to scripture is like a beacon projected on daily life. More exactly, intensification of the contemplation of God has the effect on one's consciousness of causing a greater awareness of one's own wretchedness and sinfulness. This is not, however, to discourage but to stimulate. The second part of Lasallian interior prayer culminates, in a sense, in

the act of application. In it, one forms resolutions "to live according to the spirit of the mystery," to apply to oneself the virtue or the maxim. These resolutions ought to be, without doubt, "present, particular, and efficacious."<sup>149</sup> But this would be a considerable impoverishing of the meaning were one to reduce them to a decision of moral practice. The Lasallian context of the act of application, to the contrary, shows both that they spring forth naturally from the contemplation of Christ who speaks as well in doing as in teaching, and that the conduct they tend to promote implies, in its concrete reality itself, the depth of a living relationship with the Lord.<sup>150</sup>

In a more general manner, and in conformity with what is constant in his spiritual doctrine, De La Salle often returns to the necessity of practicing what the scripture teaches. The rule of thought and of prayer, the Word of God is equally the rule of life.<sup>151</sup> It is the "first and principal rule of the Brothers," writes De La Salle, who in this becomes part of the best religious tradition.<sup>152</sup> He continues in this vein with a plan for a general orientation. Scripture ought to inspire behavior. The *Collection* makes explicit the second means given to us: "by which we may acquire the spirit of faith and conduct ourselves according to this spirit; it is to animate all our actions with sentiments of faith."<sup>153</sup> The text then specifies how one is able to attain this goal; we can animate all our actions with sentiments of faith by performing them all through some motive of faith calling to mind, for instance, such passages of Holy Scripture as shall help and incite us to do them well.

The text continues, taking an example from one's meals.<sup>154</sup> Further on, the *Collection* offers an anthology of "passages taken from Holy Scripture which may help the Brothers perform their actions through the spirit of faith."<sup>155</sup> Here, also, the Founder joined himself with an ancient tradition.<sup>156</sup> The procedure might strike us as antiquated; and one might ask if the arbitrary, superficial, and mechanical application of an isolated passage of scripture to a determined action does not come from an external labeling of acts rather than from their profound animation by faith. In spite of that, let us retain the double inspiration that seems to be at the base of an out-of-date technique: to act through faith, that is to say, in "view of God," it is good to let ourselves be impregnated by the Word of God. The constant application to the prayerful reading and study of scripture aims at the permanent transformation of concrete existence.<sup>157</sup>

After all, in the Lasallian way of thinking, interior prayer constitutes a privileged instrument, both for the entry more deeply into the understanding of the word and for the evangelization always more real and exacting of life through the word. Because the approach one makes to the scripture - to God, to the mystery - is that of the entire person, of the "heart" and not only the mind. For interior prayer is, first of all, an interior purification, a detachment from self to open oneself to the God who speaks, because the "meditation" on the word is here completely directed to converting one's existence. Finally, and perhaps above all, interior prayer is less the effort of a person than the surrender of self to let oneself be taken by the Spirit; and it is through the Spirit that one penetrates to that which is most hidden in God.<sup>158</sup> It is the Spirit who by His interior light teaches one to put into practice the evangelical teaching;<sup>159</sup> it is the Spirit who "impressed profoundly" the sacred Word into the mind and the heart, into the life of the soul;<sup>160</sup> it is the Spirit, "the finger of God," who engraves this word in the "most secret depth of the heart."<sup>161</sup> Finally, it is the Spirit who imprints in the heart of this new creature, this child of God, as a seal



does on wax,<sup>162</sup> and makes one live and act by Christ, directing all one's behavior according to a regenerated humanity.<sup>163</sup>

Thus understood and practiced, interior prayer, and the spirit of interior prayer which is its fruit, will give to the Brother's words "that unction necessary to inspire the Christian spirit in the children."<sup>164</sup> Lasallian interior prayer, the effort of the interior assimilation of the revealed Mystery, ends in a renewed zeal to proclaim the mystery to children. If a Brother is diligent in "filling himself from the sacred books," it is in view of communicating its secrets to those under his care. The first point for the meditation on the feast of St. Jerome sums up this relationship between scripture and ministry:

If you wish to be filled with the Spirit of God, and fully competent in your employment, let your chief study be the holy books of scripture, and especially the New Testament, that it may be the guiding rule of your life, and of those whom you have to instruct.<sup>165</sup>

This text also recalls that meditation on scripture, like the proclamation of the Gospel, aims at a new life. The word of the minister is not only verbal; it springs from an evangelical life that witnesses to the authenticity of one's faith.

### **3. *Let Your Actions Be a Vivid Expression of That Which Is Expressed in the Gospel***<sup>166</sup>

It is therefore of great consequence, if you wish to acquit yourself properly of your duties, that you should teach more by example than by words. As St. Paul says further to Titus, "your doctrine must be without reproach, not only as to sound doctrine, but also as a sign and the outgrowth of your virtue. In this way, those whom you instruct will be unable to criticize what you say, since it will be conformable to what you practice."<sup>167</sup>

De La Salle does not hesitate to give priority to the lived Word of God over the purely verbal word. The Gospel is efficaciously proclaimed only in the measure to which it is seen as a reality "in action." Jesus Christ Himself, "according to what St. Luke says in the Acts of the Apostles, began to do thus before He taught."<sup>168</sup> Like with Christ, it can be said, in a sense, that it is the messenger of the Gospel oneself, the minister of the Word, who is called by one's ministry to become in some way "the living gospel," with regard to those God entrusts to one.

Your zeal toward the children you teach would not go very far and would not have much result or success if it limited itself only to words . . . To be effective, your teaching must be supported by your example . . .<sup>169</sup>

The knowledge of the message thus concerns the entire person; it is also a commitment to an action on behalf of the gospel that one is proclaiming by the ministry the word. It is the history of salvation in the course of realization that makes sense of the personal story of each person, and is a call to live this story in filial liberty and in an effort toward fraternal unity. Already, from this point of view, the messenger cannot but announce the Good News as one's "witness"; one's words are faithful to the "truth" only insofar as they are spoken from within the new world which one intends to make known to the children in order to introduce them into it. True orthodoxy is thus much more than the mere identifying of propositions to an objective content. It implies from

the beginning a personal option, the commitment to a creative fidelity. De La Salle insists no less on that which one would perhaps designate today as "orthopraxis."<sup>170</sup>

At first sight, the Lasallian language to this purpose often seems to go in the sense of a kind of horizontal and uniform moralism. The Founder often returns to the "good example" a Brother should give to his pupils. It is the "first thing" they should do; the Brother is required to communicate "holiness" to them as much by his "good example" as by the words of salvation "he proclaims every day." Elementary logic: it is important to do what you say, to "preach through example and to practice" that which you wish to persuade; one should blush "to exhort to do" what "one does not do oneself."<sup>171</sup> Good example, the means of winning souls to God,<sup>172</sup> is still more indispensable when it is a question of children.<sup>173</sup>

And yet, by good example, the work of the Brother goes beyond the school; it touches all those who can be in contact with him; this is the way in which the Brothers "are obliged to preach to everyone, and it is the principal apostolic function they should exercise."<sup>174</sup>

Thus considered, it can be said that good example becomes, for a Brother, a means of "accommodating himself to the capacity" of his disciples. This preoccupation is certainly not minor. But a more attentive reading of Lasallian texts reveals a more profound teaching. The Founder does not refer the pupil to the teacher so much as a model; but he refers both one and the other to the Mystery in which the saving action is held out to the heart of the world. The Brother's example is thus more what we today call his witness. His behavior manifests visibly the reality of that which he proclaims.

De La Salle in fact often puts the "virtuous" conduct of the Brother in relationship with his faith:

It will avail you nothing to believe what Jesus Christ has taught us in the Holy Gospel if your actions do not furnish the proof of your faith; in such a case your faith is in vain . . . in what *do you give witness* that you have the spirit of Christianity? Be assured that to possess it, *it is necessary that your actions do not give the lie to the faith you profess, but that they are a living expression of that which is found in the Gospel.*<sup>175</sup>

The Founder also says that one must "confess the truths and maxims of the Gospel by one's actions."<sup>176</sup> To be faithful to the doctrine is not only to make one's words conform to the object of the revealed message; it is to witness by one's life to the reality of that which is taught. Thus, for De La Salle, poverty and detachment are a lived proclamation of the faith that abandons itself to Providence.<sup>177</sup> In the same way, the charity, kindness, and patience of the teacher proclaim in their own manner to the pupils who benefit from them, the Good News of the Gospel.<sup>178</sup>

Detachment, forgiveness, and patience are visible "expressions" of the gospel "acted out" by those who proclaim it. But in that way also this Christian testimony reflects a transcendent force that manifests its active presence in the heart of this world. Such a conduct in fact "is highly elevated above human conduct."<sup>179</sup> In a word, it is the minister's "holiness" that should be apparent; and this holiness reflects that of the only Holy One in the measure in which it is, for the messenger, a humble and joyous awareness of an intimate relationship with the transcendent God, a sense of a presence who dwells in the heart and constantly calls one to surpass oneself, to go out of oneself.

It is this living relationship with God that De La Salle calls "piety." Such is, after all, the essential "testimony" that a Brother should bring to his disciples, that of the transcendent presence of God in the most intimate aspects of human life. Such a testimony is more than good example. One cannot seek to produce it by a moral effort alone. This relationship lived by one at the heart of one's history and which shines forth in one's whole life, is first of all the fruit of a kindly gift. It surpasses the minister at the same time that it manifests itself in the minister. It constitutes the most tangible sign of this realization of the "mystery" in human history which the minister's word proclaims.

At the same time, moreover, the testimony brought by the minister is that of the power, the efficacy of the Word of God. De La Salle invites his Brothers to contemplate, in wonder, humility, and gratitude, the power of this living Word that displays itself, for their pupils, in their fragile ministry. Thus St. Bartholomew:

Attributed the success of his preaching to the living and effective word of God . . . much more than to anything which he could say by himself for he knew that the divine word alone is able to make the division between the flesh and the spirit so necessary to bring about the true conversion of a soul.<sup>180</sup>

In the same way, it is granted to each Brother to recognize with joy that the Word of God has acted powerfully in his pupils; their "conversion" to the Lord and their growth in Christ "visibly" testify to it.<sup>181</sup>

But it is within oneself, above all, that the power of the gospel manifests itself; and it is in their teacher that the pupils are able to test the power of the word, the power of the word that has "converted" the Brothers, leading them to consecrate themselves without reserve to the Glory of God in gratuitous service to "poor and abandoned" youth.<sup>182</sup> The power of the word that detaches them day after day from the pursuit of earthly goods to enable them to devote themselves to the search for God and God's Kingdom, thereby making them worthy of their ministry.<sup>183</sup> The power of the word that leads them to incarnate themselves in the world of the young, to understand and love them, to honor Jesus Christ in the poor, to prefer them to the rich ones on the earth "to accept the lowliness of an unappreciated state and of an obscure labor," in which they perceive prophetic grandeur and eschatological importance. It is the power of the word that enables them to bear with joy the "injustices, calumnies, and persecutions" inherent in their decision in favor of the poor.

### **III. To Read and Live the Whole of One's Existence According to Faith**

If a Brother is called, by the very gift of his Ministry, to become the living gospel for the children to whom he is sent and if he is to proclaim the faith by the whole of his life, his entire existence should be guided by the light and through a motive of faith. That is indeed the sense of the Lasallian analysis of the effects of the spirit of faith. Faith never ceases to change one's outlook, making one recognize in the world, in history, and in others the manifestation of God's salvific action. It changes one's intention and directs all activity to the achievement of the work of salvation. It changes the heart, opening it always more and more in abandonment to

God's will, even when by suffering and the cross, it little by little brings one to a self-sacrificing and purely gratuitous love.

### ***1. To Look upon All Things Through the Eyes of Faith***

Faith brings a decisive light by which the mind discovers undreamed of truths. It makes one enter progressively into the interior and affectionate knowledge of the Savior God and His son Jesus Christ. Over and above access to the knowledge of a new world, the light of faith brings a new way of looking at all reality. The first effect of the spirit of faith, says De La Salle, consists in looking upon all things with the eyes of faith.

In reality, we have consciously modified the Lasallian expression. The Founder expresses himself here negatively and speaks of "*not* looking upon anything *except* with the eyes of faith." If one should stop at this one passage in the *Collection*, one would have the impression that De La Salle speaks rather in terms of opposition. He distinguishes four ways of regarding creatures: by the eyes of the flesh, by the eyes of nature, by the eyes of reason, by the eyes of faith. The example he uses for each way – that of eating – tends to show, on the one hand, that only looking on reality with the eyes of faith can satisfy a Christian and, on the other, that while the eyes of the flesh and even of nature are in some way reprehensible, looking on reality with the eyes of reason is normal and acceptable, even though incomplete. As for the eyes of faith, the example given limits one to be on guard against excess at table, and never considers the positive significance of taking the proper care of one's body.<sup>184</sup>

Let us admit a certain reluctance to follow De La Salle when he writes, in the same context:

Not to look upon anything except with the eyes of faith is to not consider creatures except as God knows them, and as faith would have us look upon them. For example, when one sees a beautiful building, to look upon it with the eyes of faith, one would remember that all its beauty is only exterior, that its only end is to satisfy the senses, and that this beauty is only short-lived and will be so unstable and of such short duration that there will not remain a stone upon a stone nor will there remain even an idea of it.<sup>185</sup>

One can legitimately think that it is a little too easily disposing of God to think that He shares this pessimistic view of terrestrial beauty; one can also ask oneself if it is truly faith that demands such a depreciation of art, or is it rather that De La Salle here simply yields to the bent of a temperament little sensitive to the esthetic? One can equally consider that it is a tributary of a rigid interpretation of the end of time looked upon as the great universal catastrophe: today we well know that this form of eschatology does not exhaust the possibilities of theological and spiritual reflection on the question.<sup>186</sup>

Let us add that this depreciation of creation corresponds to a more general tendency in De La Salle. He frequently opposes nature and grace, reason and faith, the flesh and the spirit (often likened to body and soul), the world and God. Understood in this vein, the spirit of faith can lead to a kind of "contempt for the world," to a misreading of the realities and

demands of life and human activity, in short to an "angelism" that too easily pretends to refer to God and disdains the value of secondary causes, and thus in reality becomes guilty of what St. Thomas called "tempting God."<sup>187</sup>

It would not be necessary to dwell on this point, which is so evidently connected to a particular epoch, had not these negative connotations of the spirit of faith rather deeply marked a number of Brothers. The veil of the "spirit of faith" served to cover certain professional gaps or to canonize as the "will of God" manifest abuses in the exercise of authority. Through reactions against those perversions that are intolerable to a critical sense, or even to common sense, certain serious persons succumbed to the temptation to dismiss from their professional and communal life that insipid spirit of faith in favor of the seriousness demanded of them by their calling as educators.<sup>188</sup>

In truth, going beyond the curt words of Lasallian texts, too numerous as a matter of fact, if we strive to understand through the totality of his teaching the significance of this "looking with faith" on the whole of reality, it seems possible to see in the spirit of faith a dynamic principle for a positive reinterpretation of what is real. For far from disregarding the importance and the gravity of reality, the spirit of faith impels one to strive to fathom the very heart of what is real. Faith does not cause reality to disappear; it deepens its significance and enables one to perceive its rich significance. This new point of view is a gift of the Holy Spirit who enlightens the human heart:

It was by the descent of the Holy Spirit that the true light came into the world, and the first effect which the Holy Spirit produces in a soul that has the happiness of receiving Him, is to make it see things in quite a different light from that in which those who live according to the spirit of the world view things. It is of this subject that Jesus Christ says to His Apostles that when this Holy Spirit, whom He calls the Spirit of truth, comes, "He will guide you into all truth." This He will do precisely by making everything known, and by showing everything not only in its outward appearance, but as it really is in itself, and as it is seen when scrutinized by the eyes of faith. Do you make use of this light to judge all visible things, and to learn what is true and false about them, what is only apparent and what is substantial? If you act as a disciple of Jesus Christ enlightened by God's Spirit, that is the only light that should guide you.<sup>189</sup>

But rather than remain in considerations of a general nature, we can better grasp the dynamism of looking at all things with the eyes of faith, a dynamism that is both positive and literally creative, by taking a particularly significant example from Lasallian experience and the life of the Brothers. This deals with the matter of the eyes of faith applied to the poor children who are confided to the care of the Brothers. In the text just quoted, De La Salle notes that the Holy Spirit enables us to see "the things of heaven with a different eye than do those who live by the spirit of the world." It is this worldly spirit, suffering from blindness, or at least myopia, that judges superficially. Enlightened by faith, the believer does not substitute a reality "of heaven" for that of earth, but one judges the earth by its transcendental dimension. Meditating on the refusal the inhabitants of Bethlehem gave to the demands of hospitality by Mary and Joseph, De La Salle writes:

No one wished to receive them because [the houses] were occupied by people richer and more qualified than they were. See how one behaves in the world. One sees only what is exterior in persons, and one honors them only for those things that shine in the eyes of the world.<sup>190</sup>

The *Meditation* on the Magi makes even more precise, always with reference to the same example, in what this change of outlook consists. Enlightened by faith, the Magi recognized and adored in this infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, the Messiah:

See what their faith, with which their spirit was deeply penetrated, led them to do. Recognize Jesus beneath the tattered clothes of the children you instruct. Adore Him in them: love poverty and honor the Poor.<sup>191</sup>

"Recognize Jesus beneath the tattered clothes of the children." If one does not wish to remain with a vague sentimental impression, one should delve into what De La Salle intended to say. Two series of texts will aid us in doing this. On the one hand, De La Salle often returns to the enlightenment of faith that permitted Jesus' contemporaries to have a presentiment of His mystery, that is to say, to recognize in this man, over and above a fragile and human appearance – "vile" appearances says De La Salle<sup>192</sup> – the singular presence of the transcendent God, the manifestation of His saving love, the decisive fulfillment of the Messianic promises.<sup>193</sup> On the other hand, De La Salle challenges his Brothers in the *Meditation* for Christmas Eve: are they not often victims of the same blindness as were the inhabitants of Bethlehem, do they not too often miss the coming of Christ in their lives, because they do not know how to recognize Him in the poor?

How many times has Jesus presented Himself to you and knocked at the door of your heart to set up His dwelling and you were unwilling to receive Him? Why? Because He presented Himself as a poor "man, a slave, a man of sorrows."<sup>194</sup>

From this we are in a better position<sup>195</sup> to understand in what this new way of looking at reality with the eyes of faith consists: faith leads one to interpret reality anew in the light of Christ, in the light of God's plan. To recognize Jesus under the tattered clothes of the poor is, above all, to see in these abandoned children the Son of God called to grow in filial liberty, the heir of God's promises. Faith leads us to go beyond "appearances," and the folly of the Cross is more faithful to what is fully human than is a narrow-minded human wisdom which is a slave of all that glitters.

In like manner, when Jesus Christ enters into a soul, He raises it so far above human sentiment by means of the faith by which He enlivens it, that it no longer sees things except by the light of faith.<sup>196</sup>

This faith view is sustained and rendered dynamic by hope: to see above and beyond appearances, to be capable of already perceiving what has only been promised because one is sure that God acts in persons calling them to surpass themselves in their lives as God's children.

Thus, the eyes of faith, far from leading a Brother to escape into another world which would be God's world, guides him very concretely into his daily world, roots him in it, and drives him more deeply into it, causing him to have the same regard for poor abandoned youth as does God Himself. And this regard, respectful and at times filled with awe, is inseparable from resolute action aimed at combating the harmful effects of a poverty at once material, sociological, and spiritual. More profoundly, as De La Salle points out in the beginning of his *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, looking at reality with the "eyes of faith" is here the awareness of the distance existing between "God's universal salvific will" and the reality of the condition in the world as it is; to enter through faith into God's plan is from then on to wish resolutely to collaborate in the transformation of the world without allowing oneself to be overwhelmed by the difficulties of this combat.<sup>197</sup>

This way of understanding "look upon all things with the eyes of faith" seems to us more faithful, after all, to that which is of the essence with the Lasallian inspiration. It corresponds better to the dynamism of De La Salle's own life: having at first sight judged the school masters "inferior to his valet," nevertheless, he came to recognize them, by the eyes of faith, as ministers of God, as representatives of Jesus Christ, as workers of the Church. He could have this new way of looking at them, only by "incarnating" himself ever more deeply among them, going so far to this end as to renounce the ecclesiastical world in which he found himself completely at ease. The "conversion" of the way he looked on things was the fruit of his changed situation.

And because he knew how to see in them, by the eyes of faith, the ministers of God they were called to be, he understood in hope that which they were capable of becoming; he vowed his life to help make them so, and succeeded thus in giving witness to abandoned youth of the Good News, proclaiming by their life and their activity that the New World to which one adhered by faith is capable of transforming the present world. In fact, to look upon and to serve poor children as heirs of the Kingdom implies also that one works to insert them in human society, harmoniously for them and usefully for the world.

"To look upon all things with the eyes of faith" obliges one to take human reality seriously for another reason: because one knows that God is present and active everywhere, one should seek Him and trust to find Him in all things. It is thus that the *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, which often considers as absolute the opposition between God and the world, the interior and the exterior, still arrives, by the very logic of its realism about God's presence, to recover a certain confidence and a certain optimism with respect to creation. De La Salle had experienced too strongly the presence and guidance of God to be able to truly hold to the idea that one could find God only by fleeing what is human. But, reciprocally, to find God in life, one must truly search in the depth of one's being. A brief and strikingly beautiful formula apropos to St. Theresa expresses this:

Faith alone was her guide when she was in this state, and served her as a light. As she found all in God, so also she had the good fortune of finding God in all . . .<sup>198</sup>

The folly of the cross here knows how to integrate real human wisdom. Still, there are areas where the eyes of faith contend with human wisdom in the name of evangelical paradox. In his writings, De La Salle often takes up three concrete examples in which Christian perception

openly opposes the rational view of things: the beatitude of the poor, the pardon of enemies, and the acceptance of persecution and injustice. The *Meditation* for Pentecost Monday gathers together these three examples of evangelical paradoxes; they recall that such a view of events and situations can only be produced in the heart by the Spirit; it once more declares to the Brothers that it is this wisdom of the cross that they should inculcate in their disciples: for the beatitude of the poor, the love of enemies, and the bearing of injustices are required of all Christians and are in no way reserved for an elite;<sup>199</sup> it invites them to become interiorly docile to the interior words of the Spirit:

The truths that the Holy Spirit teaches those who receive Him are the maxims of the Holy Gospel. These He makes us understand and relish, and take as the guiding principles of our life and actions. It is the spirit of God alone who can make us understand them, and who can lead us efficaciously to practice them, for they are above the human intellect. Indeed, how could we possibly know, for instance, that "blessed are the poor," that we must "love our enemies," that we should "be glad and lighthearted when others revile us, persecute us, and speak all manner of evil against us," that we must "do good to them that hate us," and a great number of similar truths clearly contrary to what nature suggests, unless the Spirit of God taught us Himself? You are obliged to teach these holy maxims to the children you are charged to instruct. You must be thoroughly convinced of them yourself, so that you may impress them deeply on the hearts of your pupils. Make yourself docile, therefore, to the Holy Spirit, who can in a short time procure for you a perfect understanding of these truths.<sup>200</sup>

In the *Meditation* for the feast of St. Thomas, De La Salle takes up the same theme, but here to recognize lucidly that this view of faith is far from being general among Christians. This text presents besides an interest in showing that, for De La Salle, faith does not have bearing only on those truths to be believed, but also on the good to be accomplished. De La Salle declares that one could easily reproach St. Thomas for his incredulity. But, is this not the Pharisaic failure to realize the truth? How many among those who pretend to be disciples of Jesus Christ do not truly have faith?

The majority of Christians are even more unbelieving than St. Thomas, because they do not believe in Jesus Christ. For Jesus Christ said in the gospel: Blessed are the poor, and they consider them unfortunate. Jesus Christ says that it is necessary to do good to one's enemies and to pray to God for them, and they think only of getting revenge for the outrages they imagine someone did to them, and doing harm to those who have injured them in some way. Jesus Christ says that it is necessary to carry one's cross daily, and they seek all possible ways to escape suffering. Is that to have faith and to believe in the Gospel when they act this way?<sup>201</sup>

Addressing himself to his Brothers, the Founder exhorts them to leave behind such spiritual blindness, since they have to bring up others in this light. And he concludes with a pithy formula where we find the criteria of orthopraxis spoken of before it was explicitly set up. The authenticity of faith is judged by its conformity with one's conduct.



Do not be so blind, since you have the happiness to read the Gospel and to meditate upon it every day, and are entrusted with teaching it to others. Show that you really believe in the maxims of the Gospel by making your actions conform to these maxims, and by putting them into practice.<sup>202</sup>

This importance of practice invites us not to be taken in by the clarity of the schema of the effects of the spirit of faith. To look upon all things with the eyes of faith, we have just seen, does not reduce itself to a theoretical assent of the mind, to an intellectual agreement. Here it is the authenticity of attitudes and of behavior which prove the purity of vision. If your eye is pure, it follows that your whole body will be illuminated. But on the contrary, it is also in "doing the truth" that one arrives at the light. The profound adherence of the person to Christ's teachings on the beatitude of the poor, the acceptance of the Cross, and the love of enemies is at the same time the fruit that little by little ripens from that practice it elsewhere inspires. De La Salle has no illusions on this matter, and the third point of *Meditation* 44 observes that infidelity to the light of the Spirit is often the result of works of darkness. The great truths just recalled (that is to say, the evangelical paradoxes enumerated in *Meditation* 44.2), he says, are far from generally accepted:

Although these great truths are so admirable and rich and although it is the Spirit of God that is the real source of the light, which enlightens the soul therewith, most people understand nothing therein, because, as the Gospel says, "they prefer darkness to light." They know neither God's Spirit, nor what this Spirit can inspire and accomplish in souls. The reason that Jesus Christ assigns for this blindness is "because their doings are evil. Anyone who acts shamefully hates the light." As the world is blinded by sin, its maxims are quite contrary to those that the Spirit of God teaches holy souls. But it behaves according to these false maxims.<sup>203</sup>

As he often does, De La Salle here opposes the spirit and maxims of the world to the spirit and maxims of the Gospel. It is beyond doubt one of the keys to the opposition so absolute to the "world" that one finds in all his writings. But texts, like this one here, clarify the sense that De La Salle attributes to the word "world." Incontestably, he considers it neither as the whole of creation nor as the totality of all humanity, but as sinful humanity inasmuch as it sets itself against the Gospel.

This Lasallian teaching on the view of faith and the evangelical paradox is without doubt deeply rooted in the Gospel. Nevertheless, it seems to us that it expresses as well the spiritual experience of De La Salle and his first disciples. They had, in fact, discovered in living these teachings the flavor of poverty, the forgiveness of enemies, the acceptance of the persecutions that their community aroused. And when he had definitively opted for the poor, the Founder clashed headlong with the opposition of the "world" incarnated in the members of his family and of his ecclesiastical circle. His inflexibility in the combat for justice caused him to suffer for it also, but he forced himself to forgiveness and love for his adversaries.

Thus, the contrast that De La Salle highlights between the Gospel view and the worldly view of reality is in no way academic. If we had been tempted to find, at first, a reflection somewhat brief and an opposition too Manichean, we can now lay hold of its profundity. To look upon all

things with the eyes of faith is to enter with all one's being into the inspiring thought of "God's plan," and to become involved in history so as to contribute as much as one can to bring to light the divine meaning of humanity and the world. It is to involve oneself with the world, to suffer in the world so that the poor might have access to filial liberty, and so that they might be able to become one with the human family, so that they might be able to live with hope.

## 2. *To Act in View of God Alone*

The second effect of the spirit of faith is "to do nothing but in view of God." The negative formulation doubtless does not give a sufficiently faithful rendering of the totality of the Lasallian teaching on faith. Moreover, the initial negation might incline one to interpret the expression in the sense of a certain reticence in the face of action. In the thought of the Founder, faith is in no way constituted as a pretense for waiting-and-seeing, an alibi for passivity; and the reference to God alone never dispensed one from human effort, nor from attention to the conditions normal to the same ministerial action.

In fact, for De La Salle, on the one hand, "it is the principal end of faith to do that which one believes"; on the other hand, "it is particularly in your actions that your faith should appear, by doing them only by the spirit of faith as you are obliged by the spirit of your Institute."<sup>204</sup> In other words, authentic faith becomes a dynamic principle of action: an interior relationship with God does not exist without an active involvement with others; and in the normal interweaving of these dealings with others, the believer in some way manifests the secret reality of one's loving dialogue with the Altogether-Other.<sup>205</sup>

Whether he is addressing himself to the Brothers themselves, or whether he is setting forth for them the grand lines of force in their catechetical and pastoral action, De La Salle insists on the dynamism of faith and on the mystical nature of Christian action.<sup>206</sup> Most certainly he opposes, as we have already seen, "speculative truths" to "practical truths" of religion.<sup>207</sup> But this dichotomy cannot be considered, in view of all his writings, as a separation between dogma and moral. No Christian "truth" can be separated from life; and no truly Christian life can be led without reference to the mystical reality into which the Christian is introduced by the gift of the Spirit.<sup>208</sup> The mystery of the Trinity is preeminently practical, the very foundation of every Christian life:

If it is true that this mystery is above all others in eminence and sanctity, and that it is the chief object of veneration on the part of the faithful, it is all the more adorable for you as you are obliged to teach it and make it known to children, who are so many living plants in the field of the Church. By baptism, these children are, like you, consecrated to the most holy Trinity. They bear the marks of this consecration in their souls, and to this adorable mystery they are indebted for the unction of grace which has been poured into their hearts.<sup>209</sup>

Participation in the filial life in Christ, through the anointing of the Spirit, inspires and sustains a Christian behavior that is the flowering of the new life, life in Christ according to the Spirit, a life of a member of the whole Christ, the universal Brother, a life according to the eschatological hope, source of active striving for and patient awaiting of the Kingdom of God.<sup>210</sup> The

*Meditation* for the Feast of St. Ignatius of Antioch expresses in a simple language, and for once more affective than theological, this mystical realism of Christian behavior and the irrepressible dynamism of intimacy of faith with the Lord. At the same time, De La Salle once again makes evident the unity of faith and zeal, or even more so the unity of love?<sup>211</sup> Where it rather concerns itself with the Brother himself, where it concerns itself with their students, the Lasallian moral code is a morality of faith (that is to say, a life lived according to the spirit) and a mysticism, that is to say the actualization of the mystery welcomed as a gift and put into action in a personal response.<sup>212</sup>

The *Collection*<sup>213</sup> and the *Rule*<sup>214</sup> present other implications of doing everything in view of God alone. Let us limit ourselves here to the end that De La Salle assigns to actions:

Not doing anything but in view of God is to do all *for His glory* and *only to please Him*; it is to act by His orders and by His will, attaching oneself particularly to that which relates to our duty and our employment.<sup>215</sup>

The mention of "the glory of God" is frequent with De La Salle. He refers to it sometimes to reflect upon the transcendence of God to whom, "as St. Paul says, is due all honor and glory for ever and ever."<sup>216</sup> For a creature to give glory to God is then "to humble and abase oneself before Him, in view of His glory and His majesty"; it is also to abase oneself in adoration. Prayer is, above all, adoration of God.<sup>217</sup> The *Method of Interior Prayer* introduces an act of adoration in each of the two parts, immediately after the act of faith. The significance of this act is there presented in these terms:

We make an act of adoration, by recognizing God as our creator and sovereign Lord, and remaining with the most profound respect in His holy presence, realizing our lowliness and nothingness, our dependence on God, and our unworthiness to enjoy the advantage and happiness of being in His divine presence . . .<sup>218</sup>

Adoration in prayer is accompanied naturally by humility before God, which is one of the essential conditions for all true prayer. The *Method of Interior Prayer* accentuates the contrast between the Glory of the All-Holy God and the emptiness of the human sinner. The three acts "which refer to us" in the first part – humility, confusion, and contrition – constitute in some way, a descent into the abyss of human misery to attain its depth. But they strongly highlight the Christian meaning in this pitiless introspection. It is before God and in God that one becomes conscious of one's inconstancy and of one's malice. One recognizes that it is "against God that one has sinned"; but this God-directed sense of guilt does not lock one in despair; one discovers the depths of one's unworthiness only in discovering, at the same time, that the God of love and holiness pardons us while converting us and renewing us interiorly:

My God, I come to you to make known my sins and confess to you my iniquity, because I know that not only will this action not incur your indignation but rather draw down your mercy upon me. This is why the remorse I feel over my many transgressions serves to increase my confidence in your clemency; for the greater my remorse at having offended you, the more will you be willing to pardon them.<sup>219</sup>

After all, in the presence of the inner revelation of God's glory, the human person "gives glory" to God by one's astonishment: in the presence of His transcendent holiness which throws light on the nothingness of sinful humanity; in the presence of the power of His love which pardons while transforming one by the gift of His Spirit. Adoration thus participates in the filial enthusiasm of the Word returning to the Father who begets Him eternally. This filial sense of freely given adoration, of admiration in the presence of God, should be constantly stirred up in the life of a Brother.<sup>220</sup>

This theocentric dimension of adoration by which a person gives glory to God by one's activity of "gratuitous" prayer is capital: the texts cited above are sufficiently explicit. Nevertheless, addressing himself especially to his Brothers, the Founder calls them even more often to offer to the glory of God all their ordinary actions and notably their ministry. The Lasallian vocabulary here offers two series of formulas: act for the glory of God, and act to procure the glory of God. *To Act for the Glory of God* is, first of all, to constantly purify one's intention, to refer all one's actions to God. This entails an ascetic effort to not let oneself act only "through caprice, whim, temperament, inclination, worldly custom, nor even by mere reason, but solely by faith and by the words of Jesus Christ, making these the rule of one's conduct."<sup>221</sup> The rectification of intention demands also an effort of attention to oneself and to an awareness of one's life.<sup>222</sup>

Purity of intention in action is also apostolic disinterestedness and a spirit of gratuity in service,<sup>223</sup> a refusal to delight in oneself.<sup>224</sup> The courage to confront the contradiction of the world when necessary. This pursuit of interior purity through opening to God by profound intention imposes itself on every Brother; it likewise constitutes one of the objectives he should have in mind in the Christian education of his disciples. The account the Brother must render one day to God will bear upon the intention he will have had in his exercise of his ministry.<sup>225</sup> If impure intentions corrupt actions, in return the intention of faith one brings to them, the care to perform them in view of the glory of God, give value, in making them Christian, to actions that in themselves have little value.<sup>226</sup> In limited instances, the obedience of faith can even "rectify" objectively bad acts:

When we are invincibly ignorant of the malice of the act, and when we perform it in good faith, with simplicity and in the *sole view of obeying God?*<sup>227</sup>

Let us insist here on a limited case; for De La Salle does not ordinarily preach a spirituality – or a morality – that would give the intention of the privilege that it would end up admitting that "the ends justify the means." One must not deceive oneself here: when De La Salle asks a Brother to act for the glory of God and to direct his intention to Him, he is not content with recommending a psychological and subjective "purity of intention"; but he asks him to make his own the objective plans of God with whom he collaborates in his employment: that is to say, at the same time to take seriously all its intrinsic demands and to open oneself unceasingly to greater perfection through the eschatological enthusiasm that characterizes God's work.<sup>228</sup>

Consequently for De La Salle, intentionally referring one's actions to the glory of God supposes that one be equally attentive to their content: one works for the glory of God only if one exerts oneself also to accomplish "the orders" and "the will" of God. How does one recognize these

orders and this will? De La Salle insists, above all, on two criteria for discernment in this matter, obedience and fidelity to all the demands of the duties of one's state.

His teaching on obedience is here very firm, even though certain details and, above all, some of the examples that illustrate his thought seem to minimize the objective importance of the extrinsic content and quality of the actions. The basic principle is certainly very classical: obedience to a superior constitutes a sure means to know the will of God. Outside obedience, even the best actions lose all value. On the contrary, the most insignificant acts accomplished through obedience become meritorious. In the logic of this perspective, the Founder could write that "*what constitutes the merit of a person living in a religious community is not the quality of the actions he performs, but the excellence of the obedience with which he performs them.*"<sup>229</sup> Certain Lasallian formulas, taken literally, give the impression that, in order to exalt indifference as to means, the Founder preaches a sort of literal and mechanical fidelity that seems to paralyze all initiative and turn attention away from the quality of the work, under the pretext of concentrating it uniquely on blind docility to the order received.<sup>230</sup>

Considered in itself alone, this teaching on obedience could lead one to think that, through the intermediary of the superior, the Brother can content himself with referring his actions to God by intention alone, without being preoccupied with their objective content. That would be losing sight of the second criteria, in which De La Salle indicates to his disciples: to act according to God's orders for His glory, one must moreover be faithful to the duties of one's employment.

This objective reference is so fundamental that it has determined, in good part, the Founder's vital commitment to see that "the school goes well," according to one of his expressions,<sup>231</sup> and that the teachers are competent. The Lasallian educator must respect the coherence of the profane in its proper order and the *Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*, all the while relating them to the Gospel and to "the spirit of Christianity" in offering a program of education for people of this world.<sup>232</sup> The Lasallian school aims at the construction of the terrestrial city, at the adequate preparation of the students for life here below. To arrive at this, the Brothers must at the same time set out from the concrete reality of their pupils, study this reality carefully, and apply themselves to advance the quality of the pedagogy they put to use.<sup>233</sup> Professional conscience thus appears as a veritable religious duty.<sup>234</sup>

The *Reflections* on their state and employment in the *Collection* make it very evident that the reference to the glory and the will of God integrates the effort for an objective quality of their actions. In fact, they invite the Brother to review all the sectors of his daily existence, the activities of his profession and his community relations as well as his exercises of prayer. One of the first of the *Reflections* in some way sets the tone, and if De La Salle draws from a well-identified source, he makes it his own<sup>235</sup> and offers it to the Brothers as a characteristic of their spirituality:

Do not make any distinction between the duties of your state and what pertains to your salvation and perfection. Rest assured that you will never effect your salvation more certainly and that you will never acquire greater perfection than by fulfilling well the duties of your state, provided you do so with a view to accomplishing God's will.<sup>236</sup>

In this line, he recalls the importance of the good use of time,<sup>237</sup> the care for the perfection that must be brought to bear in one's actions.<sup>238</sup> Briefly, "to do ordinary actions in a spiritual manner having in view only God and His good pleasure,"<sup>239</sup> not only to refer one's intention to the glory of God, but to recognize and respect "God's order" in the real, to seek to bring about "God's will" in the concrete situation of these poor abandoned youth.

For if the directing of one's intention to the glory of God does not dispense from the realistic attention to one's "duty of state," but rather supposes and inspires it, neither does Lasallian spirituality reduce itself to a dull stoic accomplishing of duty. A breeze runs through the fidelity of actions. To act for the glory of God is definitely the work of a person who, seized by God's call, joyously conscious of God's gift, clear as to the significance of God's work that one has the mission of bringing to reality, offers oneself and gives oneself entirely to God for His glory, with the dynamism of a zeal that love brings to life and renews.

To act in view of God, is, as it were, to forge in daily life the consecration of one's whole life to God without reserve. There are numerous texts in the *Meditations* where De La Salle underscores the power of an enthusiasm that goes even to the sacrifice of self for God. It is truly "to make a sacrifice on one's life for God to use it only for Him"<sup>240</sup> and this fundamental intention translates itself, for the Brothers, into their ardor to labor for the good of the children. To acquit themselves well of their duties, they must "consecrate themselves entirely and give their lives." Such an interior fire is devouring, and it is the flame that causes the Brother to direct all his labors to God, to give Him all his time, all his thoughts, all his heart.<sup>241</sup>

The formula of vows interprets or expresses total consecration of self to the glory of God by a second expression at which we must pause: "Most Holy Trinity, I consecrate myself entirely to you *to procure your glory*."<sup>242</sup> A Brother's activity not only is related to God's glory, but intends to "procure that Glory." What does this say? An attentive examination of Lasallian vocabulary reveals that De La Salle uses at times: "to procure the glory of God" and, at times, "to procure the salvation of souls." There is evidence that, in Lasallian thought, the two formulas are correlatives: it is in procuring the salvation of children that the Brothers contribute to the Glory of God. And concretely, it is in carefully and enthusiastically accomplishing his ministry that he attains these two inseparable objectives. Recalling by example education according to gospel maxims, De La Salle concludes:

These are the kinds of maxims and practices that you should unceasingly inspire in them if you have any zeal for their salvation, and it will be particularly in this that you will appear zealous for the glory of God.<sup>243</sup>

We again find here the profound unity between faith and zeal, as between consecration and mission. For if to labor "for the salvation" of others is definitely to aim for the Glory of God, the enthusiasm of total consecration to the Lord makes integral the donation of self to those to whom one is sent.

You have *committed yourselves to God* in the place of those whom you instruct . . . You should not only take all possible care of them, but *consecrate your life and yourselves* completely to procure salvation for them.<sup>244</sup>

*To act in view of God alone:* this Lasallian instruction does not invite the Brothers to minimize the importance of their labor; on the contrary, it calls them to esteem and honor their employment since it is through it that they procure the Glory of God. And to see the Glory of God in the service of others is, furthermore, to consider the service as a means of going to God: it is in and through the salvation of poor abandoned youth that the Glory of God shines forth; the Glory of God, De La Salle also says, is that you "bear fruit" in your ministry.<sup>245</sup> And this fruit of salvation is also in the accession of youth to that human dignity from which their situation seemed to have exiled them, as well as their liberation from sin and their effective initiation into filial life; it is also the uprooting of these youngsters from the miserable ghetto in which their poverty confined them, the rehabilitation enabling them to be useful to the human community, as well as the interior and visible integration into the Church, the place of reconciliation and access to the promises of God in Jesus Christ.

The *Meditation* for the Feast of the Trinity – the traditional day for the renewal of vows in the Institute – expresses admirably this unity of faith and zeal, of consecration and mission, of love of God and service of others, by revealing another perspective: to procure the salvation of children, one must initiate them into a living knowledge of God. For, if the Glory of God is humanity fully alive, then it is in opening oneself to the call, to the love, to the gift of the Totally-Other that one has access to the fullness of life:

It is only right, therefore, that you, whose duty it is to unfold this adorable mystery to them as far as the light of faith permits, should acknowledge it as the source of all enlightenment, the mainstay of our faith, the very foundation of our religion. With this in view you should today pay very special honor, and dedicate yourself entirely, to the Most Holy Trinity, to contribute as far as you will be able to extend its glory over all the earth. For this purpose enter into the spirit of your Institute and stir up in yourself the zeal that God wishes you to have in its fullness, so that you can give your pupils some understanding of this sacred mystery.<sup>246</sup>

### **3. *To Attribute All to God***

The third effect of the spirit of faith is "to attribute all to God." The *Collection* explains: to attribute all to God "is to accept both good and evil as coming from His hands, saying for example, with Job: "The Lord has given me all, and the Lord has taken it all away, blessed be the name of the Lord."<sup>247</sup> The chapter on the spirit of faith already contained this reference to Job and quoted the famous statement of accepting God's will in adversities.<sup>248</sup> De La Salle is faithful to the spiritual tradition in considering faith not only as a principle of action, but also as a force in accepting the "passivities" of existence. Adherence to God never manifests itself more purely or authentically than in trials, for it is in darkness that one affirms one's unshakable confidence in Him. The reference to Job, as brief as it is in De La Salle's work, has to have been important in his spiritual experience, as his biographers testify.<sup>249</sup> It illustrates here that which is one of the most notable constants in his doctrine: the accepting and the searching for God in suffering.

De La Salle often takes up this theme. He insists on it every time he contemplates Jesus Christ "come upon the earth to suffer" and who did not pass a single hour without suffering;<sup>250</sup> Jesus Christ the innocent victim of lack of understanding, of calumny, of persecution, and finally the Just One suffering because of human injustice, and ignominiously put to death by unspeakable

tortures. The Brother will conform himself to Jesus Christ in the measure in which he takes part in His sufferings, in His martyrdom, not only moreover by accepting the Crosses that come to him, but also by voluntary mortification.

Elsewhere, De La Salle often invites his Brothers to consider as normal the persecutions they suffer in their ministry: if they fight for justice, they should expect to be persecuted, and in fact that is what their concrete experience has shown them every day. We will find this observation later in speaking of the fight for justice, of this battle against "the world" in order to proclaim to the poor the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.

We will limit ourselves here in evoking in a general manner the attitude De La Salle exhorted his Brothers to form in themselves vis-a-vis the Cross and their daily sufferings. In following his teaching, we will declare one more time the broadening which the view of God's plan realized in Jesus Christ gives to an expression otherwise somewhat banal and which is capable of giving room for a completely subjective interpretation: *to attribute all to God* is not to resign oneself to the inevitable by an easy recourse to a superficial reliance on providence; rather, it is to enter interiorly by faith into God's design in which all takes on meaning; in the concrete daily suffering, it is to live the Paschal Mystery of Christ in which the Cross is the source of life.

For the cross, observes De La Salle, is there in life. One cannot escape it. Suffering is everywhere, rising, so to speak, with every step in human life, in the existence of the Brothers. St. Helena went to Jerusalem to recover the true cross and to give it the veneration it deserves. "We do not have to go very far to search for it," observes De La Salle in quoting the author of the *Imitation*:

The Cross . . . is always prepared for us in whatever place we put ourselves, in whatever direction we look, whether above or below, whether outside or inside, on all sides, says the same author, you will find the Cross. Therefore, dispose yourselves today to love this Cross, since it is always at hand.<sup>251</sup>

Briefly, suffering is everywhere in concrete existence: in calling upon the Brothers to carry the cross, the Founder does not invite them to live in a dream world; but, rather, he asks them to take it as it presents itself to them. It is on such occasions, he adds, that one sees if "virtue is solid"; it is then "that you should witness to being a follower of Jesus Christ and one of his disciples."<sup>252</sup>

Still, De La Salle does not limit himself to asking the Brothers to accept the sufferings that occur. He also frequently insists on the love that one should have for sufferings, on the ardent desire for suffering that one should nourish within oneself. One must receive the cross "with love and affection as a gift from God and an honor He bestows upon us: this is how we should embrace the cross if we wish to suffer as Christians."<sup>253</sup> In fact, a number of saints bear witness to their ardent desire for suffering: such a one is Ignatius of Antioch who, condemned to be devoured by lions, deems that "that is when one begins to be a disciple of Jesus Christ." The Brother is invited to make this desire his own:

Think, as did this saint, that you will truly become disciples of Jesus Christ only when you love Him and bring yourselves to suffer for His holy love.<sup>254</sup>



Likewise, in the same way, they should pray God to share in St. Peter's desire "to suffer for Jesus Christ."<sup>255</sup> And like St. Andrew who, seeing the cross prepared for him, "cried out that it was very dear to him, that he had desired it for a long time, and that he had even sought it with great eagerness." The Brother should witness to an identical "love for suffering."<sup>256</sup>

This language can shock us, may appear fanciful or strange: is there not something abnormal, even to the brink of unhealthy, to preach the love of suffering? Is it not already a lot to arrive, after a fashion, to bear with resignation the crosses that come to us? Must we, besides, seek them or desire them? In reality, De La Salle does not minimize the value of Christian "patience" which sustains abandonment to God, to the imitation of Christ, and which is interior submission, silence, and even desire and thanksgiving.<sup>257</sup> But when he insists on the love of suffering, it seems to us that he simply rejoins a constant element of Christian spirituality as the reference that he makes elsewhere to the saints. For the rest, the love of suffering that he extols is based purely on Christian reflections and motives. If the solidity of virtue is tested in the fire of pain, it is of a Christian and not a stoic virtue that the Founder intends to speak.

For he is well aware, moreover, that suffering makes no sense to human nature and that the love of suffering to which he calls does not suppress its natural human repugnance. One must constantly do violence to oneself "to put oneself in the disposition of soul required to embrace the tribulations of life."<sup>258</sup> The *Meditation* for the Feast of St. Peter in Chains considers that the greatest miracle "that the chains of the apostle should produce in our hearts is the love of suffering and insult."<sup>259</sup> And no matter how ardent was Jesus Christ's desire to suffer and to die for the salvation of souls,<sup>260</sup> this is not any less evident in His agony, this agony in extreme anguish: it was only by the power of God that He could enter into the way of His passion.<sup>261</sup>

In any case, the most earnest appeals De La Salle addressed to his disciples to embrace suffering with enthusiasm and even that they bear them joyfully are often borrowed from Scripture: thus, for example, he repeats many times St. Paul's cry affirming that he wishes only to boast in the cross of Jesus Christ.<sup>262</sup>

This recourse to scripture is essentially a reference to the mystery of Jesus Christ, suffering servant, anxious to be baptized in the baptism reserved for Him: we will return to this. Let us take up again the fact that, in considering the initial and permanent dynamism of Jesus Christ such as the epistle to the Hebrews describes it,<sup>263</sup> De La Salle passes from the love of suffering to "the tender love Jesus Christ had for sinners that led Him to conceive the great desire to pass under the baptism of blood to destroy sin."<sup>264</sup> Suffering is only desirable to a Christian as a painful passage necessary to salvation,<sup>265</sup> an instrument of redemption.

In the lives of the saints, of the martyrs above all, De La Salle loves to contemplate the passage from ignominy to glory, from suffering to beatitude; he appeals in that to his Brothers to live "in the spirit of the martyr."<sup>266</sup> Thus, evoking again the "cloud of witnesses" of which the epistle to the Hebrews speaks, he paints in his *Meditation* for the Feast of All Saints a grandiose fresco to which he puts the finishing touch with an invitation to suffer the "afflictions" of this life in the hope of the everlasting glory "of which they are the pledge."<sup>267</sup>

"To attribute all to God" and to receive from His hand both good and bad like Job, this is in reality to enter through faith into the participation in Jesus' oblation. It is also in the light of the Paschal Mystery that De La Salle sees the advantages of suffering: it is the sign of the special friendship of Jesus as can be seen in the episode of Zebedee's sons.<sup>268</sup> God brings us up through suffering; it expiates sin; it also preserves from sin.<sup>269</sup> Pruned by suffering, one little by little learns to be all for God. De La Salle alludes to this apropos, not only to exterior tribulations, but also to the secret and intimate suffering of the believer who, deprived of all sensible consolation, experiences it in faith as the absence of God.<sup>270</sup>

Thus the acceptance and love of suffering join with abandonment to God: handed over to tribulation, a prey to persecutions, shaken likewise by the ordeal of the silence of God, mysteriously the Christian still reaches the depth of an interior peace which coexists with the very storms and tempests on the surface. This peace promised by Christ to His apostles, at the same time as the fellowship in His cross, is the interior radiance of the Spirit. Speaking without doubt from within his intimate experience, De La Salle often comes back to this contrast between suffering and profound joy. As interior peace proceeds from charity, he writes quoting St. Paul, "nothing can destroy it except that which makes us lose charity and the love of God."<sup>271</sup>

Persecuted, calumniated, ill, St. Genevieve lived in thanksgiving and prayed for her enemies:

To be thus treated is all we should look for in this world, after having spent your whole life for God, and that is what will make us *find and possess God* and His holy peace within ourselves.<sup>272</sup>

To welcome and to search for God in suffering, to encounter Him in dereliction, to experience the peace of His presence even in the feeling of His absence, to listen in one's heart to the imperceptible murmur of His vivifying words when He seems to be keeping quiet, to search for Him the more obstinately the more He seems to withdraw further, to go in the night to meet the groom who delays: this was the indescribable itinerary of the mystical life of St. Theresa of Avila. "In the midst of the greatest aridity, she was completely lost in God and totally abandoned to Him in spite of her interior darkness; the more God made her suffer, the more she had recourse to Him for she found all in Him no matter how hidden He was."<sup>273</sup>

Perspectives of transforming union, of total abandonment, of indestructible peace that are not the lot of some privileged ones: rooted in Jesus Christ, the Brothers are called to know, in faith, the same plenitude of interior joy:

Among all the evils that can befall you, you should always remain victorious by reason of Him who loves you, who is Jesus Christ, because neither death, nor life, nor any other creature can ever separate you from the love of God that unites you to Jesus Christ our Lord.<sup>274</sup>

## CHAPTER TWO<sup>275</sup>

### To Become Worthy of the Ministry by Living a Godly Life

De La Salle never ceases to appeal to his Brothers to remember the gift they have received and to make known the Presence that dwells within them and fortifies them, the Love of which they are beneficiaries and witnesses. And he also constantly invites them to give to this celebration of a personal gift the dimension of their own unique salvation history, of the unique plan of God which is accomplished in them, and, through them, in the world. Thus, he continuously invites them to live their ministry more deeply, in faith and in the enthusiasm of zeal.

But the Lasallian spiritual teaching, also, often insists on the personal relationship with the Living God who is the source both of the gift received and of its being put to work. De La Salle then calls upon his disciples to deepen the spiritual experience of their vocation and mission by striving to live more intensely the relationship of love which transcends both the call and the mission it still unceasingly engenders while introducing them into the very dynamics of the intra-trinitarian life.

The Lasallian spiritual teaching returns so much to the reality of this hidden life in God that we should give it a special place in this general presentation. Naturally, we are led to follow here a Trinitarian schema that one often encounters in Lasallian writings. Without rigidity, certainly, for, if one can distinguish in the course of the Founder's writings precise references to each of the three divine persons, De La Salle never goes so far as to systematize the "givens" of a theological analysis of which he is aware.

Three preliminary observations should be made here, the legitimacy of which will undoubtedly appear more clearly in the measure to which we go forward in this presentation. The first is that the Lasallian spiritual teaching is inseparably mystical and ascetical; living in God obliges one to master self, to conquer self, to renounce self; but the often severe reminders of an exacting asceticism are always united in one way or another to the mystical reality of life in the presence of God, in Christ, by the movement of the Spirit.

The second observation concerns a certain difference of tonality that we will establish between this teaching on life in God and that found in the preceding chapter on collaboration in the work of God; a difference that is evident, for example, if one compares the *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer* with the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*.<sup>276</sup> We will have to investigate thoroughly this difference, probably without being able to elucidate it entirely.

The third observation draws out the preceding: while the general theme of the retreat *Meditations* is that of the responsible presence of the "minister of God" to those "whom God confides to us," and therefore of an incarnation in the world, EM seems rather to insist on the opposition between God and the world: to experience God one must flee the world and humans. Here again, we shall attempt to reach a better understanding by thoroughly examining the matter.

## I. To Walk in the Presence of God

In all his writings, De La Salle returns often and with insistence to attention to the Presence of God. He defines it as one of "the interior supports of the Institute."<sup>277</sup> One must apply oneself to it, he explains in the *Collection*, "because it is the soul and the support of the interior life; because the spiritual exercises will have very little vigor if they are not animated by the presence of God."<sup>278</sup> The *Rule* invites the Brothers to pay attention to it "as much as they will be able" and "to renew themselves in it from time to time," for "they should think only of Him and of that which He ordains for them, that is to say, of that which pertains to their duty and their employment."<sup>279</sup>

The *Meditations* for Sundays and feasts frequently recall its importance and fruit: the habitual attention to the holy presence of God "is in this life a happy anticipation of heaven"<sup>280</sup> for it allows one "to enjoy God by anticipation"<sup>281</sup>; it is also "of great utility in your employment; for, as your work relates to God and the salvation of souls, it is most important not to lose sight of God while performing it."<sup>282</sup> The *Letters* of direction written by De La Salle repeatedly insist on it: the application to the presence of God enables one to conquer self and helps one to have in view, while in action, the will of God,<sup>283</sup> it is the principal fruit of interior prayer,<sup>284</sup> the "most suitable means . . . to become interior,"<sup>285</sup> at the same time that it facilitates the accomplishment of one's duty.<sup>286</sup> Even in school, the Brothers take care to educate their pupils in attention to the presence of God by recalling it at every hour.<sup>287</sup>

Thus, it is not surprising that EM attaches such importance to putting oneself in the presence of God: it is a matter, according to many experts, of one of the most distinctive originalities of the Lasallian *Method*.<sup>288</sup> In fact, nearly half of the book is given over to application to the presence of God. And in a sense, De La Salle thinks, the exercise of interior prayer could be reduced to this renewal of awareness in faith.

It is good to remark, with regard to the application to the presence of God, that one should not dwell on it for only a short time, for it is the exercise that contributes most to procure the spirit of interior prayer and the interior application that one can have; but one should act so as to occupy one's mind as much as possible with it and not turn to another subject until one can no longer pay any attention to this.<sup>289</sup>

Going beyond the exercise of interior prayer alone, the first part of EM offers a veritable treatise on life in the presence of God. De La Salle sets forth its significance; speaking of its conditions, he treats of the relationship between attention to God and connection with the exterior world.

### 1. To Become Filled with God and to Be Interiorly United with Him

The exercise of the presence of God in interior prayer constitutes, according to EM, the "disposition of the soul for interior prayer, properly called recollection"; and to recollect oneself interiorly, to recover awareness of oneself and of the meaning of one's life, "one begins by applying oneself to the presence of God."<sup>290</sup> This practical equivalence between "interior recollection" and application to the presence of God seems to us essential for explaining Lasallian interiority.<sup>291</sup>

On the one hand, the effort at becoming interior that leads to the center of one's being<sup>292</sup> does not reduce itself to the work of psychological introspection. Returning to one's heart, it is there that one encounters the God who dwells within. One finds oneself alive only in a dialogue with a Love that precedes one, and this remembrance of the presence of God is the first fruit of this awareness of being loved. In fact, God "continually thinks of us." To love "with your whole mind," this is to be occupied constantly with God in response to His prevenient love:

For nothing proves so forcibly that we love someone than being unable to keep ourselves from thinking of the other.<sup>293</sup>

EM speaks of interior prayer only in terms of a dialogue between two living beings. Interior prayer is defined, from the beginning, as "an *interior* occupation, that is to say, an application of the soul to God." In fact, the soul occupies itself with "filling oneself with God and uniting oneself interiorly with Him." There the soul converses with its intimate guest whom the soul possesses and who possesses the soul,<sup>294</sup> a conversation which De La Salle takes care to underline as occurring beyond words,

for a great number of interior words in these prayers serve rather to unsettle the mind, to disturb the depth of the soul rather than to procure for it attention and application to God and to make it become interior; on the contrary, this multitude of words in the mind and in the heart only serve to shrivel the soul, only pass quickly, and often leave the soul empty of God and of spiritual and interior matters.<sup>295</sup>

The multiplication of words clouds the encounter, in substituting for it a monologue which is ultimately egocentric. One must set one's aim "on a simple attention"

by keeping oneself in the presence of our Lord . . . without discourse or reasoning, but with a simple, respectful, and affectionate attention, one that is as vivid as possible, remaining in this interior disposition . . .<sup>296</sup>

On the other hand, attention to the presence of God in interior prayer is not intellectual research but the unceasing awakening to an awareness of a primordial experience, that of the anticipatory love of God. It is less a willed effort than a conscious welcome of a lived relationship that forms the deepest thread of life; less a conquest of self-mastery than a surrender to the Other who unceasingly brings about being, acting, loving; it is not the emergence of an idea cultivated to the point of conviction, but the fruit of the overture to the active indwelling of a free creative love.

This seems to us to be the profound significance of the six ways of placing oneself in the presence of God. By this apparent dissection – in which it occurred to him to underscore the methodological importance for the one learning to make interior prayer<sup>297</sup> – De La Salle appears to us to want to show, on the contrary, that in going to the heart of what is real that one there finds the living God who bestows being and meaning upon all things.

*The depth of a person*, at first sight, is that of God. A human being exists only in so far as one is raised up and sustained by this interior presence. "God is not far from us, for we have life, movement, and being only in Him"<sup>298</sup>.

what a grace God has given us, to make us, by Himself and His indwelling, to be what we are; which led . . . St. Paul to say that we are of God's race.<sup>299</sup>

To descend within oneself to the very depth is to encounter there the Other, "closer to me than I am to myself":

Thus, it is not necessary that I go far away to adore you and to fulfill my obligations to you; to accomplish this, I have only to enter into myself to render you in my soul, as in your living temple, the homage that I owe you.<sup>300</sup>

Methodologically, De La Salle holds here to a natural presence of God to each person; in reality, that text as a whole shows that he considers that person rather in one's historical totality: delving into the very depth of self, one recognizes oneself, according to the words of St. Leo, as "participating in the divinity," called to "show by one's conduct" that indeed one lives by the life of God.<sup>301</sup>

Also, the manner of placing oneself before God present "in us by His grace and by His Spirit" seems less to add a supernatural dimension to this natural reality than to make explicit and to fathom the contents of this "participation in the divinity." God has reunited and saved us in Jesus Christ who is the living presence of the Lord to humanity. Jesus Christ made Himself "a human child" to "merit for us the grace to become children of God"; He took upon Himself "our miseries to enrich us with inestimable treasures" of grace and glory; He made Himself our Brother, becoming in all things like His brothers, experiencing "temptation" to be ready to "help those who are tempted."<sup>302</sup> In His spirit, Jesus Christ "gives us access to the Father as adopted children through His only Son."<sup>303</sup>

This historic work of God has, in fact, become for each one of us an actual reality, the basis and the all of the Christian experience. God has placed in us "His Holy Spirit"; and through this interior dwelling, the entire person, body and soul, is "the temple of God."<sup>304</sup> The Spirit incorporates us into Jesus Christ; He grafts this branch onto the vine and makes one enter into

a close union with Jesus Christ, who lives in us and in whom we live, as St. Paul so admirably describes.<sup>305</sup>

To apply oneself to the presence of God is thus to be aware once more that person lives in God in such a manner that one is truly "guided" from within by the Spirit.<sup>306</sup> This interior union, source of spiritual dynamism, is perceived at the same time as a reality experienced in faith, and as an objective to be attained always more and more thanks to God's Gift always solicited in ardent prayer:

How good you are, O my God, to pour out your Holy Spirit upon me; it is, without doubt, to guide and direct me in all my actions . . .

Come then, Holy Spirit, take possession of my heart and inspire all my actions in such a way that it can be said that it is you rather than I who cause them, and that I have neither life, nor movement, nor action, except inasmuch as you yourself give them to me.<sup>307</sup>

The *depth of the created world* is God's. Certainly, in quoting Psalm 138, De La Salle seems to have in view the divine ubiquity which expresses itself by the fact that no one is able to flee from God or escape Him.<sup>308</sup> The sequel of these reflections shows that he never considers a material omnipresence apart from humanity or the universe. He recognizes rather that if one goes "to the heart of the world," if one attains the "inside" of things and the deep movement of history, one discovers that they are linked existentially to the God of Jesus Christ who also dwells in the human heart. And he declares that, by going to the depth of one's own being, the person recovers the awareness that one's existence and one's action in the world flow from one's personal relationship to the living God.

In this perspective, the whole universe is "holy," consecrated by the presence of God: "You are, O my God . . . on the earth, and you permeate it completely, because it contains you, and, in a manner better said, you yourself contain it."<sup>309</sup> The historic activity of a person in the world then culminates in the "worship" in truth that one is called to render to the Lord in the universal temple of God, "holy place." "I adore you, therefore, in this place as in your temple and in your sanctuary."<sup>310</sup>

The presence of God in the heart of the world allows one to remain attentive to God "even in the most dissipating places." Even if the person is conditioned by one's surroundings, the most profound cause of the "dissipation" is found finally within the self. The interior person knows how to go beyond superficial appearances. Also, the awareness that the universe is "filled by God" gives one the courage to act and the strength to surmount acedia, disgust. God gives meaning to humanity's terrestrial life, to one's engagement in the world, there to make history.<sup>311</sup>

Certainly, one must not see in De La Salle the precursor of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. We will soon underline the clear cut opposition that EM often established between God and the world. But the notations that have just been made already open a way to a positive interpretation of texts that, in their materiality, seem undoubtedly excessive.<sup>312</sup>

Finally, God is the *depth of ecclesiastical life*. The experience of the presence of God, as interior since it is founded on the indwelling of the Spirit in "the depth of the soul," is inseparable from existence in Church. The passage on the presence of Jesus Christ "in the midst of those gathered in His name" should be cited at length, so vigorous is it, even vibrant with an enthusiasm wholly interior. The action of the Spirit is there presented as one movement only, at the same time uniting the Brothers among themselves and animating each one interiorly, these two activities being correlatives besides. It is through the mediation of the community that the Spirit springs forth more intensely in the hearts of each of its members, and the taking root more firmly in the Spirit by each member opens one and unites one to his Brothers even more:

(Jesus Christ) is in the midst (of the Brothers) to give them His Spirit and through Him to direct them in all their actions and in all their behavior. He is in their midst to unite them together, accomplishing in them what He had asked for them of His Father before His death . . . "May they be one in us, as you, my Father, and I are one, and may they be perfected in unity," that is to say being so completely one and united together, having only the one same spirit, which is the Spirit of God, that they will never be disunited.

Jesus Christ is in the midst of the Brothers during their exercises to give them there the spirit of their state, and to maintain and strengthen them in the possession of this spirit, which for them is the source and the assurance of their salvation, if they always preserve it faithfully without alteration.

Jesus Christ is in the midst of the Brothers to teach them the truths and maxims of the Gospel, to implant these deeply in their hearts . . . to inspire them to engage in the practice of them . . . uniformly in their Society, so as always to preserve an entire and perfect union among themselves.

Jesus Christ is in the midst of the Brothers in their exercises in order that, all their actions be directed toward Jesus Christ as toward their center, they may be one in Him through the union they have with Jesus Christ who acts in them and through them . . .<sup>313</sup>

The "three fruits" that De La Salle recognizes in this manner of considering Jesus Christ present through the Spirit in the midst of the Brothers, all concern, in fact, the most intimate union of each person in Christ.<sup>314</sup> The prayer he gives as an example with respect to this manner begins by recalling the birth of the Church at the time of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostles assembled in the Cenacle, and ends with the petition for intimate union of heart and mind with the Brothers:

in order that, having received your divine Spirit in the fullness you have destined for me, I may be guided by Him to fulfill the duties of my state, and that He will make me share in your zeal for the instruction of those whom you have confided to my care.<sup>315</sup>

The mention of ministry, at first unexpected and rare in EM, seems to us altogether coherent with this realistic and spiritual vision of the Church, the privileged locale of the outpouring of the Spirit and of the practiced encounter with God. If the Spirit springs up in each in and by the mystery of the assembly, if the Spirit who indwells and animates persons opens them to a close union with their Brothers, His interior and unifying action renews them in their missionary enthusiasm, the distinguishing mark of the "community" and the personal gift of a God who touches each Brother to the heart in "confiding" young people to his care.

Doubtless, one could note that De La Salle does not use the word "Church" in speaking of the presence of God in the midst of the Brothers. But it is really the ecclesial reality he considers here: not only because he, in other places, refers to the community as a *little Church*,<sup>316</sup> but also because, mentioning further on the presence of God in the church, the material building, he again considers, in reality, that it is a question of the manifestation of the Lord in the assembly:

The Church is the house of God because it is in it that God wishes Christians to assemble in order to adore Him and to pay Him homage.<sup>317</sup>

In truth, this access of the Christian people to God is realized in Jesus Christ "whose sacrifice sanctifies these churches with an exterior holiness of no small degree, and causes them to share in the sanctity of Jesus Christ, through the offering and immolation that He makes of Himself in His sacrifice."<sup>318</sup> The Eucharist recalled here is the object of a more explicit mention in connection with the sixth manner of placing oneself in the presence of God. But the "real



presence" is there seen in terms of the alliance between God and His people. It is Jesus Christ who sanctifies the (material) temple because He is there present to heap graces upon those who there adore Him:

This is why we can apply to these sacred edifices the words of the Book of Revelation: This is the dwelling of God among us; He shall dwell with us, and He shall be our God. This is the favor that our Lord bestows on us, and that is why He is called our God.<sup>319</sup>

The Eucharist, sacrament of the presence of God, of the encounter between God and humans, of the union of people among themselves in the assembly, sacrament of the gift of God through the Spirit that makes us God's children and gathers the Brothers together, but also sacrament of the return of the person to God in "spiritual worship." De La Salle arrived at this worship in spirit and in truth with respect to the indwelling of the Spirit in the deepest intimacy of each person. Naturally, he returns to it when he speaks of the presence of God in the material temple.<sup>320</sup>

One can see that the different manners of placing oneself in the presence of God join each other in a dynamic unity and reality: that of Christ Himself. For the mystery of the encounter of the person with God is accomplished in Jesus Christ, with whom the Holy Spirit enables us to participate: Jesus Christ, "our mediator and our intercessor before the Father when we pray to Him in the Church," Jesus Christ who, being "according to His humanity, an ardent furnace of love for His Father . . . is in a state of making us participate in that love in the time that we pay our homage to His most holy humanity in whose presence we are." His eucharistic presence is the sacrament of this salvific action that tends "to give us life in abundance," this abundant life consisting "according to the same Jesus Christ in the knowledge and perfect love of God."<sup>321</sup>

In light of this christocentric vision of the "presence of God," object of the first part of the *Method*, it does not seem excessive to us to say that the second part of interior prayer also amounts to an effort to recall the presence of God. In fact, it centers on Jesus Christ contemplated in "His mysteries, His virtues, His maxims." This specification only makes explicit that God is present to persons to pursue in and by them the work of salvation, to display for us the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to make us participate therein by His Spirit. The Christ whom one contemplates is the Christ living and acting here and now. He dwells in the human heart, and the latter is united to Him as the branch is united to the vine. He actually gives us His Spirit.

For if the "mysteries" of our Lord are these "principal actions" that He accomplished "for our salvation"<sup>322</sup> – and this definition of a mystery places us in the perspective of the economy [of salvation] rather than in that of an abstract theology – the principal fruit of Lasallian interior prayer is "the spirit of the mystery" to which one is today made a participant by the Holy Spirit. In his language, De La Salle expresses the actuality of the mystery; he unites with the liturgical "today" in its memorial richness, its present gratification, its eschatological expectation. The same observation can be made with respect to meditation on a virtue or a maxim.<sup>323</sup>

The exercise of placing oneself in the presence of God in interior prayer thus tends to unify the existence of the Brother who in the depth of his being, in his life, and in his action in the world, among others, by his ecclesial experience, discovers himself, in thanksgiving, inhabited and

moved by the Spirit who gives him the grace to live a filial and fraternal life. We add that, according to De La Salle, the intensive exercise of "placing oneself in the presence of God" in interior prayer is not a parenthesis. It is directed to the totality of the life which takes place entirely in the presence of God through the Spirit. The exercise of interior prayer is at the service of the "spirit of interior prayer" to which De La Salle frequently returns in EM. We limit ourselves to taking up one text:

It is this same Spirit who shall make my interior prayer rise up to you like a sweet smelling incense and who shall preserve in me the spirit of interior prayer and keep alive the fire which you have enkindled within me during this time, to express myself with your own words. So I say with the Church: Come, Holy Spirit, and send down upon us from heaven a ray of your holy light.<sup>324</sup>

The spirit of interior prayer consists also in the active search for God, for His will, for His glory, in all existence and in all activities. On the occasion of the feast on the 8th of May (the Apparition of St. Michael), the Founder speaks to his disciples about this insatiable thirst for the living God. Do they have "this interior taste for God" which leads them in such a way "that they seek only God," that they "give themselves entirely to Him," at the same time that they never think that they have fully attained Him and continue unceasingly their journey toward Him?

You must strive from today to enter into these dispositions, wanting only God, and wishing to belong to Him alone, for our heart, as St. Augustine says, will never rest until it rests in God.<sup>325</sup>

Interior eschatological tension, which De La Salle expresses in another manner in the *Meditation* for the feast of the Ascension: to seek God without respite is to be stretched toward Heaven, where the definitive encounter with the Lord will be realized:

You should aspire only for heaven, and constantly raise your heart and mind thither. You are made only for heaven; you should labor only for heaven; you will find perfect rest only in heaven.<sup>326</sup>

## **2. *God Is All and the Things of the Earth Are Nothing***

When he calls his Brothers to seek God alone, to attach themselves to Him alone, to act only for Him, it often happens that De La Salle in some way puts in balance God and the world. God is all; the world is nothing. To belong wholly to God, one must detach oneself from the world and even despise it. The *Meditation* for the 8th of May is very explicit on this point. These are the "kinds of apparitions of St. Michael these inspirations" that come to the Brothers to "renounce the world" and to give oneself entirely to God. These inspirations lead them "to put themselves above all created things" in order to attach themselves to God alone. Moreover, that is the meaning of the very name of Michael who proclaims the absolute transcendence of God. The inspirations that "come to us to consecrate ourselves to God with a complete renunciation of all created beings" are given to us by God through the ministry of St. Michael "whose care for persons is directed to disengaging them from earthly entanglements and to enable them to

give themselves unreservedly to God,"<sup>327</sup> "for all worldly things are as nothing, and God is all."<sup>328</sup>

This "disdain" for the world – and it seems to us that in many texts De La Salle uses the word in its general meaning of "creation" – this "scorn" or "contempt" of the world constitutes a Lasallian theme too often for it to be neglected. EM, in particular, many times underlines this opposition, formulating it in different ways. The application to the presence of God (in the exercise of interior prayer) is "incompatible with the application to exterior and sensible things, for God is spiritual"; it cannot even "fit in with the application to spiritual things, for God is infinitely above created things"; also, "the more a soul applies itself to God, the more it detaches itself from creatures"; it becomes interior "by withdrawing from exterior and material things."<sup>329</sup> Having become attentive to the presence of God, "our soul disregards all that is exterior, despising it, and troubles itself only with what occurs in the interior."<sup>330</sup> Entering into very concrete precision, EM warns against excessive eagerness for things of one's employment, and even against an "indiscreet and poorly directed" zeal that would lead to applying oneself to the salvation of others in a way prejudicial to one's own salvation.<sup>331</sup>

This language is all the more surprising as one finds very different, if not opposing, considerations in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* as to the respective care for personal salvation and for that of the pupils,<sup>332</sup> and that De La Salle frequently insists on the importance of zeal, on the seriousness with which one has to fulfill the duties of one's employment. The stress is so displaced in this last passage from EM that one could question its authenticity.<sup>333</sup> It is no obstacle: the flight from the world, and even the despising of the world which is necessary for placing oneself in the presence of God, or the results of this application, are sufficiently constant themes in Lasallian teaching.

Frequently, in fact, above all in his *Meditations*, De La Salle speaks of the necessity, the advantages, and the conditions of that which he calls flight. "God and the world, the spirit of God and the spirit of the world cannot get along together."<sup>334</sup> The more one is emptied of the things of the world, the more God makes Himself present and fills that person with His spirit.<sup>335</sup> The less one communicates with other people, the more God communicates Himself to this person.<sup>336</sup> Such contrasts often appear in the *Meditations* on the saints. De La Salle freely presents them to his disciples as models of love for flight from the world and for solitude. "The practice of the saints," he remarks with respect to Saint Genevieve, "is to withdraw from conversation with other persons and to love those with God."<sup>337</sup> For it is in this flight from the world "that one learns to find God: it is there that one tastes God through the ease with which one can there make interior prayer, free from all communication with the world."<sup>338</sup>

Analogous texts can be multiplied.<sup>339</sup> The *Meditation* for the feast of St. Bruno – this canon of Rheims who founded the Chartreuse – seems to best summarize the whole of De La Salle's idea of flight from the world and solitude. He explains why one can there find God more easily; nothing distracts one, everything leads one to seek to please Him; one doesn't allow oneself to be absorbed in bodily needs and family preoccupations:

It is in the peace of solitude, unknown to the world, and thinking only of their sins and of the means to live a holy life that people find God and strive to please Him. On the one hand, there is nothing to distract them from God; and, on the other hand, there is nothing

which does not encourage them to do all they can to please Him. They are indifferent toward everything that concerns this life; they are no longer preoccupied about their bodies, nor any seeking after all the comforts of life, since they have quit the world in order to get rid of all that. Such was the practice of St. Bruno and his associates, who were able to say with St. Jerome that cities were as disagreeable to them as a prison, and that solitude was for them a paradise.

You have quit the world as much as St. Bruno, although you are not in as profound and severe a solitude. But, have you truly renounced the world? Do you no longer think of it or of your relatives? Are you truly disgusted with the world because of the kind of life you led there and the poor service you gave God? You should without doubt consider yourself blessed to have left it.<sup>340</sup>

The prescriptions of the *Rule* with reference to separation from the world are very strict, whether it deals with externs, with one's own family, with visits made or received, with trips, and with correspondence.<sup>341</sup> In his letters to Brother Gabriel Drolin, more exposed than others because of his isolation and of the need in which he at times found himself, in Rome, of living "in the midst of the world," the Founder often repeats his warnings on this point: "It is miserable being obliged to communicate with the world"; "I am displeased that you have been obliged to have so much dealing with the world. I find no difficulty in thinking that your piety has been diminished."<sup>342</sup>

To tell the truth, that which preoccupies De La Salle more than the material fact of communication with the world is contamination with the worldly spirit. That is what disturbs him most of all for his dear Gabriel Drolin: that he would so accustom himself "to the spirit and the manners of the world" that he would afterwards have "difficulty in abandoning them."<sup>343</sup> The world, here, is no longer so much the creation of a spirit opposed to that of the gospel, as it is defined in *Duties of a Christian*;<sup>344</sup> the world, for the Brother, is also all that is not in conformity with the end of the Institute, the service of God through announcing the Gospel to the poor. Can one then be for God and love the world?

If you truly belong to God, you are the world's enemy and the world is yours, because it is God's enemy. Treat it as such, and have a horror of all connection with it. Do not permit that it should have any access to you, lest by dealing with it you contract its spirit.<sup>345</sup>

For De La Salle, the world's maxims are in radical contradiction to the gospel maxims concerning the beatitude of the poor, the love of enemies, the acceptance of the Cross, unceasing prayer, the narrow gate, penance;<sup>346</sup> and, from this point of view, "flight from the world" imposes itself not only on the Brothers, but on all Christians; and the Brother, as a minister of Jesus Christ, should propose to his disciples as a happiness "all that which the world holds in horror: poverty, injustices, insults, calumnies, and persecutions for the sake of justice."<sup>347</sup>

Thus, De La Salle never reveals the advantages for his followers of having "left the world" without urging them to "renounce" it and to "die to the world":

You, who have left the world, have you renounced it in such a way that you no longer think of it at all? Are you completely disgusted with everything that makes up the pleasure of people living in the world? Are you no longer attached to anything?<sup>348</sup>

In the same way, the Brothers are invited to refrain from concerning themselves with "worldly affairs." St. Leo had forbidden this to religious; but it is the Brothers, more than all the others, that this prohibition had in mind: their time belongs to God and to the children. "It would be shameful to employ in matters that did not concern them time that God obliges them to consecrate totally to Him." On the other hand, "exterior matters" dissipate one's spirit; they render the Brothers "incapable of occupying themselves in those exercises that demand a spirit well-filled with God."<sup>349</sup> According to Blain, one of the last words De La Salle would address to his disciples on his death bed would give witness to his lively preoccupation with seeing them attentive to keeping themselves from the attractions of the world and the seduction of its spirit:

If you wish to persevere yourself in your state and to die in it, never have any familiar dealings with people of the world; for, little by little, you will acquire a liking for their way of acting and will be drawn into conversation with them so that, through policy, you will no longer be able to avoid agreeing with their language, however pernicious it may be. This will lead you to fall into infidelity; and no longer being faithful in observing your Rule, you will grow disgusted with your state, and finally you will abandon it.<sup>350</sup>

Many texts already cited testify to the fact that De La Salle frequently attaches appeals for renunciation and detachment to his exhortations for flight from the world, understood from the very beginning as interior opposition to the worldly spirit.<sup>351</sup> In this way he underscores the necessity of an interior conversion to God, constantly undertaken anew. To leave the world constitutes only the first step in a movement which must become interior:

You, too, have renounced the world exteriorly and all that people seek in it for their contentment. Take care that this renunciation also be interior and procure for you a complete detachment.<sup>352</sup>

The teaching of the *Collection* on the means to become interior places a strong emphasis on the importance of renunciation. The Lasallian teaching has nothing original here, but what is striking is its ascetical precision. To become interior, one must consent from the beginning to *privations*,<sup>353</sup> which go to the point of renouncing one's own self-will and judgment. But the asceticism is met with again in the second means that is summed up in the word *fidelity*<sup>354</sup> and the third that is defined by the term *application*.<sup>355</sup>

In the same vein still, De La Salle returns time and time *again to self-control and to mortification of the senses and the mind*. Without any doubt, he is here speaking from his personal experience. If one can think that at times Blain goes overboard in speaking of his austerity, there can be no doubt that De La Salle was one of the great penitents of his century.<sup>356</sup> Nor can one hide his severity toward his disciples. The beginnings of the Institute seemed to have been marked, for the Founder as well as for his first Brothers, by a "spiritual rapture" that led them to excesses that can be attested to objectively and which were not disassociated with many premature deaths of which the biographers speak.<sup>357</sup> And the austerity, indeed the harshness of the Founder in the

direction of his followers, will often bring him reproaches, both from the Brothers and from the outside.

Be that as it may, De La Salle never seems tempted to sweeten the rigor of the gospel message. To the contrary, he gladly cites and soberly comments on scriptural texts concerned with renunciation and penance. Fidelity to the moral code of the gospel demands that one renounce self and take up one's cross to follow Jesus Christ;<sup>358</sup> one must lose one's life to save it,<sup>359</sup> strip off the carnal body, mortify the flesh with its passions and disorderly desires,<sup>360</sup> mortify the earthly flesh, and throw off "the old man" to put on the new.<sup>361</sup> One must hold one's "senses in check":

For, according to St. Paul, the desires of the flesh are contrary to those of the spirit; they are opposed to one another . . . Since we should live by the spirit, says the same apostle, we must also be led by the spirit, not by our senses . . . Do you take the means to be masters of your senses? If you give in to them, it will be quite difficult for you to control them later. Therefore, watch over them constantly, because no one can be sensual and Christian at the same time.<sup>362</sup>

One must reduce the flesh to servitude: the more the body is humbled, the more the soul is purified and agreeable to God.<sup>363</sup> Austerity weakens the passions, and it is the guardian of chastity.<sup>364</sup>

The passions cannot be mastered, or the flesh prevented from revolting, unless fasting and mortification are used to bring them into subjection. This is the way that all the saints lived in order to obtain this result; you will not find any other way than this, joined to prayer; this is what Jesus Christ Himself prescribes for us in the holy gospel. It is quite right that the body be submissive to the spirit; but, if we wish it to be so, we must take the means to achieve this.<sup>365</sup>

With respect to numerous saints, De La Salle takes pleasure in mentioning their austerities and their bodily mortifications. If he does not always invite his sons to follow them in this way<sup>366</sup> – the *Rule* will establish, besides, that there is to be no corporal mortification prescribed in the Institute<sup>367</sup> – he invariably concludes with the necessity of mortification of the senses to control oneself and to draw near to God.<sup>368</sup> Particularly necessary at the beginning of the spiritual life, corporal austerity imposes itself throughout life "to preserve oneself in piety."<sup>369</sup> Restraint in food,<sup>370</sup> the practice of silence<sup>371</sup> – "a person who is not reserved in speech cannot become spiritual"<sup>372</sup> – the asceticism of "modesty"<sup>373</sup> constitute for De La Salle the favorite field for this battle.

Nevertheless, it is in no way surprising that he considers mortification of the mind more important for the upbuilding of the "inner person" than mortification of the senses.<sup>374</sup> To sum up, one must be on one's guard

never to apply one's mind to anything through mere curiosity or to aim solely at gratification; apply it only to those things which benefit one's profession.<sup>375</sup>

In part, at least, it is to this ascetical teaching on mortification of the mind that De La Salle's teaching on *obedience*,<sup>376</sup> so amply developed in the *Collection*,<sup>377</sup> in a long series of *Meditations*,<sup>378</sup> and to which he often returns in his *Letters*,<sup>379</sup> finds itself linked. The saint defines obedience as

the virtue through which one submits one's will and judgment to another as holding the place of God.<sup>380</sup>

To submit one's own will and judgment to another is to renounce it: such a renunciation demands that obedience be universal, indifferent to all that is commanded,<sup>381</sup> exact and entire,<sup>382</sup> prompt,<sup>383</sup> blind,

that is to say, without paying attention as to whether the thing is good or bad, unless it be evidently contrary to the commandments of God. If the thing appears inopportune commanded, or if any thought of this nature comes to mind, we should not listen to it or adhere to it.<sup>384</sup>

Such was the "simple and exact obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ,"

it was so simple that it was without a single reply, without a single contradiction, and even without reasoning or examining.<sup>385</sup>

This reading of Christ's obedience may seem short and negative. But beyond details, it is the very vision that the Lasallian teaching seems to imply on humanity, spiritual combat, the relation between God, the world, and the individual that poses certain questions for us. At times one seems to perceive in De La Salle's writings an echo, as it were, of the concept of Condren who, shifting the accent from adoration to sacrifice, ends somehow in sanctioning the destruction of the human as homage to the absolute being of God.<sup>386</sup> "One advances in perfection only in the degree to which one works at self-forgetfulness, and perfect obedience *leads to total self-forgetfulness*."<sup>387</sup> In the same line, De La Salle admires "the hatred of his body" shown by St. Francis of Paola, by St. Genevieve, whose "austerities were so great and who neglected her personal wants to such a degree, that she seemed to have no body left at all," and by St. Peter of Alcantara.<sup>388</sup>

In the logic of the expression of a dualistic anthropology that makes the body the enemy of the soul, the senses "the doorway of sin," nature an obstacle to grace, the exterior world a stumbling block for the interior life and the encounter with God, De La Salle at times tends to simplify certain biblical oppositions. It is thus that he reduces the Pauline opposition "flesh-spirit" to the opposition "body-soul."<sup>389</sup> "Those who have overcome their body and their passions are masters of the elements and of all the world."<sup>390</sup> One can find in such an affirmation the conviction of the supremacy of spirit over matter, of the victory of the human person, a fragile reed, but a reed thinking about the universe that can crush it. Yet, the "domination" of the world seems to start here with the "subjugation" of the body.

In the last resort, the opposition is underlined between the exterior and interior, the sensible and the spiritual, the visible – apparent – and the invisible – real. And finally, we have seen, there is a

kind of incompatibility between God and the world that De La Salle emphasizes. A similar concept seems to emerge at times and a sort of spiritual individualism, that makes an exclusive relationship with God alone as the absolute ideal:

It is thus that a soul is penetrated with sentiments of faith and so raised up into the life of God that it no longer understands things apart from God, it values everything in terms of God and finds no joy except in God. As a result it can no longer be preoccupied by anything but God, because, enlightened by this supernatural radiance, it no longer feels any interest in worldly things and looks upon them only with disdain. This was how St. Francis felt when, enlightened by faith and filled with love for God, he kept saying all his life, "My God and my all!" Today, try to place yourself in similar dispositions.<sup>391</sup>

In these conditions, the exercise of interior prayer would appear not only as indispensable, but as an essential activity: a kind of distrust of action and a paralysis in the presence of a commitment in the world can seem natural enough then. Previously, we have pointed out such a passage in EM that to some degree follows this sense.<sup>392</sup> Let us admit it straight out. We have not personally been able to reconcile entirely this conception with that found in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*; and the ensemble of *Meditations* where De La Salle places the Brother, in the presence of God to be sure, but of the God of the economy [of salvation] at work in the world for the salvation of humanity, introduces the Brother to His intimacy by personal appeal and the gift He bestows in order to make the Brother a collaborator in His work.

It is doubtless fitting to make a note of these differences of language and perspectives, and not to pretend at all costs that there is absolute coherence in the Lasallian spiritual teaching. Some of these writings, without doubt, carry more than others the stamp of their time and the spiritual currents more pessimistic and dualistic, more centered on contempt of the world and the deep seated corruption of human nature; and De La Salle, then, may seem to be less directly taken with the concrete existence of his disciples engaged in the service of others through the call of God to procure His glory. Let us add that EM was composed with a perspective other than the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*. In the first place, De La Salle wrote EM for the Novices. No doubt he judged that at this stage of their initiation it was essential to see to it that they be rooted in God, to establish them in a personal relationship with the Lord.<sup>393</sup> Perhaps one can also find in EM a profound inclination of De La Salle in love with the calm life, solitude, retreat from the world.<sup>394</sup>

### **3. *As She Found All in God, She Had the Good Fortune of Finding God Everywhere***

Let us seek then, neither to hide this austere aspect of Lasallian teaching, nor to minimize its scope, so frequent and insistent, nor to make it fit by force into a positive synthesis. This having been said, it seems to us not only legitimate, but also in conformity with Lasallian texts themselves, to attempt to draw from them a dynamic significance.

The two following paragraphs are going to grasp the mystic aspect of this hard asceticism; it is the condition for conformity to Christ and for life according to the Spirit. We will also see, in the following chapters, that De La Salle insists on the fact that it is above all in the concrete reality of his existence and his ministry that the Brother must live this mystery of death for life; his educational activities then will be evidently the privileged arena of his asceticism and of his



growth in Christ, of which it is the condition. Remaining here in the perspective of a journey in the presence of God, there are other positive aspects of this renouncing of the world and of self that should be mentioned.

From the very first, the negative language of De La Salle in reference to the world nevertheless translates positively – an existential awareness of the absolute and transcendent God. This is the basic experience of De La Salle himself, that which he presumes from the beginning with his disciples. The Lord has come into his life and this visible eruption led him to tear himself away from his world, and upset the hierarchy of his values. He, too, has lived an experience analogous to that of Abraham – and of so many saints of whom he speaks in his *Meditations*. For himself as for them, God's call has signified the exodus, the passage through the desert, the flight from the world. The experience of the "consuming fire" that all the mystics have had and to which they'd given expression, and which one recognizes in St. Augustine's "You have made us for yourself, O my God," the "nada" of John of the Cross, the reclaiming of the transcendence of God by Karl Barth, as in this notation by Kierkegaard:

It is a question of having seen once in life, to have felt one time something so incomparably great that everything else in comparison is nothing: something that one never forgets even if one forgets all the rest.<sup>395</sup>

When he speaks to his Brothers, the Founder bases his remarks on an analogous experience of which their entry into the community constitutes a visible sign; and he calls them to deepen interiorly this breaking with the world. After all, that which matters is "to give oneself totally to God" and to His service, to walk in His presence, and to journey toward Him without letting oneself be engrossed with, tied down by, or encroached upon by "creatures." This is one of the meanings of the practice of *poverty*.

Secondly, we have to speak again of De La Salle's teaching on this spiritual attitude, so fundamental for the Brother called to serve the poor. We limit ourselves to recalling here that the Founder frequently presents poverty in this perspective of total surrender of oneself to God.

Material poverty is a constant in the existence of the first Brothers.<sup>396</sup> For De La Salle, the spiritual attitude of poverty must be expressed by an effective detachment: to love poverty is to be content in lacking something, even necessities.<sup>397</sup> Nevertheless, it does not suffice only to be without to live in poverty; certain persons, even in community, only seem to put up with a situation of scarcity: "often it is those who are most deprived (of the goods and commodities of life) who desire them most ardently . . . It does not suffice only to be deprived if this deprivation is not accepted voluntarily and with affection."<sup>398</sup>

In reality, effective liberation and interior detachment from material goods is neither an end in itself, nor a virtue. It is only the sign – and the food for thought – of this total offering to God, recognized as the human person's Supreme Being: "Ask God fervently to grant you this complete detachment so that you may attach yourself to Him alone, in whom is all happiness in this life and in the next." For the spirit of God only communicates Himself to those who are found empty of all that is not God.<sup>399</sup> The *Meditation* for the feast of St. Francis summarizes very well the

essence of the Lasallian teaching on poverty; what is involved is to exist totally for God, to live for His love:

Learn from this saint to cherish poverty and to live in detachment from all things. The more you are detached from creatures, the more you will possess God and His holy Love. What! Will you have to admit with St. Augustine, before his conversion, that "mere trifles hold me back and prevent me from belonging wholly to God?"<sup>400</sup>

Renunciation, detachment, retreat from the world are then the necessary other side of awareness of the transcendence and absoluteness of God, but also of the foresight of His gratuitous Love and of the priceless attachment by which He calls a person to Himself in introducing one into His intimacy.<sup>401</sup>

In second place, and correlatively, these ascetical attitudes manifest that, by his existence, his vocation, and his ministry, the Brother is situated before God in a relationship that is priceless, transcendent, and cannot be reduced, even though it is for and by God, to the sole function that he fulfills. Certainly, God calls him to send him to others; and it is in serving them, in working for their salvation, that he procures the Glory of God. But this involvement in the world is authentic and significant only in the measure to which it remains like a vector in tension between its origin and its end; said in another way, in the measure to which the full involvement, vis-a-vis other persons, expresses the will to realize "the orders of God," in the measure to which this pursuit of effective service of others is turned toward the realization of God's plan of salvation.

Of this fundamental God-centeredness, it can be said that De La Salle never varies. On this point, the teaching of EM is more complementary than contradictory to that of the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*. If, at the very heart of one's total involvement for others, the "Minister of God" is thus placed before God, the beginning and end of one's ministry, it is that this personal relationship with God does not reduce itself to service of others through obedience to the divine will and to the building of the Kingdom. Each person is unique, and one's supreme dignity comes from the fact that one is desired by God, loved by God, and called to live in intimacy with God.

It seems to us that the strongest texts of EM on the renunciation of the world as a consequence and condition of the interior personal relationship with God present, in spite of their excessive language, this positive meaning. In fact, the very exercise of interior prayer constitutes, as it were, a sacrament, or the interior celebration of this vital personal relationship which is at the very root of the Brother's whole existence. This is why De La Salle presents interior prayer as a dialogue, a "conversation with God" who "communicates Himself to His friends and to His confidants" and who teaches them "secrets unknown to most persons."<sup>402</sup>

The Lasallian insistence on the necessary disengagement from the world and from the self in order to be for God seems to us to imply a third positive significance: the reminder that the demand of a permanent conversion is found at the base of every journey toward God. Seized by God who calls one to His service, the person is constantly tempted, nevertheless, to close one's heart to the interior word, to turn back egoistically upon the self, to fabricate and install new idols. To continue one's journey toward God, one must ceaselessly tear oneself away from the bonds one knits for oneself, bonds that deaden one's enthusiasm.

Echoing the prophetic invitation of John the Baptist, De La Salle often recalls the need for the interior conversion of which exterior penance is only a sign; it is on this that he insists in the *Meditation* for Ash Wednesday.<sup>403</sup> If one must unceasingly detach oneself from self and from the world, it is because this breaking of our chains is necessary that we may turn ourselves toward God:

Have you not often said, like St. Augustine, "Tomorrow, tomorrow I shall be converted?"  
Do you not still say it every day? Have you really left all from the depth of your heart?

Are you fully converted to God? Have you completely renounced the world? How often has God spoken to you by an interior voice, loud enough to be unmistakable, and yet you have not listened!<sup>404</sup>

Thus, Lasallian teaching makes it clear that "separation from the world," renunciation, and detachment have no significance apart from the awareness of God's transcendence, of His loving call to service, of the need for conversion that the journey toward Him demands. Moreover, at the very heart of his teaching on the necessary breaking-off, De La Salle never forgets this point as often as he addresses himself to these men who, by God's call, are involved in the world and who, by the education of poor abandoned youth, contribute to the construction of the earthly world.

To be sure, one also finds in his writings numerous texts in which he remarks that, in the measure in which the Brother recollects himself in the presence of God or in which he enters more into His intimacy, the Brother is sent back to the world. Even St. Anthony, the Father of hermits, was drawn back from the desert by "the zeal he had for the salvation of his Brothers." The Brother, also, should leave his retreat "when God demands of him that he work for the salvation of the souls confided to him."<sup>405</sup> He ascends toward God with these souls and descends toward them on the part of God.<sup>406</sup> He should have "some communication with the world" in order "to diffuse everywhere the good odor of Jesus Christ."<sup>407</sup>

St. Theresa the great contemplative, lived "lost in God . . . as she found all in God, so also she had the good fortune of finding God everywhere."<sup>408</sup> In this pithy turn of phrase, De La Salle presents a first way to achieve this "return to the world" by the life of intimacy with God and the journey in His presence. One "finds all in God" because He alone is able to gratify the soul's thirst; but the God whom one encounters is the Creator in whom all subsists; He is at work in the world to bring about His Kingdom. To better penetrate the intimacy of His mystery is to open oneself "to the good fortune of finding God everywhere." Here De La Salle does not advocate a confused pantheism: one recognizes God everywhere because, on attaching oneself to Him, one goes back to the awareness that it is God who gives all things; and, in involvement in the world, one recaptures their true consistency and their initial and ultimate meaning. He is the source of all life; He is the goal toward which all reality is on its way.

While he so often insists on the opposition between God and the world, nevertheless in EM one finds many instances of a return to the sense of seeing all things in view of God. Intimacy with God enables one to go "to the heart of things," and to recapture "an esteem for them . . . as being in God, convinced as we should be that God is in all things and that all things have value only

insofar as God dwells in them." At this depth of understanding, one can no longer "separate (in oneself) the idea of these creatures from the thought of God."<sup>409</sup>

Having thus recaptured a profound sense of life, one can go without fear wherever one must for "wherever one goes there one finds God; there is no place that is not honored with His presence."<sup>410</sup> This engagement can conquer all fear, all pusillanimity: "I fear no evil, O my God, for you are with me"; the Lord "will turn my feet aside from all snares that were laid for me; it is He . . . who will teach my hands to make war and to fight if the occasion presents itself."

The consideration of the presence of God in us in order to keep us in existence brings about a positive view of the body itself. The first fruit of this consideration "is to look upon the supplying of our bodily needs *in view of preserving God's life within us, so that we may live by and through that life.*"<sup>411</sup> Here we are far from "hatred of the body" and looking upon eating as a degrading animal action; the human person lives from God and for God in a body as in a soul, and we cannot respect God living in us without this respect reflecting one's attitude toward the body. On recalling elsewhere that the human person is the Temple of God in one's body, De La Salle returns to this respect for the body of which purity is a manifestation and to the offering of the body as a "living host, holy and pleasing in the eyes of God, to render Him a reasonable and spiritual worship," which in no way implies that mastery of the senses in a sacrifice of destruction.<sup>412</sup>

When De La Salle says to his disciples that in interior prayer "Jesus will reveal to you secrets unknown to most people," the context shows that in this *Meditation* on St. John, he is thinking of the knowledge of "the highest mysteries of the divinity and of the holy humanity of Christ."<sup>413</sup> However, the "secret" that God reveals in interior prayer, according to the epistle to the Ephesians, is that the "incomprehensible riches of Christ" are from now on accessible to all humanity and that in Jesus Christ all are called to the alliance with God.<sup>414</sup> Here it seems to us is discovered a second form of "the return to the world" by the life of intimacy with God: the Brother, "in retreat and in interior prayer," recaptures the awareness that he is charged by this God, in whose presence he recollects himself, to make known His design of love to the youth that God confides to him, in order to introduce them also to life as children of God, to lead them to enter as living members into the communion of the Church. It is in this perspective of the always-more-profound entry into the "mystery" that De La Salle often treats of the relationships between "retreat" and ministry.

In a general way, he reminds the Brothers that, in imitation of the apostles, it is by withdrawing from the world [retreat] and applying themselves to interior prayer that they will become "worthy of their ministry."<sup>415</sup> Paradoxically, it is by regularly keeping one's distance from the world that the Brother rekindles his awareness of the profound meaning of his engagement on behalf of the salvation of the world: living thus "unknown" to the world, he will put himself "in a position to work very fruitfully in his employment."<sup>416</sup>

De La Salle makes explicit the fundamental relationship between "retreat" and interior prayer for the ministry. Detached from the world by withdrawal [retreat], a Brother "can often read and listen to the reading of Sacred Scriptures," meditate on "the science of salvation and the holy

maxims that his profession requires him to practice and to teach to others,"<sup>417</sup> and therein learn "to speak well of God,"<sup>418</sup> by listening to Him:

One only learns to speak to God by listening to Him because to know how to speak to God and to converse with Him can only come from God, who has His own language which is special to Him and which He shares only with His friends and confidants, to whom He grants the happiness of frequently conversing with Him.<sup>419</sup>

The "spiritually deaf" are incapable of "speaking of God"; the healing of their deafness requires that God "draw them aside": in solitude [retreat] they dispose themselves to listen to His voice.<sup>420</sup> It is only if their word is born of their interior conversation with God that it will possess "the unction necessary for inspiring in children the spirit of Christianity."<sup>421</sup>

In solitude and interior prayer, a Brother also recaptures the awareness that if he is a worker with God, it is God alone who can work through him and in him: "because he is himself incapable of doing anything helpful for the salvation of souls, he ought frequently to turn to God to obtain from Him that which, in his profession, he is obliged to communicate to others"; thus, the more he applies himself to prayer, the better he does in his employment.<sup>422</sup> Besides, solitude and interior prayer will give him the distance necessary to "better know himself," to work at interior perfection, by renouncing his passions and inclinations.<sup>423</sup> Thus, he will, little by little, acquire the virtue necessary "to do his work well and to educate a great number of children in the spirit of Christianity."<sup>424</sup>

Finally, lived awareness of God's presence – the effort to welcome His interior word and intimacy with Him – send a Brother back to the world by their very dynamism itself. We find here that which we have already noted: the good news of the gospel that the Brother must announce is not a word that remains exterior to him. He announces "the gifts that God has bestowed on him," a salvation that has overtaken him, a love that has captured his heart.<sup>425</sup> And he will go out to others not in virtue of an exterior "mandate," but because the love of God "impels him" to share with those God confides to him this gospel which has transformed his own existence:

Such is ordinarily the result of true seclusion [retreat] that those who become filled there with the love of God endeavor to share this afterwards with others, when God for the good of the Church places them in a position where they are obliged to deal with the world. Then these great saints, filled completely with the spirit of God, devote themselves with all possible care to make known and to cause others to value what they experience within themselves. Animated by this zeal, they assist very efficaciously in leading a great number of souls to give themselves to God.<sup>426</sup>

Therefore, one can say that the circle is complete: not only, in fact, does the "return to the world," thus understood and lived, not constitute an obstacle to intimacy with God, but it is an interior participation in the life of God, or, as De La Salle says, an "imitation" of God who engaged Himself through love in human history in order to save them.<sup>427</sup>

It seems to us, at the end of this analysis, that the Lasallian insistence on flight from the world [retreat], interior prayer, and intimacy with God in no way introduces a dichotomy between "prayer" and "activity," or "interior life" and "apostolic life," or "union with God" and "the service of others." Rather, this insistence attracts attention, on the one hand, to the fact that true intimacy with the God who saves the world and calls the Brother to be His collaborator sends the Brother back into this world with a fresh enthusiasm; and, on the other hand, to the fact that as a "minister of God," the Brother discovers at the root of his call, of his being sent, and of his very own existence, a personal love that establishes him "in God," in a gratuitous relationship which transcends all his apostolic activities and demands to be, for its own sake, celebrated in thanksgiving.

But the very gratuity of a priceless relationship is not alien to announcing the gospel to the world. For the heart of the Good News that the Brother announces, is it not that God involves Himself with human beings by reason of His free and creative love, that God in Himself is gratuitous love?

## **II. Do Not Bear the Name of Minister of Jesus Christ in Vain**

Reminding the Brothers of the significance of their calling and their mission, De La Salle had them consider their role as "Ministers of Jesus Christ," as representatives, as ambassadors, as cooperators with Jesus Christ. He, also, gladly makes explicit the interior effect these functions have in their lives. The *Meditation* for the feast of the Circumcision is an excellent summary of his teaching on this subject:

Do you not bear in vain the name of Christian and minister of Jesus Christ in the work you do? Do you live in a manner that truly befits these glorious titles? Do you instruct those entrusted to your care with all the attention and zeal that God requires of you in your employment? Strive to render yourself worthy of this distinguished role by your irreproachable conduct.<sup>428</sup>

This text, it seems to us, is characteristic of the interiorization, ever more profound, of the mystery of Christ that De La Salle calls his Brothers to live. He begins with the similarity of the essential activity of the Brother and of Christ: the proclamation of the Gospel. He calls forth the effort to imitate Christ in one's conduct; and he leads them to understand that it is out of an interior participation in the Mystery of Christ, in the exterior life of the "minister of Jesus Christ," that conformity to Jesus Christ will flourish. We shall trace this difficult road of progressive interiorization: from the imitation of Christ to conformity with Him, to participation and interior union in His mystery. And we will see that all this teaching can be summed up in the Lasallian theme of "consecration" to God in Christ.<sup>429</sup>

### **1. Follow Jesus Christ by Imitating His Conduct**

Like all the apostles, like many saints, the Brother one day heard Christ's call to leave all things and follow Him, to become one of His disciples; an exterior call, no doubt, that has expressed itself visibly by his "leaving the world" to live in community, and ultimately to live there in the company of Jesus Christ.<sup>430</sup> But this visible change represents at the same time a gift and a call,

both interior and permanent. The gift of the love that Christ manifests to the Brother in choosing him, and by which He "fills him with His Holy Spirit," thus permitting him to respond by an interior attachment to His person and by a detachment from the world and its spirit.<sup>431</sup> The invitation to live in intimacy with Christ, to remain docile to His unceasing calls, to follow Him even in conflict and suffering, to converse with Him in interior prayer and in the Eucharist, to be so attached to Him that he no longer thinks of himself.<sup>432</sup>

If Jesus Christ calls the Brother to follow Him, it is to associate him with His ministry of announcing the Gospel. Thus, the *Sequela Christi* includes for him an imitation of Christ who brings the Good News to the poor. Jesus Christ taught "the principal truths of our religion," and He declared to His apostles: "I must announce the gospel of the reign of God, because it is for this that I have been sent":

Say the same thing, following De La Salle, that it is *for this* that Jesus Christ has sent you and that the Church, whose ministers you are, employs you. Bring all the care needed, then, to fulfill this function with as much zeal and success as the saints had fulfilling it.<sup>433</sup>

Christ is the Brother's model in the exercise of his ministry; and to really follow and imitate Him, the Brother must "accompany" Him, as did the apostles, in order to learn from Him that which he must teach and the manner in which he should acquit himself of his function. The gospel morality and evangelical paradoxes become the chart which guides the Brother in teaching "the young Christians who are entrusted to him . . . according to these and all the other practices of Jesus Christ."<sup>434</sup>

The *Duties of a Christian* illustrates, by example, this Lasallian orientation. What is essential in its section on "dogma" consists in a long consideration of the life and the teachings of Jesus Christ,<sup>435</sup> whereas its section on "morality" interprets the Decalogue which serves as a framework for the light of the new law that Jesus Christ has come to bring. A treatise on the evangelical virtues and counsels completes the study.<sup>436</sup> Moreover, De La Salle invites his disciples to refer to Christ as their model in certain activities particular to their ministry – the correction of their pupils, for example.<sup>437</sup> He also calls upon them to adopt the rhythm of Christ who combined preaching and praying.<sup>438</sup>

In this teaching on the *Sequela Christi* and the imitation of Christ by the minister, certain texts of De La Salle already show that it is not sufficient merely to reproduce Christ's exterior comportment. The Founder draws attention to the imitation of Christ in His essential apostolic attitudes, in the dynamism of His Incarnation. For example, he calls the Brother to imitate Him in His attitude of a servant, in which the washing of feet offered the symbol that was explained by Christ Himself.<sup>439</sup> He proposed that they make their attitude that of the Good Shepherd, who knows each sheep individually, has a "great tenderness" for them, and adapts His teaching and His educative work to their capacity<sup>440</sup>; of the Good Shepherd who rushes to search for the lost sheep and "places it on His shoulders and returns it to the flock."

"Since you take His place," De La Salle here concludes, "look upon yourself as being obliged to do the same."<sup>431</sup> The imitation of Christ, the *Sequela Christi*, already appears as a dynamic participation in His mystery of incarnation for salvation. It is less a starting from considering

Christ as a model to be reproduced than the gushing forth from within, from the salvific love of Christ for humankind, expressing itself concretely toward the children confided to him, that the Brother makes present rather than imitates the mission of Jesus Christ.<sup>442</sup>

## 2. *To Conform Oneself to Jesus Christ*

Moreover, De La Salle speaks more often of "conformity" to Jesus Christ than "of imitation of Jesus Christ"; and this word connotes in itself an idea of interiority. Certainly, conformity to Jesus Christ translates itself visibly into behavior. *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* makes the observation that by having "exterior manners *conformed* to those of Jesus Christ" true Christians "can be distinguished from infidels and from nominal Christians"; but the context shows that this behavior is Christian, first and above all, at the level of its inspiration. It consists in "giving living expression to one's faith in the good will, honor, and respect shown to one's neighbors as members of Jesus Christ and living Temples of the Holy Spirit."<sup>443</sup> The *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* move in the same direction by reminding that, to properly fulfill his ministry, it does not suffice for a Brother to "exercise his functions with regard to the children by only conforming to Jesus Christ in His conduct." One must enter "also into His views and His intentions."<sup>444</sup>

This conformity to Jesus Christ, at the same time both exterior and interior, expresses itself particularly by participation in His virtues. For the *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, to enter into the spirit of a mystery of Christ upon which one meditates, is to make Christ's attitude one's own interiorly and to express it in one's exterior behavior. Each mystery thus has "a spirit proper and special to itself, because in it [the mystery] our Lord practiced certain virtues which are especially evident . . . and that our Lord practiced these virtues to give us an example and to lead us to practice them in imitation of Him, helped by recourse to the grace that He merited for us and that is attached to this mystery, as being part of the spirit and of the action itself."<sup>445</sup> Thus, in contemplating at Christmas the adorable person of the Word "dishonored and annihilated under the form of an infant," one can understand within oneself the invitation to be converted and to become like this infant:

O my God, I am convinced of this truth, that if I wish to share in your glory in heaven, I must *conform myself to you on earth* . . . you teach me by your extreme poverty and by your sufferings to prefer poverty, the world's contempt, and mortification to riches, to honors, and to pleasures. It is this which I propose *to do in imitation of you*.<sup>446</sup>

EM returns several times to conformity to the poverty of Christ that is stimulated by the contemplation of the poor Christ; and, each time, it is the interior transformation of outlook and heart that, above all, stands out. The love of Christ heals the person of the "haughty" inclination that carries one "passionately" toward "seductive pleasures." It destroys "one's cupidity and insatiable covetousness for possessions," makes one "apply oneself to behaving with the simplicity, docility, and submissiveness that becomes a child of God."<sup>447</sup> The *Meditation* for Christmas shows that "conformity" to the Savior becomes one with conformity to poor children.<sup>448</sup> We will return to this later, as well as to conformity to their humility.<sup>449</sup>



The Brother should endeavor to be conformed to the obedience of Christ:

Take the obedience of Jesus Christ as the model of your obedience and strive to be conformed thereto, recalling the words of St. Paul that He was obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross . . . <sup>450</sup>

These last lines bring us back to the passion, sufferings, and Cross of Christ. In fact, when De La Salle speaks of "conformity" to Jesus Christ, most of the time it is to the suffering Jesus Christ that he is referring. The Lasallian expressions here take on a cutting vigor that shows to what degree the mystery of the suffering of Christ is central in the habitual contemplation of the Founder. "We are Christians," he writes for example with reference to the mortification of St. Francis Borgia, "*only insofar as we are conformed to our Savior*, and it is the love of suffering and of mortification that renders us like Him."<sup>451</sup> We could multiply analogous citations.<sup>452</sup>

Here we find again, from another perspective, the insistence we have already pointed out on mortification, renunciation, and penance. But it is the mystical face of the rigorous asceticism advocated by De La Salle that now appears. It is participation in the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation, of the paschal mystery. The passion and death of Christ have a universal scope; "to achieve and consummate the work of redemption," no less is needed than that each Christian unites "one's sufferings to those of Jesus Christ, as being one of His members suffering in Him and for Him."<sup>453</sup> The disciple of Christ is called to conform oneself to Him, who "accepts to suffer and to die" for the expiation of the sins of humanity,<sup>454</sup> who "emptied Himself and takes on the nature of a slave . . ." Accomplishing the prophecy of Isaiah, "He bore all our sins and took upon Himself all our weaknesses."<sup>455</sup> Always following the Scripture, De La Salle reminds his Brothers of the fruit drawn from this contemplation of Christ suffering for our sins: a horror for sin and contrition for those one has committed;<sup>456</sup> conformity with Christ in His deep-seated humility;<sup>457</sup> the always renewed decision "to die to sin and to live for justice."<sup>458</sup> This is notably the teaching of the *Meditations* for Holy Saturday and for Easter Sunday.<sup>459</sup>

By participating in the sufferings and the death of Christ, one is introduced into His glory.<sup>460</sup> This christocentric vision of mortification gives the Lasallian teaching on this point a value that is in the end positive. Suffering is the human condition and not a seeking after death.

The resurrection of Jesus should also procure for you the benefit of making you rise spiritually by causing you to live according to grace. This means it will cause you to enter an entirely new and heavenly life . . . Mortify your earthly bodies, says the apostle, and put off the old self in order to be clothed in the new.<sup>461</sup>

Mortification of the senses and of the mind thus concretizes, above all, the will and the reality of continual "conversion," of the metanoia by which one "receives the gift of the Spirit who confirms one in good."<sup>462</sup>

The theme of *persecution for the sake of justice* only presents De La Salle with the occasion for recalling for the Brothers the existence and the meaning of conformity to the Suffering Christ. He often returns to it.<sup>463</sup> "If you desire to live a holy life," says St. Paul, "expect to be persecuted."<sup>464</sup> If the warning here is of a general order, the explication of what is meant by a

holy life habitually leads back to the heart of the ministry of the Brothers and of their lived experience. Their evangelical service of the poor has very often brought them to "suffer for the sake of justice,"<sup>465</sup> experiencing tangibly the hostility of "the world," and the antagonism between the worldly spirit and the gospel spirit.

All the prophets have undergone these persecutions.<sup>466</sup> Jesus Christ predicted them for His Apostles: "If today those who belong to God and work for His glory are not actually put to death," observes the Founder, "what is not done to take away their honor by the most atrocious calumnies, treating them as though they were unworthy to live." When they undergo such trials, they should rejoice: "If the world is their enemy, this is the sign that one truly belongs to God."<sup>467</sup> Persecution is the normal "recompense" for the pains and labors of the Brother's ministry, the only one that "one receives from the poor for all the good one does on their behalf."<sup>468</sup> The disciple is not above the master, and those who work as ministers of Christ can expect to drink of His chalice. This is the price of the redemptive work which, accomplished by and in Christ, comes to its conclusion by the action of "apostolic persons."<sup>469</sup>

Participation in the cross<sup>470</sup> blossoms in the fruit of salvation. The more apostles of Jesus Christ "are overwhelmed by afflictions in their apostolic labors," the more they operate efficaciously for the salvation of souls;<sup>471</sup> their witness illustrates and renders their action fruitful.<sup>472</sup> Their sufferings purify them, enable them to grow in their love of God, in their apostolic zeal, in their hope for a celestial recompense.<sup>473</sup> Christ, moreover, will not fail "to extend His hand" in these difficult transitions. Persecutions cannot separate them from His love.<sup>474</sup>

This Lasallian teaching on "conformity" to Christ in sufferings and the cross seems to us significant in several ways. In the first place, it shows at what point, for De La Salle, "conformity" to Jesus Christ no longer results from the imitation of an exterior model, but springs forth from an interior association with the Paschal Mystery. To follow Jesus Christ "on Calvary as well as on Tabor" is to enter, by means of the sufferings existence includes, into the intimacy of His mystery of death for life.<sup>475</sup> In the second place, the Lasallian perspective on suffering appears to us here, by reason of its mystical harmony, more than ever positive. There is not the slightest suspicion of masochism for suffering is not sought in itself, but is accepted as being an integral part of apostolic action. In no way is it a "self-destroying" complex. In accepting the cross, one is assured of reaping fruit for others as well as for oneself.

Finally, and above all, such a teaching enables us to grasp the precise point in the Brother's concrete history – his experience of apostolic ministry – which is for him the place of mystical experience. It is in the exercise of his ministry that he encounters "persecution"; and it is thus, associated really and historically with the "mystery," that he better realizes his own growth in Christ, at the same time that, on the cross, he engenders new members in Jesus Christ. That is what is expressed admirably, for example, by the *Meditation* on the martyrdom of St. James, the first Apostle to shed his blood for faith in Jesus Christ:

You have been chosen by God 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 chief function. *Consider yourselves very fortunate and well-rewarded to be overwhelmed with insult and to suffer all sorts of*

*outrage for the love of Jesus Christ. If dissolute people take pleasure in causing you to suffer, let it also be a great satisfaction for you to endure this patiently, for this will help you die to yourselves.*<sup>476</sup>

Interior participation in the mystery of Christ orients and animates the daily story of the Brother; and his historical combat for justice and service to the gospel, for the benefit of poor and abandoned youngsters, ushers him more vitally into the priceless mystery of Jesus Christ.

Thus, spiritual experience and growth come about not in flight from the world, but in the very heart of activity within the world by which the mystical encounter of the human person and God is brought about in Jesus Christ. In and through his activity, the Brother carries out the consecration of his entire being to God. With Christ and in Him, he "hands over" his life to the Father for the salvation of others. This is what the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* suggest, in once again evoking the matter of persecutions:

Let it be clear, then, in all your relations with the children who are entrusted to you that you look upon yourselves as ministers of God, carrying out your ministry with love and with a sincere and true zeal, accepting with much patience the difficulties you have to suffer, willing to be despised by others and to be persecuted, even to give your life for Jesus in the fulfillment of your ministry.<sup>477</sup>

### **3. *It Is No Longer I Who Live, but Jesus Christ Who Lives in Me***

The setting out to follow Christ, the imitation of Christ, and conformity to Jesus Christ express themselves in exterior attitudes; they imply ascetical effort on the part of the individual. Yet, we have not been able to present this aspect of the spiritual teaching of De La Salle without having again continually noted that the behaviors that he evokes do more for him than merely express an interior reality; asceticism represents the internal demand that the Mystery makes on life. In fact, it is truly the participation in the mystery of Christ which is at the heart of Lasallian reflection on life "according to Christ." More so even than the *Sequela Christi*, the imitation of Christ, and even conformity to Jesus Christ, it is about union with Jesus Christ that De La Salle most often speaks, that is to say, of identification, of assimilation in Christ.

The point of departure for De La Salle's entire reflection seems to be found in the mystical significance of the expressions – "ministers of Jesus Christ," "ambassadors of Christ," and "representatives of Jesus Christ" – that he applies to his Brothers. For the poor and abandoned children to whom their ministry is addressed, it is Jesus Christ Himself who comes to them, teaches them, serves them, loves them, works to save them. Here and now, for them, the redemptive Incarnation, the work of salvation continues. Thus, for them, the Brother becomes a sacrament of Jesus Christ. Such is the economy of salvation, willed by Jesus Christ Himself.

He wants your disciples to see Him in you and receive your teaching as if He were teaching them. They must be convinced that the truth of Jesus Christ comes from your mouth.<sup>478</sup>

This mystical reality demands of the Brother that, with an ardent zeal and a love similar to Christ's, he take upon himself interiorly the eschatological goal of Christ's coming into the world: the destruction of sin,<sup>479</sup> but, also and above all, the accession of all people into the "true life." Jesus Christ came into the world, as He himself said, "that they may have life and have it in abundance."<sup>480</sup> The same mystical reality of the vital assimilation of the Brother into Christ compels him to incarnate himself into the world of the children to whom he is sent. We will talk again about this demand of incarnation.

Vital assimilation to Christ also demands of the Brothers that they participate in the *spousal love of Christ for His Church*. Following St. Paul, De La Salle presents a vision of the Church that is altogether mystical, christological, and pneumatic. At the same time, he has a clear grasp of its reality in the world. Charged by Jesus Christ to "build His body which is the Church," the Brothers must contribute as much as they can "to purify and sanctify her with the word of life, so that she may appear before Him full of glory, spotless, without wrinkle or blemish, but wholly pure and beautiful." They actualize the mystery of Christ by growth in His Church, by "teaching children and forming them in piety."<sup>481</sup> By "giving sensible signs that they love those confided to them," they give witness of their participation in Christ's love for His Church.<sup>482</sup>

De La Salle presents this identification with Christ as both a requirement and a gift, without it being possible to distinguish one from the other, so inseparable are they. The Founder calls his disciples *to remain united to Christ*. He does so by having recourse, among other things, to the Johannine image of *Christ the vine* of which Christians are branches. The *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* apply the image to the Brother's ministry which can be efficacious, bear fruit, only in the measure to which the minister "remains in Jesus Christ: as the branch of the vine can bear fruit only if it remains attached to the stem. Jesus Christ wants you to understand by this comparison that the more that *which you will do* for the good of your disciples will be animated by Him and draw its force from Him, the more it will produce fruit in them." The very activity of the Brother in the world, his concrete relations of service to the children, are sacramental expressions of the salvific love of Christ; Christ is at work in the actions of the Brother.<sup>483</sup>

Apart from the image of the vine,<sup>484</sup> Lasallian writings frequently take up the theme of interior union with Christ. EM returns to it, in particular, in proposing to the Brothers an act of union with our Lord in the first as well as in the second part of interior prayer. These explanations enrich the significance and the exigencies of union with Christ. If one meditates on a mystery, one unites oneself interiorly with His Spirit in the mystery, with the interior dispositions that He had. One asks Him to participate in this spirit, while at the same time entering into the practice of the virtues one noticed in the mystery. The mystery of Jesus' dawning in this way places us at the very heart of the transformation His coming realizes in believers.

It is most fitting to unite oneself with Jesus in His birth, so as to receive and share His Spirit, which gives us access to the Father as adopted children in His only Son.<sup>485</sup>

To unite oneself to our Lord is, thus, to make one's own His dispositions, His attitude of self-offering to the Father and of service to humanity. It is interiorly to adopt His mentality by assimilating the evangelical spirit and maxims.<sup>486</sup> We remark in passing that this "union with our Lord" is both an obligation and a gift for all Christians. One of the objectives of the education of

the children confided to the Brothers is "to engage them to unite all their actions to those of our Lord, so that their actions, being sanctified by His merits and by His consecration, are able to be pleasing to God and a means of salvation for them."<sup>487</sup>

From the first a gift and work of Christ in the person, an ontological reality that transforms one, making one a child of God in His only Son, the union with Jesus Christ establishes and intensifies itself through the *sacramental life*. It is through Baptism that the Christian becomes a child of God, that one is adopted in Jesus Christ by the Father.<sup>488</sup> This relationship leads Him to enter into a very strong union with Christians, a union "that consists in this that . . . all are members of Jesus Christ and of the Church . . . It is the Holy Spirit who, enlivening the Church, produces this union among the faithful that unites them closely to Jesus Christ."<sup>489</sup>

It is, above all, with respect to the Eucharist – on which he has written abundantly<sup>490</sup> – that De La Salle underlines the necessity and the efficacy of the sacraments for growth in union with Christ. Here we will limit ourselves to some notations that come from the Founder's writings for his Brothers, which are concerned solely with the relationship between the Eucharist and union with Jesus Christ.<sup>491</sup>

The method "to assist at Mass properly" that De La Salle offers in the *Collection* simply follows the unfolding of the eucharistic rites in inviting the Brothers to participate in an interior manner. The Founder repeatedly invites them to unite themselves to Christ: to His remorse at the time of the confession of sins, to His self-offering from the time of the Offertory to the Preface, to His thanksgiving, to His consecration to God, to His dispositions as "adoring victim of His Father, as the mediator and reconciler of God with humanity" during the Canon.<sup>492</sup> From the Our Father to the Communion, if one does not prepare oneself to receive Communion, "one should endeavor to make a spiritual communion by beseeching Jesus Christ to give us His Holy Spirit so that we act only for Him, and have no life but His, since we are His members."<sup>493</sup>

It is thus the whole of the eucharistic celebration that offers, by the very rites themselves, the possibility of intensifying the effort for union with Christ. But it is, above all, in respect to communion that De La Salle stresses the efficacy of the sacrament, insisting from the start on the fact that, in the Eucharist, it is Christ who effects the union of the person with Himself. The "divinization" wrought by the eucharistic Christ of those who receive Him constitutes a central theme of the *Meditations* for the octave of the feast of the Blessed Sacrament. Entering within the faithful who receive communion, Jesus Christ "makes them partakers in the divinity itself"; uniting Himself with them, He "abundantly confers His graces" on them.<sup>494</sup>

Starting from Scripture and from patristic literature, De La Salle builds upon this theme still further. To receive the body of Christ "is to participate in the life of our Savior" and to be assured of eternal life "if we preserve in ourselves the spirit of Jesus Christ, which is what He leaves in us."<sup>495</sup> He also takes up the patristic image of the multiple grains of wheat that become one bread: thus, Communion unites us so intimately to Jesus Christ that we become "one body with Him, the very body of Jesus Christ." And Christ transforms interiorly the one who receives Him:

Jesus Christ unites Himself to you in Holy Communion, to transform you into Himself and to make you be one and the same heart and one and the same spirit with Him; the

interior dispositions that are in Him pass over into you and become your own. How happy you should consider yourself to be in a state in which Communion is received very often, where you can always be one, and only one, with Jesus Christ, possess His spirit, and act only by Him.<sup>496</sup>

From such expressions identical to those the Founder uses elsewhere to define the effects of the spirit of faith,<sup>497</sup> we are once more led to understand that his spiritual teaching is based, above all, not on a moral but on an ontological plane. Before being a principle of behavior, and to effectively become one, the spirit of faith is the flowering of the mystery of Christ in the person, a participation in the indwelling Spirit of Christ, inspiring and enlivening one. Very logically, these considerations on the ontological efficacy of the Eucharist open the way to an invitation to frequent communion which De La Salle firmly sanctions in an epoch in which the question was controversial.<sup>498</sup>

*Meditation 55* examines the pretexts many use not to communicate frequently. One is "the lack of holiness." De La Salle's argument is significant because he puts in high relief the aspect of the "gift" of holiness, of union with Jesus Christ. One receives communion, says the Founder, not because one is holy, but to become holy.

Is not the union with Jesus Christ, which you obtain by receiving Him, capable of making you share in His holiness? This is precisely the reason why you should receive Communion often.<sup>499</sup>

Not one of the other alleged pretexts holds water: to "unite oneself with God," the "easiest and the surest means" given by God Himself is Communion which, therefore, should be frequent.<sup>500</sup>

All we have said before on the subject of asceticism, of combat, and of mortification allows us to suppose that here De La Salle in no way sanctions any passivity whatsoever. His eucharistic teaching insists as much on the effort toward union with Christ in life as it does on the gift of this union in the Sacrament. The *Meditation* for Holy Thursday in a way establishes the bond between the gift and the responsibility, in calling the Brother's attention to the object of the prayer which he should address to Christ received in the Eucharist:

Admire this holy institution; make yourself worthy to profit from it by living a holy life; and today beg Jesus Christ coming to you to destroy entirely your own inclinations and your self-will, so that you may henceforth have no other inclinations except His and may no longer be guided except by His spirit.<sup>501</sup>

Such prayer is not limited to communion; the urgent request for "the Spirit" that will enable one to live the very life of Christ is untiringly recommended by the Founder. In the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, he reminds the "representative" of Christ to children that one must "unceasingly represent to Jesus Christ the needs of one's disciples, explaining to Him the difficulties that have been encountered in guiding them." Jesus Christ, seeing that the Brother regards Him as the one who can do everything in his work, "will not fail to grant him what he will ask of Him."<sup>502</sup> Jesus Christ is, in fact, our only mediator.<sup>503</sup>

The main thing about the gift Christ bestows on us, of this life He has come to bring to humanity, is His Spirit, who confers upon us filial adoption, by incorporating us into the only Son. And this is also the central object of the prayer we should address to Him, the essential objective of interior prayer, as EM insists, speaking equivalently of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord became a human child to merit for us the grace of being rejuvenated according to the Spirit and of becoming in Him children of God by adoption and by the grace that is in Jesus Christ.<sup>504</sup>

It is starting from this ontological transformation that has progressively brought about change in the whole of existence, life in Christ, by the Spirit, in His mentality, His behavior, His attitudes, and His intentions. Two beautiful prayers in EM ask for the same essential grace of adoption and its flowering in the whole of one's life. One is addressed to Christ: after having asked to participate in His love of poverty, of mortification, and of sufferings, De La Salle returns to the source of this conformity to Him.<sup>505</sup>

The other prayer is addressed to the Holy Spirit, and takes up again the quotation of Galatians 2:20. The modification that De La Salle makes at the end of this quotation of St. Paul clearly emphasizes that for him life "in Christ" is the life of the Spirit who inhabits the human heart and transforms one interiorly into a member of Christ.

Come then, Holy Spirit! Possess my heart, and inspire all my actions to such a degree that it may be said that you rather than I cause them and that I may experience neither life, movement, nor action, save inasmuch as you give them to me. *Happy are those who live and act only by the Spirit of God; it is of them that we may say that they live no longer but that it is Jesus Christ, or rather the Holy Spirit, who lives in them.*<sup>506</sup>

Nevertheless, to this insistence on the gift of filial life by the Spirit of Christ, De La Salle does not fail to present a corresponding appeal: the Brother must welcome this gift and open himself to the Spirit dwelling within him and inspiring him; he must abandon himself interiorly to Him who gives Himself to him. To be up to the task of "representing" Jesus Christ to the children confided to him, the Brother should often give himself over to His Spirit:

Frequently give yourself to the Spirit of our Lord to act in your work only under His influence, so that your own spirit may have no part in it. This Holy Spirit, then, will fill your students with Himself, so that they will be able to possess fully the Christian spirit.<sup>507</sup>

Such a text shows us to what point, for De La Salle, the concrete pedagogical relationship of the Brother with his pupils unfolds at the same time in the world of the Trinitarian Mystery; delivered over to the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Brother also communicates this Spirit to his disciples.

#### **4. *Even to Give Your Life for Jesus in the Exercise of Your Ministry***

The perpetual vowed commitment formulated in 1691 by De La Salle with two of his Brothers, and which he pronounced in 1694 with twelve companions, celebrates and re-launches a vital commitment that precedes them, provokes them, and surpasses them.<sup>508</sup> In his spiritual teachings,

the Founder rarely returns to the "content" of these vows. He addresses himself without discriminating between those Brothers who had pronounced these vows and those who had not. In his eyes, the identity of the Brother is not determined by a juridical act, nor, *a fortiori*, from the general conception of the "religious life" determined by the three vows.<sup>509</sup> Instead, the Founder returned frequently to the significance and the obligations of a total gift, of a commitment without reserve on the part of the Brother to God and to his ministry. It is in this perspective that he freely uses the terms "consecration" and "sacrifice."

This consecration to God, in its first and most radical sense, is the reality of all Christians. Before being a human undertaking, it is a gratuitous gift of God. De La Salle recalls this in the *Meditation* for Trinity Sunday, that is to say, the day on which, in the Institute, the professed Brothers traditionally renew their profession:

These children were consecrated to the Most Holy Trinity in baptism, just as you were; they bear in their souls the mark of this consecration; and they are indebted to this adorable mystery for the anointing with grace which has been poured into their hearts.<sup>510</sup>

On the basis of this gratuitous gift, of this divine kindness that transforms one ontologically by making one a member of Christ, a temple of the Spirit, an adopted child of the Father, the individual responds by "vowing" oneself to the Trinity:

With this in view, you should today pay very special homage to this mystery and *devote yourself entirely* to the most holy Trinity to contribute as far as you will be able to extend its glory throughout the earth.<sup>511</sup>

This fundamental perspective which refers the Brother's essential consecration – and eventually the vowed expression he can give to it – to the consecration, to begin with ontological, of baptism, calls forth as well, in an explicit manner, the incorporation into Christ brought about by the Christian sacrament of initiation. In reality, the "consecration" of the Brother is rooted not only in his baptismal consecration, but by it in Christ's consecration, the only one consecrated by the Father, the only one consecrated to the Father. It is incorporation into Christ who "consecrates" the Christian; and it is in this life of union with Jesus Christ, by "the movement of the Spirit," that this consecration given by the Father in His Son is effectively accomplished.

Jesus Christ "consecrated Himself entirely for our salvation and for that which concerns the good of our soul."<sup>512</sup> He sacrificed Himself by offering himself to His Father "as a living victim, pure, holy, and agreeable to God;"<sup>513</sup> a "spiritual" offering, at first interior, fulfilling itself in the fundamental yes of adherence to the will of the Father. De La Salle recalls it in returning to the teaching of the epistle to the Hebrews:

Holocausts and sin offerings have not pleased you; then said I, behold, I come to fulfill your will; and it is this same will, affirms the same apostle, that has sanctified us by the offering that Jesus Christ made once for all of His body.<sup>514</sup>

Both by the shedding of blood it entails and by the proceedings in the Temple, the circumcision already brings about this offering, this sacrifice, this consecration, this worship in spirit and in



truth.<sup>515</sup> But it is evidently by His passion and His death on the cross that this offering is consummated, source of the reconciliation between God and humanity, principle of the life that Christ had come to bring in abundance on the earth:

Jesus Christ Himself tells us in the gospel that He came into this world only to give us life and to give it to us in abundance; and it is by Him and in Him, says St. Paul, that a general reconciliation of all things with God has taken place; and by the blood that He shed on the Cross, peace has been restored in heaven and on earth; and it is He also, according to the same apostle, who, even though we had strayed far from God and had become His enemies, has restored us in His grace to make us holy, without blemish and without blame before Him.<sup>516</sup>

The contemplation of the mystery of Christ that De La Salle proposes to the Brothers in EM brings him back to the heart of this fundamental reality of salvation; it arouses admiration and thanksgiving, the profound joy of love at the thought of the Son of God made human to "sacrifice Himself by offering Himself to the justice of God His Father as a living victim, pure, holy and agreeable to God."<sup>517</sup>

Having been definitively established, by His resurrection, as mediator between God and humanity, the eternally living Christ continues this "offering," this sacrifice accomplished once for all. He does it in the Eucharist; and, in recalling this, De La Salle brings out again the idea that one can only consecrate oneself to God by entering into the movement of Christ's priceless consecration.<sup>518</sup>

Incorporated into Christ by baptism,<sup>519</sup> all Christians are called equally "to consecrate themselves entirely to God and to His service,"<sup>520</sup> to form in the concrete reality of their entire life the fundamental consecration they have received as a gift; thus, they should consecrate to God their bodies, their time, their actions;<sup>521</sup> thus, they should unite themselves to the Eucharistic sacrifice by offering themselves in it to God to be consecrated entirely to Him "in Jesus Christ."<sup>522</sup>

The Brother is also consecrated to God in Christ by virtue of his baptism; and, by this, he should, like all Christians, live the life of a consecrated person. Still De La Salle was well aware of the existence, in the Church, of people consecrated to God in a special manner. That was the case of the Virgin Mary and of so many saints.<sup>523</sup> That is equally the case for the Brother: the call of God to involve himself in the service of poor and abandoned youth and to leave the world for this and to join the community of Brothers constituted for each one the invitation to this consecration. The Founder at times invites his disciples to go back, in memory, to the identifiable point of departure, which he considers the essential engagement manifested by entrance into the Institute rather than by the vowed engagement:

Although it was not your privilege, like St. John, to be free from sin on coming into the world, you should nevertheless have endeavored to deliver yourself from it ever since your spiritual birth and your consecration to God.

You offered yourselves to God when you left the world.<sup>524</sup>

But most often it is in making note of the call that De La Salle evokes the particular consecration of his disciples to the Lord: the call to renew their total gift here and now, the call to live it in its entire concrete reality. The Founder seems more anxious to invite the Brothers to realize their consecration effectively in their lives than to stress the initial act in which one might have thought of glorifying himself or on which one might believe he can rest, since it has value and meaning only in the measure to which it is ratified by one's existence. For De La Salle, there is no state, in this sense, in which one would be *ipso facto* consecrated to God; one must start over each day to give oneself to Him:

How many persons consecrated to God there are who have not given themselves entirely to Him and live in laziness and negligence! At least, say with David: today I can wish to begin to belong entirely to God.<sup>525</sup>

The *Meditation* for the feast of the Purification of Mary in the Temple opens to the Brothers, following Mary who this day vowed to dedicate herself to the exclusive service of the Lord, eschatological perspectives. On leaving the world, De La Salle says to his disciples, "you have consecrated yourselves to God to live in this Community." On this day, your happiness began on earth:

But it was not for that day alone that you should have consecrated yourself to God; since you made a consecration of your soul on that occasion and since your soul will live forever, your dedication to God must be forever. If you have begun this on earth, it should have only been to carry out here a sort of apprenticeship for what you will do eternally in heaven.<sup>526</sup>

It is, above all, the heart that ought to be consecrated entirely to God; the love one has for God shows itself by entire devotion to His service:

Should you not, then, offer your life willingly to God and sacrifice it to Him to preserve His holy love or increase it in you? God has given you this life out of an entirely gratuitous goodness. It is quite right then, that you should show Him how much you are indebted to Him and how totally you belong to Him, by paying homage to Him for your life as something that belongs to Him, of which you are only the guardians. It is truly to sacrifice your life to God, to spend it only for Him. This is what you can do in your profession and your work, not being concerned whether you die in a few years, provided you save yourself and win souls for God.<sup>527</sup>

"To sacrifice your life for God is to spend it only for Him": De La Salle recalls here for his disciples that their sacrifice to God, their complete consecration to the Lord, is fulfilled in their devotedness without reserve to announce the Gospel to the children who are confided to them. He often returns, with vigor, to this "sacramentalization" of consecration to God for the service of others. It is in giving one's life drop by drop for his pupils that the Brother realizes the sacrifice of himself to God:

You are obliged in your employment to teach the truths of faith to your disciples and to instruct them in their religion. In order to fulfill well this duty, you should consecrate

yourself entirely and even, if necessary, give your life in order to accomplish it properly.<sup>528</sup>

Moreover, in consecrating himself to God, the Brother not only takes upon himself the service of the children; but he becomes, in some way, their substitute. Consequently, it is in vowing his life to procure their salvation that he best realizes the passage of his own existence to the Lord:

You have committed yourselves to God in the place of those whom you instruct. By taking upon yourselves the responsibility for their souls you have, as it were, offered to Him soul for soul. Have you sometimes reflected on the commitment you have made (to be responsible for those whom God has entrusted to you), in order to be faithful to it? Do you have as much care for their salvation as you do for your own? You should not only take all possible care of them, but consecrate your life and yourselves entirely to procure salvation for them.<sup>529</sup>

The text puts in evidence to what degree the spiritual teaching of De La Salle is unifying. In fact, the Founder reveals there that which he himself has lived in an existential totality. Consequently, he entirely dismissed any separation of "consecration" and "mission." He does not even seem concerned to establish priorities between God and humanity, the "vertical" and the "horizontal." For theocentrism is inseparable from attention to humanity, and existence itself becomes united in a "religious" disposition to self-sacrifice that brings about an effective involvement for the total salvation of the youth confided by God Himself to the care of the Brother.

In truth, it is still the mystery of Christ, to which the Brother is vitally united, that is fulfilled in this unity. Sent by the Father, delivered over totally to the Father's will, Christ came on earth to accomplish humanity's salvation. Participating in His "mission" which comes from the Father and unites Him particularly with the Father, associated with His thirst to accomplish the will of the Father which is that "not one of these little ones should be lost," the Brother should also say that which Jesus Christ said "of the sheep of which He is the Shepherd and which must be saved by Him":

I came, He said, that they might have life and have it to the full. For this had to be the kind of ardent zeal you had for the salvation of those you have to instruct, when you were led to sacrifice yourself and to spend your whole life to give these children a Christian education and to procure for them the life of grace in this world and eternal life in the next.<sup>530</sup>

They are thus "committed to work entirely for the salvation of their souls."<sup>531</sup> Like that of Christ, their zeal should go "so far in this that in order to achieve it you are ready to give your very life, so dear to you are the children entrusted to you."<sup>532</sup> *To give one's life for these children is equivalent to giving one's life for Jesus Christ:*

Let it be clear, then, in all your relations with the children who are entrusted to you that you look upon yourselves as ministers of God, carrying out your ministry with love and a sincere and true zeal, accepting with much patience the difficulties you have to suffer,

willing to be despised by others and to be persecuted, *even to give your life for Jesus in the fulfillment of your ministry.*<sup>533</sup>

"To represent" Jesus Christ to the children is definitely to be so totally consecrated to God in Jesus Christ that one participates in His gratuitous love for the salvation of others, going as far even as a total gift of life for them. It is, thus, that the Brother does not bear in vain the name of minister of Jesus Christ.

### **III. To Live and Act by the Movement of the Holy Spirit**

At every step we have encountered De La Salle evoking the Holy Spirit, the soul of the entire existence of the Brother. It is He who is at the origin of the initial gift, of the charism of announcing the gospel to poor and abandoned children. It is He who grants the Brother the knowledge of God's designs, who leads him into the new world of faith, who renews his outlook, who inspires his labors for God, and who through him "touches the hearts" of those to whom he is sent.

The place of the Holy Spirit in the Lasallian spiritual teaching is so central that the presentation we are going to make of life in the Spirit often risks leading us to a certain repetition. It is even more inevitable because it is also the Holy Spirit who animates the Brother to walk in the presence of God, who renders him more and more conformable to Christ in His death in order to associate him in the glory of His resurrection. In stopping at the Lasallian spiritual teaching on union with Jesus Christ, we often find mention of the Holy Spirit; and we have highlighted the equivalence De La Salle himself established between "it is Jesus Christ who lives in me" and "it is the Holy Spirit who lives in me."

The section that follows will thus serve as some sort of summary and conclusion to this entire part. In the lived history of the Brother, all starts with the gift of the Spirit; the fidelity that is demanded of him is fidelity to the Spirit. And his interior life is the very life of the Spirit, in him and for others.

#### **1. *The Spirit of the Living God Acts in You and Through You***

De La Salle defines the Church as "the sanctuary where God dwells through the Holy Spirit."<sup>534</sup> The Spirit animates the Church by the grace and love He pours into the hearts of the baptized; He governs her and leads her to the Father.<sup>535</sup> And the mission of the Church has as its objective to promote the reception of this active presence of the Spirit in the heart of Christians. It is not a question of propaganda or of regimentation, but the very work of the new creation, of the new "alliance." The story of Pentecost, which describes the birth of the new People of God, stresses this new creation, this new alliance, in which the law is totally interior. At the same time as it stresses the nature and the meaning of the Christian apostolate, it also portrays its inauguration.

On this day, the Holy Spirit descended on them and on all those who were gathered together in the large upper room. He came to bring them a new law, a law of grace and love, and poured Himself out upon them like a strong, driving wind. This was to show that just as God in creating us had breathed into us the breath of life, so too, in

communicating a new life to the disciples to live only by grace, He breathed into them His divine Spirit to give them some share in His own life.<sup>536</sup>

Participating in an ecclesial ministry, the Brothers labor to have the children live the life of the Holy Spirit. Their intention, in instructing their disciples, should be to have them live a Christian life, that is to say that, "possessing the Christian spirit which is the spirit of Jesus Christ," they live in the new life according to the Spirit; they do not sadden the Spirit of God who has marked them with His seal; they possess the Spirit of wisdom and of light; they live in fraternal charity; they grow in their inner selves until Christ's return.<sup>537</sup>

The text concerning Pentecost, that we have just cited, ends with an exhortation to the Brothers to renew themselves in the gift bestowed on them by the Holy Spirit. On this holy day "the Spirit of God should rest upon you to make it possible for you to live and to act by His movement in you; draw Him within yourself by offering Him a well-disposed heart." Indeed, if the ecclesial ministry has as its end life in the Spirit in the members of the People of God, it is itself also, in its origin, an activity of the Spirit. The Founder reminds his disciples of the Pauline doctrine of charisms and invites them to consider their own vocation to ministry as one of these gifts of the Spirit today, quite as much as it was in the apostolic origins, in the work for the salvation of the world.<sup>538</sup>

This gift of the Spirit transforms the Brothers and makes them capable of announcing the gospel, zealous to do it, and able to bear its fruit. Coming upon the apostles on Pentecost day, the Spirit made new men of them: unsusceptible to the knowledge of Christ, fearful of announcing His victory by the Cross, they became capable of entering into His mystery, eager to proclaim these marvels of God, able to touch the hearts of the very ones who had been opposed to Christ.<sup>539</sup> So too with the Brother: the gift of the Spirit allows him to announce God's word without watering down the folly of the Cross;<sup>540</sup> the Spirit enables him to touch the hearts of those in his charge, and his word becomes for them spirit and life, because it is "produced by the Spirit of God dwelling in him." It is from the Spirit that his lessons draw all their force; and, by them, it is the Spirit Himself who brings the children to love and practice what is good.<sup>541</sup>

But this gift of the Spirit manifests itself and works visibly in the Brother's activities only because it is, from the first, an interior gift. Its action is spiritual in its content and in its fruit because it is so in its source. Christ's promise that He came "that those who believed in Him should have life" finds its fulfillment in the presence of the Holy Spirit in every Christian. He abides in a soul only to bring it the life of grace, this life then becoming the source of all interior action. And in giving life, He snatches one from the slavery of sin, introducing one into filial freedom:

Since we must be alive in order to act, the first impulse the Spirit of God must give to a heart when He takes possession of it is to produce the life of grace within it. For this reason St. Paul calls Him the Spirit of Life, and he adds that it was by this Spirit that he himself had been delivered from the law of sin. You should have been freed from this shameful law when you left the world and became free with the liberty of God's children, a title with which Jesus Christ honors you.<sup>542</sup>

In that way, if the Brother is fit to announce the Word of God, it is first of all because the Holy Spirit gives him for himself an understanding and interior relish for it, leading him at the same time to see all things in light of God and of His design for salvation. And the Spirit places in his heart a self-sacrificing love for God and for others, which is the source of his unselfishness and of his spirit of gratuity, of his refusal to be self-satisfied, and of the courage to confront contradiction and to suffer persecution by the world patiently.<sup>543</sup>

De La Salle's teaching on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit simply recognizes this "gift" of the Spirit which expresses in ministry its completely ontological dimension and its interior depth. The reminder of "charism" that one finds in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* is amplified in recalling the transforming action of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in *Meditations* 42 to 45, and deepened by contemplating the action of the Spirit in the human heart in the *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*.

Source of new life by the grace of filial adoption, the Holy Spirit directs the Brother's existence interiorly. "Interiorly possessed" by God, thanks to the Spirit, he lets himself act through Him, entirely vowed to the search for the will of the Father, to the coming of His kingdom, to the extending of His glory, learning every day no longer to live and act "as a sinful human child, but as a child of God, regenerated through you and adopted by the eternal Father."<sup>544</sup> The Spirit poured out upon the apostles in the Cenacle comes, little by little, to possess the Brother also; He inspires his prayer, leads him to the Father, and maintains in him the fire that God enkindles in his heart. This filial spirit gives the assurance of obtaining from the Father's bounty the grace to transform one's existence into a life in Jesus Christ "for in giving us His Son, the Father gives us all things in Him and through Him."<sup>545</sup>

The Spirit becomes the interior master who "intimately penetrates the heart" with gospel maxims, each day teaching the Brother how to practice them in his entire existence and his educational relationships. By the Holy Spirit, God interiorly instructs the Brother in "the ways to be completely for Him." It is through Him that the Brother penetrates "that which is most hidden in God," that is to say, most notably the "secret" of the universal salvific will, discovered in his new understanding, and its pressing demand, by the very perception itself of the alienation from this salvation in which the poor and abandoned children find themselves.<sup>546</sup>

The knowledge of God is a new force for involvement in bringing God's salvation into the concrete existence of these "poor little ones." Thus, the Spirit "renews" the face of the earth, in conferring on the Brother the inner understanding and strength to proclaim that which is not yet by making it happen, to break the fatal circle of determinism in which misery seems to entrap the children of the artisans and the poor. By the gift of the Spirit, the Brother becomes a prophet whose word is efficacious, because the salvation he announces, having been contemplated in the depths of his heart, springs forth, here and now, in the story of these abandoned children.<sup>547</sup>

## ***2. If You Live by the Spirit, Then Act by the Spirit***

As always with De La Salle, the recollection of the interior reality of the gift is accompanied by the invitation which never ceases to put it into practice in one's daily, concrete existence. The moral conduct of a Christian expresses a mystic reality; but the "mystery" into which one is

introduced by pure grace also demands that it be expressed by human effort in the reality of moral conduct. The Spirit who makes us children of God transforms us in such a way that it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us. Furthermore, *"if you live by the Spirit, then act by the Spirit."*

Although it is a very special effect of God's goodness to preserve you in His holy grace, still this is not sufficient for you in your profession. To live according to the spirit of your state, you must act under the influence of grace and make it plain that you are guided by the inspiration of the Spirit of God. This, says St. Paul, is an indication that you are in God's grace. If you live by the Spirit, he says, then act by the Spirit.<sup>548</sup>

The Lasallian spiritual teaching clearly expresses this life by "grace," this conduct "by the movement of God's Spirit" in a double path: that of the spiritual combat of spirit against flesh and that of fidelity to the inspirations of the Spirit.

*"If by the Spirit you mortify the flesh and all its actions, you will live."*<sup>549</sup> We have already mentioned many times the Lasallian insistence on mortification, spiritual combat, renunciation, and detachment. We only invoke it again here to underline the fact that the Founder joins this austere teaching to that of St. Paul on the victory of the Spirit over the flesh. This detachment from what is created, this inner liberation, both fruits of the Spirit, are at the same time the preliminary condition, the first disposition to "receive the Spirit." Whoever is "attached to this world and its goods cannot be capable of receiving the Spirit of God, who communicates Himself to those only whom He finds empty of all that is not God." Thus, the incompatibility of the "world" with the "spirit," for the world only delights in the three concupiscences [the flesh, the eyes, and the pride of life].

Detach yourself, therefore, from all such things, and attach yourself to God alone if you wish to be in a state to receive the Spirit of God.<sup>550</sup>

Thus, from the beginning, life in the Spirit is placed under the sign of conflict. The whole of Lasallian teaching shows that it is less a question of a chronologically certifiable beginning than of a permanent dialectic, a constant law of growth in the Spirit by victory over "flesh."<sup>551</sup>

Beyond this active human struggle, the progressive victory of the Spirit over flesh remains, above all, the fruit of the Spirit's action. Also, the first and most important effort that one is invited to make is to offer no resistance to the Spirit, to "abandon oneself to Him" interiorly, to allow oneself "to act" by Him.<sup>552</sup> Abandonment to the Holy Spirit is what the Founder considered as the fruit of the exercise of interior prayer,<sup>553</sup> while the exercise of one's ministry constitutes one of the privileged fields for His manifestation and of His increase.<sup>554</sup>

For the Spirit to triumph over the flesh, one of the essential points of application to this struggle is that one no longer act "by motives purely human and natural," but that one lets oneself be led by the Spirit in such a way that one does all things "as being before God, as belonging to God, and as having only to please God."<sup>555</sup> We have analyzed above some of the implications of the second effect of the spirit of faith, "to do nothing but in view of God." From what we have said

then about purity of intention and of doing everything for the Glory of God,<sup>556</sup> it is necessary here to recall the Founder's important teaching on *fidelity to inspirations*.

In fact, like the spiritual writers of the seventeenth century, De La Salle attaches a great importance to fidelity to the movements and inspirations of the Holy Spirit.<sup>557</sup> In truth, for the Founder, this "absolute fidelity to grace, not allowing a single movement to pass without cooperating with it," is neither run-of-the-mill nor easy: "it takes a miracle."<sup>558</sup> It is no less important for spiritual progress. Spiritual director for his Brothers and other pious souls, De La Salle returns to it very often in his *Letters*.<sup>559</sup>

Among the means to become interior, the *Collection* places "fidelity to the inspirations and interior movements," that is to say, to the "light that God sheds upon the soul to enlighten one on what one should do for one's own well-being." To be unfaithful would be to "extinguish the Holy Spirit within oneself," to expose oneself to the possibility that God "cease bestowing light, seeing that they remain useless."<sup>560</sup> De La Salle returns to this means in the "Considerations" on their state and on their employment, by opposing to this docility to the Spirit, a manner of conducting oneself "through inclination, for mere form's sake, for human respect, or by some other purely natural motive."<sup>561</sup>

We have already cited many passages from EM that insist on this "being led by the Spirit." As always, the *Meditations* develop a little the Founder's thought on the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, they amplify it notably by situating the inspirations the Brother receives from the Holy Spirit and the docility with which he should respond, in the movement of doing good by the Spirit during the course of the history of the Church. De La Salle loves to have his disciples contemplate the fidelity of numerous saints to the movements of the Spirit. At the same time, the *Meditations* expand the spiritual significance of the inspirations of the Holy Spirit by calling attention to their goals: personal spiritual progress certainly, but more so the salvation of the world.

The sudden flash of understanding by St. Paul manifests very well the power of the Holy Spirit; the apostle responded with an immediate and absolute docility. Called by an analogous gift of the Spirit to accomplish the ministry of Christ and to teach the poor, the Brothers are invited to the same docility:

Do you correspond as promptly as St. Paul did to all the movements of grace? . . . Do you say with St. Paul, Lord, what do you want me to do? And are you as prompt to do everything that you learn about what it is that God asks of you?<sup>562</sup>

The sense of the future evident in the last two sentences is stimulating. It invites one to hope, for the Spirit yet manifests Himself. It invites to attentiveness and to openness for, by the Spirit who renews without ceasing the face of the earth and the human heart, each day is something new. Likewise, from the contemplation of the long resistance to divine inspirations offered by an Augustine, divided within himself, agitated and irresolute, De La Salle not only draws a pressing exhortation to be more "docile" to the inner voice that calls to a true "conversion," but more positively, he gently invites his Brothers to welcome the Spirit on this new day that is beginning: "At least, say with David, today I want to begin to belong wholly to God."<sup>563</sup>



The contemplation of the power of the Spirit at work in the story of the saints and their docility in walking down the road the Spirit opens for them invites the Brother to welcome, in his own existence, the unforeseeable newness of the Spirit. Always the same in His irresistible strength and in the fruit which He brings for the growth of the Kingdom of God, the Spirit, nevertheless, never repeats Himself: His approach to each one is original, and new also is the road that He leads one to take.<sup>564</sup>

The constancy and the variety of the work of the Spirit in the Church allow the Brother to be confident and open: already, in his life, the Spirit has manifested Himself, particularly by the call to community and to ministry. He will come again: the first form of fidelity to the Spirit is this very certitude of His action today and tomorrow, as it was yesterday. Nothing should shake this assurance, not even past infidelities. For the very ones who have estranged themselves from God are not abandoned by Him: "He never quite abandons those who have a good heart, and He takes care from time to time to provide them with the graces they need beforehand." No fear then of the past; on the other hand, one should, on looking to the future, dispose oneself to fidelity to the care of the Spirit for it is a matter "of some consequence that one be faithful and correspond to Him and to follow His inspirations when He gives them."<sup>565</sup>

Essentially, these inspirations of the Spirit always tend to lead one to live life in the Spirit more intensely. Hence, they never cease urging one to "leave all for God," for "it will be only in Him that we will find our true happiness even in this life";<sup>566</sup> they always push a little more for us "to consecrate ourselves to God with a complete disengagement from all creatures." As for the concrete detail concerning what the Spirit can ask of the Brother, most often De La Salle does not specify any further. The history of the saints also shows that the content of inspirations is varied and unexpected.

Still, it is important in each case to verify if these inspirations are truly from God.<sup>567</sup> One must not "easily follow all thoughts one has to do something good, nor to take them too lightly as inspirations from God."<sup>568</sup> Without elaborating a systematic theory of spiritual discernment, De La Salle leaves his Brothers, when the occasion presents itself, one or the other criterion of discernment. Moreover, because of the options presented to him, De La Salle often has to search to recognize "the will of God" for himself.

Among these criteria, one can mention care to consider the reality of things, the truth of situations and of persons. De La Salle evokes these criteria particularly with respect to conduct vis-a-vis the pupils. One must begin where they are individually, and thus interest oneself in knowing each in their individuality. To participate in the mission and in the saving love of the Good Shepherd demands this concrete attention to the human reality of those in one's charge. This psychological clear-sightedness says De La Salle, draws from "discernment of spirits" and should be the object of a shepherd's prayer:

This should also be one of the main concerns required of those who instruct others: to be able to understand their pupils and to discern the manner in which to guide them. Some require great mildness, while others need to be directed with firmness. Some require much patience; others need to be stimulated and spurred on. It is necessary to punish and reprove some in order to correct their faults, whereas others need to be continually

watched over to prevent them from being lost or going astray. This *guidance requires understanding and discernment of spirits*, qualities you should frequently and earnestly ask of God, for these are most necessary for you in the guidance of those placed in your care.<sup>569</sup>

A suggestive text, which emphasizes once more that the field for the "spiritual" life of the Brother, of his docility to the Spirit, is his concrete ministry, his educational relationships; a text which also demonstrates that the Spirit acts and calls in and through persons; and that He also educates to spiritual fidelity in and through professional fidelity. In addition, it is toward a greater fidelity in his employment that the inspirations of the Spirit normally push the Brother.

A second criterion for discernment of the inspirations of the Spirit is close to the first. It is respect for concrete human interdependence. It is thus that De La Salle himself had lived out his fidelity to God, identifying "visibly" his new call as having been entered into with the ties he little by little contracted in responding to the immediate needs of the teachers. Thus will the Spirit of God inspire the Brothers, for example, to make themselves poorer, in order to be more "conformed" to the situation of poverty in which their pupils find themselves.<sup>570</sup> To this concrete interdependence one can attach, although not exclusively, De La Salle's insistence on the reference to the Superior. Charged with the spiritual direction of others, he has, by his position, the grace of discernment, as did Ananias with regard to Paul:

When God inspires you with something good to do, He simply wants you to understand, by these lights from heaven, that He is asking you to do something that you are not doing, but He does not wish you to proceed on your own, guided solely by these lights from heaven; He wants you to have recourse to your Directors and Superiors, whom He is careful to instruct and whom He has charged to inform you of what you should do. Never trust your own inspirations, nor those which seem to come from God; explain them to those who guide you, and submit yourself to their advice.<sup>571</sup>

Such "discernment" is possible only if the Brother is "open" to his Superior; and it demands from the latter that he, too, allow himself to be led by the Spirit of God.

A third criterion seems to us a prolonging of the first two criteria by giving them their full stature: it is, at the same time, persistence with an evangelical project and harmony of the inspiration with "evangelical standards of behavior." Thus, according to De La Salle, "thoughts that push one toward relaxation" are certainly not from God, and one must maintain the "utmost distance" from them.<sup>572</sup> On the contrary, grace urges us "to live according to the perfection proper to our state"; it often inspires us "to do violence to ourselves."<sup>573</sup> It calls us also to the observation of the *Rule*, thanks to which equally "the will of God is made known to us."<sup>574</sup>

Despite all that, urgent cases can present themselves in which one can neither wait nor consult. Lasallian wisdom recommends at such times that one "has recourse to God and, following that, carries out with courage and simplicity of heart that which one believes would have been given as the best counsel in such circumstances":<sup>575</sup> advice to step back and try to look with objectivity at the situation in which one finds oneself.

For the rest, De La Salle invites to openness and to detachment and not to anxiety. His counsel in the *Collection* is well known:

Do not be concerned so much about knowing how to do a thing perfectly, as about doing it as perfectly as you can, for by doing it as well as you know how, you deserve to learn and to understand what you would not otherwise know.<sup>576</sup>

"Be satisfied with what you can do," he continues, "since God is satisfied with it": realism in the acceptance of "the truth of things," even in oneself, to avoid an unbearable tension toward an impossible ideal. But he immediately adds: "Do not spare yourself when grace comes to your assistance, and be convinced that, provided you are willing, with the grace of God you can do more than you imagine"<sup>577</sup>: realism in the acceptance of ourselves implies not only the humble knowledge of our limits, but also the certainty of our capacity "to go beyond" them by the power of the Spirit who calls us to become what we are: children of God and members of Jesus Christ.

"The spiritual person," habitually docile to the Holy Spirit, will make such discernment more easily. The more fidelity to the Spirit is one of the objects of prayer, the more one must ask for the gift of the Spirit and beseech God "that His grace enable us to practice that which His Holy Spirit has made us realize that God desires of us."<sup>578</sup> One must also apply oneself assiduously to interior prayer which, according to De La Salle, aims at leading more and more to interior peace, to silence of the mind and of the senses, to intimate union with God, to attention to the Spirit, and to docility to His word:

Come then, Holy Spirit, take possession of my heart, and animate all my actions to such a degree that it may be said that you rather than I cause them and I may experience neither life, movement, nor action, save inasmuch as you give them to me.<sup>579</sup>

One thing De La Salle emphasizes in his teaching on devotion to the Virgin Mary is the docility to the Spirit which characterizes her and which she can inspire in us. The Spirit overshadowed her from the moment of her conception, preserving her from sin and from concupiscence. In "thanking God with Mary for the great things He has done for her," the Brother can ask Him for the "freedom from all sin"<sup>580</sup> that puts one at the Spirit's disposal. For De La Salle, the most blessed Virgin corresponded to all the graces she received from God from her birth itself; this correspondence consisting from the beginning – the notation is suggestive as to her spiritual attitude of faithfulness to God – in "interiorly admiring the great things which God had done in her . . . in order that she might share it with all those who have recourse to her."<sup>581</sup>

Fidelity to the Spirit, whether it is with regard to the Virgin Mary or to the Brother, always concerns both the most personal vocation and the realization of the design of God for the salvation of others. The contemplation of the mystery of the Visitation makes this unity still clearer. Without a preamble, De La Salle opens his *Meditation* by focusing on Mary's fidelity in going to Elizabeth:

Let us admire the promptness with which the Most Blessed Virgin went to visit her cousin St. Elizabeth as soon as the will of God was made known to her. She undertook this journey without delay despite the difficulties of the road, which was mountainous.

She had nothing in view except to accomplish what God desired of her, and this was what she had most at heart. Her promptness drew down the blessings of God on her visit . . . We should consider ourselves blessed when God visits us through His inspirations. Let us be faithful to them, because to this fidelity God usually attaches a great number of graces.<sup>582</sup>

The grace attached to fidelity to the Spirit, in this case for the Blessed Virgin, was the sanctification of John the Baptist. At the very heart of a family encounter, it is Jesus Christ, in Mary and through Mary, who visits His precursor. In inviting the Brother to beseech "Jesus to be willing to visit us and to perform some miracle of grace in our favor,"<sup>583</sup> De La Salle sanctions the thought that this visit of the Lord, this call of the Spirit, takes place in the humble tissue of human relationships; he often emphasizes to his disciples that it is through them that Christ comes to the young. The end of the *Meditation*, nevertheless, draws attention to another type of visit from Christ and of the inspirational action of the Spirit:

You have the honor of being visited by God every day in interior prayer and often by Jesus in Holy Communion; make sure that these visits to you are not without effect, but that both may procure for you an abundance of grace which will help you to advance in virtue every day, and tend in some particular way toward perfection. Do not fail to examine from time to time what benefit you have derived from these visits.<sup>584</sup>

It is not surprising that we find here the mention of the Eucharist. We have seen above that De La Salle considered it as the sacrament par excellence of union with Jesus Christ. It is such because in it Jesus Christ gives us His body in order "to let us share in His Spirit."<sup>585</sup> Living bread in those who receive Him, Jesus Christ "gives Himself generously to all the faculties of the soul and carries out there the actions of life." The moment of Communion is a time par excellence by which, through the outpouring of the Spirit, He lives and acts in us. One must then open oneself to the Holy Spirit so that He might direct us more and more.

When Jesus Christ is in you, is He truly there as a living bread? Do you allow Him complete freedom to communicate His divine Spirit to your soul? Is He living in you to such an extent that you can say that it is no longer you who live, but that it is Jesus Christ who lives in you?<sup>586</sup>

### ***3. The Holy Spirit Communicates Himself to You in the Interior of Your Soul***

From the beginning of the Institute, the preoccupation of the Founder had been to lead the teachers to live "in a manner consistent with the end of their Institute,"<sup>587</sup> that is to say, evangelically. To this end he had to help them become "interior" men, capable of grasping the profound significance of their ministry, of their vocation, and desirous of living their personal, communal, and apostolic life with purity of intention, application, forgetfulness of self, and enthusiasm. It can be said that De La Salle consecrated himself primarily to this education of his disciples in the interior life.

In his writings, the Founder constantly returns to the primacy of "the interior" and the uselessness of exterior religious actions that are not expressive of this interiority. Vocal prayer

must be accompanied by interior attention; one must recite the Office with interior respect and apply oneself to the Mass "according to the method which is prescribed in the Society," that is to say, in an interior manner.<sup>588</sup> The signs of exterior respect for Christ in the Eucharist would be little "appreciated by God if they were not accompanied by interior acknowledgment of our utter nothingness."<sup>589</sup> Thus, one must take care to have "interior application to the exercises" in order to be solidly established in piety.

It is the same for one's entire existence. The exterior signs of respect for the members of the community should express "the respect, the esteem, and the sincere, true and interior union which the Brothers have with their Brothers." The exterior renunciation of earthly goods should be "interior" in order to "arrive at a total detachment." Exterior withdrawal [retreat] is of little value without "interior" withdrawal. One must join interior silence with exterior silence. Fasting and exterior mortification must be animated by an interior spirit.<sup>590</sup> In short, one must do everything with an interior spirit,<sup>591</sup> without being content

to do only what is exterior in the duties of your state. For if people are satisfied with what is external in actions, God who looks into the heart will not put any value on them.<sup>592</sup>

De La Salle's insistence on interiority can be aligned with the primordial importance he attached to the "spirit." A study of his vocabulary, here as in many other places, would be very enlightening.<sup>593</sup> Let us limit ourselves to returning for an instant to the chapter the Founder consecrated, at the beginning of the Rule, to the spirit of the Institute, the spirit of faith and of zeal. The Prologue which De La Salle composed for the *Rule* of 1718 is written with a certain solemnity. At the end of his earthly existence, at the moment in which he is putting the finishing touches to the Code of the Rules of the Institute, it seems that the Founder experiences the need to insist with his disciples on the relativity of all the structures with respect to the spirit which should inspire and animate them.<sup>594</sup>

That which is of the utmost importance, and to which the greatest attention should be given in a community is that all who compose it possess the spirit peculiar to it; that the novices apply themselves to acquire it; and that those who are already members make it their first care to preserve and increase it in themselves; for it is this spirit that should animate all their actions, be the motive for their whole conduct; and those who do not possess it and those who have lost it, should be looked upon, and should look upon themselves, as dead members.<sup>595</sup>

Without entering into a technical examination of the sense of the word "spirit," let us simply note an analogy of language. The Founder declared that it is this "spirit" that should "animate all their actions and be the motive for their whole conduct." It is difficult not to compare such expressions with the numerous texts in which De La Salle attributes that "animation" of existence to the Holy Spirit.

We certainly do not wish to establish equivalence between "spirit of faith" and "Holy Spirit" and "spirit of Christianity." But the analogy of language seems to allow us to think that for De La Salle, the spirit which inspires and sustains existence cannot be reduced to an interior attitude of a psychological order. It is the fruit of the action of the Holy Spirit in the person. Reciprocally,

the connection or linkage of language allows us to recognize that the Founder considered the indwelling and action of the Holy Spirit in the person to be so profound and so interior that the actions He inspires and the movement He gives become truly those of the persons themselves. It is thus that He is the principle of interior liberty.

The teaching of EM seems to confirm this observation. On each page, one can say, this work returns to interiority. Moreover, interior prayer is there defined as the entry into an activity as an "interior occupation," "because it is not simply an occupation of the spirit, but an occupation of all the powers of the soul; and, to be very pure and solid, it should be carried out in the depth of the soul, that is to say in the most intimate part of the soul." The reflections on the presence of God should have only the one same manner of God's presence as the object for this practice – which serves to reform the spirit and to learn sound reasoning – and, moreover, give to the soul a facility in sustaining oneself "more interiorly in the presence of God." The journey toward "simple attention" is an advance toward interiority through the reduction and elimination of multiple words and even of short reflections. This simple attention consists of "a simple interior view" of faith in the presence of God, in the mystery, or in the virtue.<sup>596</sup>

But De La Salle also stresses that this interiority is not a monologue with oneself; it is the interiority of a dialogue with God, of union with the Spirit and with the dispositions of our Lord, and by the movements of His grace. It is a matter of "tasting God" interiorly, of letting oneself be impregnated with His sweetness.<sup>597</sup> This interior union with the living God is the work of the Spirit rather than that of human conquest. Presenting the Brothers with a method of interior prayer, De La Salle willingly made note of its relative character. The acts proposed can have their usefulness; and it is necessary to accept the idea of advancing patiently with the *Method*, for one cannot arrive immediately at simple attention. But one should remain free with respect to all techniques, taking only that which one judges to be "fitting," that which one "believes can be useful."<sup>598</sup>

Above all, this progressive interiority is the work of the Holy Spirit. One must "pray our Lord to give us His Spirit, that we may make interior prayer only through His guidance." It is little by little, sweetly and softly, that the Holy Spirit leads the soul to yield to being possessed by God, to enter into the spirit of the mystery. One must be patient with oneself, accept the long purifications necessary for the disengagement from sin, from evil inclinations, and from the allurements of the senses and the mind, until "the will of God acting in the soul is established as the origin of all its actions."<sup>599</sup> And for this effort at purification, one must remain available and receptive for the Lord's passing:

When we feel interiorly and gently drawn to some sentiment which we had not proposed to ourselves beforehand, like the love of God, or the desire to show God our confidence and submission or to ask for something with earnestness and confidence, either for ourselves or for someone else, or to reflect on some word of God, we should follow this attraction . . . for as long as it pleases God to allow us to dwell on it, for this is a sign that God desires this for us at the moment.<sup>600</sup>

The consciousness of the "interior presence of God" thus seems to be, beyond doubt, much more the fruit of the Spirit's action in the soul than one's own effort to withdraw oneself from the

"exterior world." Also, the God one encounters in interior prayer, because He dwells in existence, is the God of Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Christ Himself to whom the Spirit unites the person as a branch to the vine; in such a way that one comes to be able to say that it is the Spirit who lives in us. Thus, the road toward interiority is the road toward an identification more and more intimate with Christ, by the action of the Spirit. The explicit progression that De La Salle points out between the acts of contrition, of application, of union, and of invocation in the first part of EM seems to us to underline excellently this equivalence.

By the act of contrition, one strives to express to God one's detachment from sin. Still, in the measure that it is only a human act, this act of contrition will not fully attain its end. To obtain a more interior result, one must rely on the merits of Jesus Christ:

We make an act of application of the merits of our Lord since, as we cannot be certain that our act of contrition fulfilled all the required conditions, we take the precaution of drawing down on ourselves the merits of our Lord's passion and the graces which He merited for us by His death which, by covering our sins as with a veil to hide them from God's eyes, will place us in a better condition to appear before God in prayer, in a manner agreeable to God.<sup>601</sup>

The rooting out of sin is to be expected from Christ, but the "forensic" tonality of the Lasallian language is without doubt here a concession to the Lutheran perspective. In fact, De La Salle will immediately remind us that it does not suffice that God "covers our sins with a veil" in agreeing to no longer remember them. The transformation must affect the person oneself, and God's pardon brings about one's conversion and one's interior renewal. This is why "it is only right that we should not be content with making an act of application of our Lord's merits, but we must also make an act of union with our Lord,"

*uniting ourselves to His interior dispositions . . . and by begging Him to come and make interior prayer in us . . . thinking of us as belonging to Him, as His very members who have and can have no interior life, movement, or activity except in Him, for these things exist in those who belong to Him only insofar as He gives life to them . . .*<sup>602</sup>

But one must go further, or rather deeper. A third time, in proposing "an act of invocation of the Spirit of our Lord," De La Salle uses again the expression "it is not enough":

It is not enough in interior prayer to have drawn our Lord to us, and to have united ourselves with Him and with His holy dispositions, and to have begged Him to make interior prayer in us . . . it would seem to be appropriate for us to implore our Lord to give us His Spirit, so that we may make interior prayer solely under His guidance . . . in such a way that we may put into practice what St. Paul says, that it is the Spirit of God who prays in us, for we cannot conceive even a single good thought as coming from ourselves.<sup>603</sup>

The interiority envisioned by De La Salle is thus that of a relationship, of a dialogue in which God has the initiative. It is that of a union in which God, through His Spirit, takes possession of a person, incorporating one more and more intimately into Christ up to the point of full

assimilation. This perspective highlights the fact that the Holy Spirit is truly "the soul of the interior life of the Brother," who is at once the source, the agent, and the fruit of his interiority.

The Holy Spirit who dwells in you should penetrate the *depth of your souls*; it is in them that this Spirit should especially pray. It is in *the interior of the soul* that this Spirit communicates Himself and unites Himself to the soul, and makes known what God asks in order to belong entirely to Him.<sup>604</sup>

This reference to the Holy Spirit unifies the spiritual teaching of De La Salle. Dwelling in the depth of the soul, the Spirit produces in the person an unalterable thirst for God; communicating Himself to the person, He makes one a "son" in the only Son, and causes one to live as a child of God. He causes one to know God's will and gives one the strength to adhere to it with enthusiasm. He causes to be actualized in the concrete reality of one's life the total consecration to God, by which the Brother strives to live "all for Him."

The same Spirit develops in the Brothers an active and creative love for the poor and a fraternal openness to the members of the Community.



## Notes\*\*

1. In the original 1977 French text, this is the second chapter of Part One, "Favored by God with Spiritual Gifts for Preaching the Gospel to the Poor," and appears on pages 71-147. Had it been included in the 1981 American translation, it would have appeared after page 41 of the text.

2. John Baptist de La Salle, *Meditations* (Landover, MD: Lasallian, 1994), in *Cahiers lasalliens* Vol. 12 (1962) and 13 (1963) (Frères des Ecoles Chretiennes, 1962), 189.1.

3. JBD, *Meditations* 3.2, citing 2 Peter 1:21. [Hereafter referred to as *Meditations* in the text, and M in notes. Numbers refer to sections and lines in the original edition.]

4. M 201.1; 193.3; 193.1; see also M 206.1; 87.2; 157.1. [The editors suggest that the terms, "children" and "young persons," be understood in the broadest sense, and that the directives given by De La Salle be seen as applicable to all students with whom a Lasallian educator ministers.]

5. One often finds a Trinitarian plan in Lasallian writings. Cf. M 46.3; also see Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, *Les Devoirs d'un chrétien envers Dieu et les moyens de pouvoir bien s'en acquitter* (Vol. 1), in *Cahiers Lasalliens* 20 (1964): 17-18; 65-66. [Hereafter *Cahiers Lasalliens* referred to as CL with edition number and year; all editions are published by Freres Des Ecoles Chretiennes.]

6. M 131.1; cf. M 2.1; CL 46: 197-198. See Miguel-Adolfo Campos, FSC, *L'Itinéraire évangélique de saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle et le recours à l'Écriture dans ses "Méditations pour le Temps de la Retraite"*. *Contribution à l'étude sur les fondements évangéliques de la vie religieuse*, Volume II in CL 46 (1974): 138-180.

7. Cf. Michel Sauvage, *Catechesis and the Laity*. Translated by Oswald Murdoch (Sidney, Australia: De La Salle Provincialate, 1991), 198. (Hereafter referred to as CAL.)

8. M 3.2; 166.3; 193.1; 205.1.

9. For example, Peter (M 139.1), Simon and Jude (M 182.1), and John (M 88.2).

10. See John Baptist de La Salle, *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer* (Landover, MD: Lasallian, 1995), in CL 14 (1963): 147-148, invocation of the saints who "have left all to follow Jesus"; M 81.1.

11. M 10.1; cf. M 59.1.

12. M 167.1; 99.2; cf. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, *Les Devoirs d'un chrétien envers Dieu et les moyens de pouvoir bien s'en acquitter*, Vol. 1, *Exposé en discours suivi*. CL 20 (1964), 32; M 167.2. [Hereafter referred to as Da].

13. M 195.1; 202.2; cf. M 206.3; 199.3.

14. Expression from 2 Corinthians 5:20 in M 195.2; 201.2.

15. M 195 and 196 deal with this theme.

16. M 199.1; 201.2.

17. See CAL, 202-210.

18. M 200.1; 201.2; 205.3

19. M 205.3.

20. See CAL, 132-133.

21. M 201.1, citing 1 Corinthians 12:28. Cf. CL 1 (1959) and Miguel Campos, *L'itinéraire évangélique de saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle et le recours à l'Écriture dans les Méditations pour le temps de la retraite*, Vol. II in CL 46 (1974): 222-225 (Hereafter referred to as Campos 2); see also M 193.2, citing Romans 12:6-8.

22. Concerning the priestly charism of St. Jerome, De La Salle concludes: "Let us this day, ask through the intercession of St. Jerome, for a share in the grace which God gave him for the benefit of the Church. As for yourself, strive to render yourself useful *according to the talents which have been given you*" (M 170.3).

23. M 3.2.

24. M 193.1.

25. M 175.2.

26. M 99.1.

27. M 152.2.

28. See *Regles communes des Frères des écoles chrétiennes* in CL 25 (1965) 2.7. [Hereafter referred to as RC.]

29. "Have you been fully converted to God? And have you completely turned away from the world?" asks De La Salle in reference to the conversion of St. Augustine (M 123.2). That which is apparent here, and which is constant in his teaching, is that renunciation is nothing more than the other side of attachment to God and that it is brought about, not without struggle but, in that peace and joy that the "unction" of the Spirit brings.

30. Cf. M 62.3.

31. M 45.1.

32. M 4.3.

33. M 191.2.

34. M 205.1; 207.1.

35. M 43.2.

36. "You exercise an employment that obliges you to touch hearts, which you are able to do only through the Spirit of God; ask Him to grant you today the same grace He granted the holy Apostles, and that after having filled you with His Spirit to sanctify you that He communicate Himself to you also to procure the salvation of others" (M 43.3; cf. M 204.2).

37. See in this regard Brother Clément-Marcel, *Par le mouvement de l'esprit* (Paris, P. Lethielleux, 1952), 197-235; and R. T. Laube, *The Holy Spirit Source of Apostolic Life and Power. The Pneumocentric Structure of Lasallian Spirituality* (Rome 1969), 147-156; 198-218.

38. Cf. M 195.2; Campos 2, 95-98.

39. Da, in CL 20 (1964), 2-3; M 167.2.

40. JBD, *Explanation of Method*, 58-66 and 67-80; 85-98; 119 123; 137-138. (Hereafter referred to as EM).

41. It is made starting from Scripture, but above all places persons face to face with the God of Revelation and with His salvific work in Christ and through the Spirit.

42. John Baptist de La Salle, *Collection of Various Short Treatises* (Landover, MD: Lasallian, 1993), in CL 15 (1963), 33.

43. M 9; 32; 44 and 45.

44. "That spirit of faith made him take a special delight in the magnificent oration St. Paul makes of the faith of the ancient patriarchs . . . in Chapter XI of the Letter to the Hebrews." In John Baptist Blain, *The Mind and Heart of St. John Baptist de La Salle* (Vol. 2, Book 2). Translated by Edwin Bannon (Oxford, England: De La Salle Publications, 1998), 71 in CL 8 (1961).

45. RC 2.1.

46. RC 2.2 and 2.9.

47. Cf. A. de Bovis, "Foi" (*Esprit de*) in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique*, Vol. V, Beauchesne/Dic.Spiritual (January 1, 1932), columns 603-613.

48. M 194.3; 197.2; 200.3; 84.3; 175.2.

49. JBD, *Collection*. (Hereafter referred to as R).

50. R, 32.

51. Ibid, 30.

52. M 139.3; cf. M 178.1.

53. M 199.1.

54. M 193.1, citing 1Timothy 2:4; Romans 10:14, 17; 2 Corinthians 4:6; 4:1-2; cf. M 61.

55. M 199.1.

56. M 109.3.

57. M 171.3.

58. Notably in M 199.2 and 200.2.

59. See CAL, 213.

60. M 102.1.

61. For example, M 196.1: "Ask Christ for the graces necessary *to procure the conversion of the hearts of your disciples.*"

62. M 198.3, citing Ephesians 4:22.

63. M 193.3, citing 2 Corinthians 5:18.

64. M 205.3, citing Ephesians 5:26.

65. M 196.3.

66. M 198.1, CL 1 (1959), 32-33; Campos 2, 171-177.

67. See CAL 192-193, #108.

68. In M 159.1; 168.3; 180.2; 181.3; and 192.2, citing Hebrews 4:12.

69. M 43.3; 81.2; 129.2; 139.3; 148.2.

70. Compare the definitions of faith in Da in CL 20 (1964), 3 and 2-3.

71. Da, 4-5.

72. M 106.1, 135.2; see CAL 162-164, on the meaning of the word "instruct."

73. M 37.2.

74. M 174.1.

75. M 153.1.

76. M 60.3.

77. M 5.1.

78. This is an expression used in M 120.1; cf. M 166.1; 198.1.

79. Cf. M 120.1, 153.1; 206.1.

80. Cf. M 5.1; 106.1; 120.1; RC, 66-67.

81. This term is borrowed from Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxes of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 16: "No more than bourgeois morality is true Christian morality or the intellectuality of a number of good thoughts is true intelligence can a conformist 'orthology' suffice for the true believer."

82. "Every believer adheres to the words of Someone. Thus, that which appears as a principal and as having in some manner value as an end in every act of believing is *the person to whose words we give adherence*. As for the details of the affirmed truths in this will that one has to adhere to someone, it then presents itself as secondary" (2a-2ae, q. 11 art. 1). Cf. J. Mourux, *Je crois en toi: Structure personnelle de la foi* (Cerf 1948).

83. M 193.2.

84. There De La Salle follows the order of the articles in the Creed, lingering on the "Mysteries" of Christ, understood as they are defined in EM, p. 83; cf. Da, pp. 24-61.

85. Da, p. 1.

86. EM, p. 83. A study of "mystery" in De La Salle's work should be made.

87. Cf. CL 1 (1959), pp. xliii-xlv; CAL, pp. 285-290.

88. M 201.2, citing 2 Corinthians 5:14-15.

89. M 96.1.

90. M 139.1.

91. M 139.2.

92. R, 67.

93. M 131.1. The Brother, says the Founder elsewhere, is "destined by God to engender children in Jesus Christ, and also to make Jesus live anew in their hearts. *Can it be said that you have fully entered into the designs of God upon you?*" (M 157.1).

94. This perspective of faith, grandiose and demanding as it is, is underlined by the frequent repetition in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* of a passage from 1 Corinthians 3:9-10 in which the apostolic ministry is presented precisely as the actualization of the work of salvation that God accomplishes in and through His ministers: "For we are fellow workers for God; you are God's field, God's building. According to the commission of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another one is building upon it. Let each take care how one builds upon it." This passage comes back in 193.2 and 193.3, 196.1, 199.1, and 205.3; that is to say notably in the first retreat meditation of each of the three "groups" that will be presented later: 193, 199, and 205. See Campos 2, 349.

95. M 193.1 begins by evoking the God who, after having created humanity, wishes to lead all to salvation (citing 1Timothy 2:4). M 208.3 ends up with the celestial vision of those who, thanks to the Brother's ministry, will have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14).

96. "Since God, according to the expression (of St. Paul) has made you His ministers to reconcile them to Him, and for this end has confided to you the word of reconciliation in their regard, you should exhort them as if God were exhorting them through you, having destined you to announce the gospel truths to these young people and to procure for them the means of salvation suitable to their age" (M 193.1).

97. "As you are ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ in the employment that you exercise, you should do it as would Jesus Christ Himself. It is He who wishes that your pupils look on you as on Himself" (M 195.2).

98. "Admire the goodness of God in providing for all the needs of His creatures, and admire the means He takes to procure for them the knowledge of the real good . . . and offer yourself to Him to aid the youth entrusted to your care, as much as He will ask of you" (M 197.1).

99. M 198.1-3.

100. M 199.1.

101. (Jesus Christ says): "I must announce the Good News of the Kingdom of God, for it was for that I was sent. Say the same, that it is for this that Jesus Christ has sent you and that the Church, of which you are ministers, employs you" (M 199.2).

102. "Thank God for the grace He has granted you in your employment to participate in the ministry of the holy Apostles and of the principal bishops and pastors of the Church, and honor your ministry by becoming, as St. Paul says, worthy ministers of the New Testament", M 199.3.

103. M 200.

104. M 201.3.

105. M 202.1.

106. M 202.2.

107. M 202.3.

[108. M 203.2.]

109. "Correction" will be treated later.

110. "O what joy will be his when the Brother of the Christian Schools sees a great number of his pupils in possession of eternal happiness, for which they will be indebted to him through the grace of Jesus Christ. . . . What a reunion they will have in God, the one with the others" (M 208.2).

111. "Act in such a way that, by your good and wise conduct toward those confided to your care, you will gain all these advantages and all sorts of glory" (M 208.3).

112. M 205.1.

113. We quote here from a text by Louis Bouyer, *La Bible et l'Évangile: le sens de l'Écriture, du Dieu qui parle au Dieu fait homme* (Paris: Cerf, 1962), 230-234, which appears to summarize perfectly the sense of the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*.

114. RC 2.3.

115. R, 34-38: an enumeration and explication of these means.

116. See especially the work of L.Varela in *Biblia y espiritualidad en San Juan Bautista de La Salle* (Salamanca, 1966) and of Campos 1 and 2 in CL 45 (1974) and CL 46 (1974).

117. Cf. M 193.1; 193.3-39.3- 194; 201.1; 207.2; 81.2; 198.2- 84.1; 100.1; 140.1 - 200.3; 197.2.

118. M 140.3.

119. M 199.1 and 199.3, citing Ephesians 3:8.

120. Cf. CL 1 (1959), xliii-xlv; M 198.3, citing Ephesians 4:12-5:2; M 196.2.

121. The substance of the dogmatic part of Da is drawn from the gospel narratives. The framework of "Morals" is that of the Decalogue, enlivened and rejuvenated unceasingly by passages from the New Testament. His teaching on the sacraments and prayer also has a scriptural flavor. As for JBD, *Instructions et prières pour la sainte messe, la confession et la communion* in CL 17 (1963), see also Maurice-Auguste: *Pour une meilleure lecture de nos règles communes* (Secrétariat Général des frères, 1954), 18.

122. The preface of John Baptist de La Salle, *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1990) in CL 19 (1964) (also known as RB) takes up the second effect of the spirit of faith: "to act in view of God." It goes beyond anything artificial in certain details of a "politeness drawn from Holy Scripture" to reach the profound inspiration in this recourse to Scripture. De La Salle here invites students to live the reality of the mystery. "Just as we ought to live by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, so also we should conduct ourselves by the same Spirit" (*Preface*, 3). The rules for the care of the body are inspired by the "respect for the presence of God" in us and in the world; politeness toward our neighbor is directed "to members of the body of Jesus Christ and to temples living and animated by the Holy Spirit" (4). This gospel reference in no way impedes him from "paying regard to time" and to the spirit (genius) proper to each nation (4-5).

123. See Varela, *Biblia y espiritualidad*, 289-294.

124. The *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* "land" constantly in the concrete situation of the student: M 197.2; 198.3; 200.3; and 202.2.

125. Da presents the evangelical counsels as obligatory for all. It distinguishes three kinds of counsels: the works of mercy, the beatitudes, and the gospel maxims. Only of the works of mercy is it specified that they are of obligation "for some," but of counsel for others; the context shows that the obligation arises in a concrete given situation. In other words, they oblige "semper sed non ad semper" (Da, 187-192). Not a single mention is made of the three evangelical counsels. M 5 distinguishes between precepts and counsels, but the counsels mentioned are not the three classic ones. Finally, M 58 demands that the Brothers have "more virtue than people of the world"; but the distinction is rather that of an authentic Christian spirit as opposed to its mere appearance.

126. M 192.1.

127. M 3.1.

128. M 193.1.

129. M 193.3.

130. M 170.1.



131. M 167.1; 159.1; 116.2; 178.3; 119.2; 178.2; and 116.1.

132. M 159.1; cf. M 100.2; 192.2; 62.1.

133. Cf. Maurice-Auguste, *Pour une meilleure lecture*, 27-31.

134. Aux sources du silence, 1952, p. 28; Louis Bouyer, *Le sens de la vie monastique*, (Cerf 1950), 257-272.

135. Public reading of the New Testament at meals and before spiritual reading.

136. See the prescriptions of RC adapted in the General Chapter of 1966-1967 (*Rules and Constitutions* 10.4; *Acts* 102-104; 108-110).

137. Maurice-Auguste, *Pour une meilleure lecture*, 29-30.

138. Maurice-Auguste, *Pour une meilleure lecture*, 30, note 1.

139. R, p. 61.

140. Cf. Bouyer, *Le sens de la vie monastique*, 258.

141. The remark of Louis Bouyer about *Lectio divina* seems to us perfectly applicable to Lasallian spiritual reading. "One must, from the beginning, remove from this reading all utilitarian ideas, even though apostolic. It is not a question of reading to retain an idea or a formula to recall later. It is with the *lectio* as with intellectual development; its value does not arise from what it enables one to acquire but rather by what it enables one to become. Nevertheless, it is true that this disinterestedness with regard to reading cannot be understood by setting aside its object" (op. cit., 259).

142. Acts 17:28 in EM, 32, 60; John 14:23 in EM, 35; Genesis 28:16-17 in EM, 58-59; Matthew 18:19-20 in EM, 28; Matthew 21:13 in EM, 39; Revelation 21:3 in EM, 63.

143. EM, 83; 118; 119; 123; 134.

144. EM, 27-31, 47-48, 95-96, 119-120, 134-135.

145. Cf. EM, 73-74.

146. EM, 66.

147. EM, 48.

148. EM, 51, 96-97, 122-123.

149. EM, 107, 127-128, 143.

150. For example, EM, 127-129.
151. Maurice-Auguste, *Pour une meilleure lecture*, 16-21.
152. Cf. Michel Sauvage in *Lasallianum* 2 (October 1962), 177-182.
- [153. R, 34.]
154. See, for example, R, 34.
155. R, 38-44.
156. Maurice-Auguste, *Pour une meilleure lecture*, 25.
157. M 192.2.
158. EM, 37.
159. EM, 121.
160. EM, 139-140.
161. EM, 147.
162. EM, 111.
163. EM, 37-38, 52, 129-130.
164. M 126.3; cf. M 159.2; 148.2; and 153.1.
165. M 170.1.
166. M 84.3.
167. M 69.1; cf. M 138.3.
168. M 69.1. The same citation of Acts 1:1 can be found in M 202.3.
169. M 202.3.
170. About this concept of "orthopraxis," cf. G. Gutierrez, *Théologie de la Libération* (Brussels, 1974), 26.
171. Cf. M 91.3; 39.2; 100.1; 194.3; 37.2.
172. M 158.3.

173. M 202.3.

174. M 128.1.

175. M 84.3.

176. M 117.1.

177. M 134.1; cf. M 67.2.

178. Cf. M 132.1; 153.2; 155.2; 206.3; etc.

179. M 178.1.

180. M 159.1.

181. M 207.3.

182. M 167.1.

183. M 180.2.

184. Looking upon things with the eyes of the flesh is reprehensible because it is *unreasonable*. One takes pleasure in eating because it is agreeable to the taste; but the action of eating is "truly base because it makes one similar to beasts." The anthropology underlying such a declaration can be questioned; at least, it partially preserves "the eyes of reason" which nevertheless is itself judged to be inadequate. The *Collection* teaches that to look upon eating with the eyes of faith is to follow St Paul, who would have us regard those given to excessive eating as a species of idolaters, "whose God is their belly, and who glory in their shame" (R, 33). Here it is the excess and not the act that is condemned. EM leads to a more positive outlook in reminding us that one of the fruits of the attention to the presence of God in a person "is to take care of our bodies in view of preserving God's life in us, so that we may live by and through God's life, and of living through God" (EM, 33).

185. R, 32.

186. Cf. Yves Congar, "Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat," in *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 145-2 (1954): 115-123; *Gaudium et Spes*, 39.2.

187. "To not act and to wait on God for help when one has the means to help oneself is to be senseless and to tempt God. Does it not become the Divine Bounty to exercise His providence not in producing all the effects directly, but in promoting creatures and their activities? One should not, therefore, await help from God without bringing collaboration. That would impugn God's plan and His goodness (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentes* III, 135.5; cf. 2a-2ae q. 53 art. 4; 3a q. 41 art. 4 ad 1m).

188. Michel Sauvage, FSC, "Le Frere enseignant homme de la terre et homme du ciel" in *Orientations* (Special Number, 1962).

189. M 44.1.

190. M 85.1.

191. M 96.3.

192. M 139.1.

193. See M 32.2 and 32.3.

194. M 85.1.

195. We will see that recognizing the presence of God in the poor is an important theme in Lasallian teaching.

196. M 32.2.

197. M 43.3; cf. M 32.

198. M 177.3.

199. Cf. M 202.2, 196.2; 5. See Miguel Campos, *L'itinéraire évangélique de saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle et le recours à l'Écriture dans les Méditations pour le temps de la retraite*. Vol. 1. CL 45 (1974), 45-47. (Hereafter referred to as Campos 1).

200. M 44.2.

201. M 84.1.

202. M 84.1.

203. M 44.3.

204. M 175.2; 147.3.

205. Faith is also the principle of fraternal unity: M 39.3; Da, 99-100; RC 13.1, 15.18; EM, 30.

206. Faith inspires virtue, notably obedience: R, 68; M 9; 91.1; 72.2; EM, 106-107.

207. M 194.3; 197.2; 200.3.

208. Cf. CAL, 216-220.

209. M 46.3.
210. Cf. CL 1 (1959), xliii-xlv.
211. M 102.1; 102.2.
212. Cf. CAL, 171-180, 279-290.
213. R, 33.
214. RC 2, 4-7.
- [215. RC]
- [216. Romans 11:36]
217. Cf. Da, 412
218. EM, 67, 98-100, 123-124, 139.
219. EM, 72; cf. Da, 429-430.
220. M 90.1; cf. Da, 438-440.
221. R, 67; cf. R, 37-38.
222. R, 38.
223. M 108.2.
224. M 196.3.
225. M 206.3.
226. R, 66-67; M 12.1.
227. M 11.3.
228. See Campos 2, 319.
229. M 11.3.

230. It is in the commentary on the Wedding Feast of Cana that De La Salle interprets in such an accommodating way that Scripture seems reduced to a pure pretext. Mary says to the servants: "Do whatever He tells you." One who obeys should be so indifferent that "the one who commands cannot judge or discern, if it is possible, what pleases or displeases the one who

obeys." That is the insensibility of a corpse. Jesus orders the servants to fill the urns with water. They filled them to the brim. They took the word "fill" in its full meaning. "That's the way you should use it when your superiors command you to do something; you should not only do what is commanded, but do it in the way in which it is commanded." The examples given are such that one has the impression that the one so commanded should not look to the end of the order given, nor suppose that the superior has asked to achieve the best result: one should hold oneself strictly to the substance of the command. It is perhaps the policy at its worst.

231. Cf. CAL, 47-48.

232. Cf. CAL, 265-268.

233. Cf. CAL, 268-271.

234. M 91.1; 206.1; 206.2; 205.1; 207.1.

235. On the sources of the *Reflections* in the *Collection*, see Andre Rayez. "Etudes lasalliennes," *Revue d'Ascetique et de Mystique*, No. 109 (January-March 1952), 47; CL 16 (1964), 52-99. (Hereafter referred to as Rayez 1).

236. R, 78.

237. "Consider how important it is for you to use time well. In order to do so, it is necessary for you to live in an orderly fashion, and to have order in your exterior activities; you must regulate your interior, and you must resolve to live henceforth only under the guidance of grace" (R, 79, #1; cf. R, 80, #4).

238. "Do you not believe that it is enough to do all things in their time without putting effort into doing them perfectly? And are you not convinced that it is part of their perfection to do them at the proper time? Do you perform all your actions as perfectly as you can?" (R, 80, #8). "Do not make as much effort to learn how to do an action perfectly as you put into doing it as perfectly as you know how; for in doing perfectly what you know, you deserve to learn what you would not yet know" (R, 80, #9).

239. R, 79, #3.

[240. M 201.3]

241. M 58.1; 70.2; 104.2; 114.3; 135.2; see CAL, 320-322.

[242. RC]

243. M 202.2.

244. M 137.3.

245. M 195.3.

246. M 46.3.

247. R, 34.

248. R, 31; RC 22.

249. For example, John Baptist Blain *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Vol. 1, Book 1), translated by Richard Arnandez (Romeoville, IL: Lasallian Publications, 1982) in CL 7 (1961), 95-96; John Baptist Blain, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Vol. 1, Book 2), translated by Richard Arnandez (Romeoville, IL: Lasallian Publications, 1983) in CL 7 (1961), 89-90, 162-3; John Baptist Blain, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Vol. 2, Book 1) by John Baptist Blain, translated by Richard Arnandez (Romeoville, IL: Lasallian Publications, 1986) in CL 8 (1961), 120-1, 136-7; John Baptist Blain, *The Mind and Heart of St. John Baptist de La Salle* (Vol. 2, Book 2), translated by Edwin Bannon (Oxford, England: De La Salle Publications, 1998), in CL 8 (1961), 151, 547, 568-70; cf. Maurice Auguste, *Pour une meilleure lecture*, 33-36.

250. M 165.3.

251. M 121.1; cf. M 31.2.

252. M 118.1; 144.2.

253. M 121.3.

254. M 102.3.

255. M 149.3.

256. M 78.3.

257. See R, 76.

258. M 31.2.

259. M 149.3.

260. M 25.3.

261. See M 27.1.

262. M 165, citing Galatians 6:14. The same quotation appears in M 28.3; 121.3; 149.3; and, above all, in 165.1.

263. M 25.1

264. M 25.2.

265. M 73.3, citing Acts 14:22; same reference in M 149.3.

266. See Emile Lett, *L'esprit du Martyre ou la souffrance christique d'après saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle* (Orph. App, 1950).

267. M 183.2, citing Hebrews 11:12.

268. M 124.1.

269. M 124.3.

270. M 35.3.

271. M 31.2.

272. M 95.3.

273. M 177.3.

275. M 31.3.

276. In the original 1977 French text, this is the third chapter of Part One, "Favored by God with Spiritual Gifts for Preaching the Gospel to the Poor," and appears on pages 149-241. Had it been included in the 1981 American translation, it would have appeared after the preceding chapter but just before page 43 of the text.

276. Whereas the retreat *Meditations* place the Brother in the presence of the God of salvation at work in the world, it often seems that EM places him before God alone, setting aside the world; and, while in the retreat *Meditations* the call to zeal is constant, one finds only one explicit mention of it in EM (p. 31).

277. R, 3; the three others are interior prayer, the spirit of faith, and interior recollection.

278. R, 50; cf. also R, 64, 83, 86.

279. RC 2.7; see also RC 4.13; R, 61, 63, 27.

280. M 179.3; same expression in EM, 48-49.

281. M 177.3.

282. M 179.3. See also M 67.1; 90.1; 95.1.



283. Cf. 87.1-3; 129.

284. Cf. *The Letters of John Baptist de La Salle* (Romeoville, IL: Lasallian Publications, 1988), 3.3; 4.8. [Hereafter referred to as L].

285. Cf. L 98.4.

286. Cf. L 72.5; 2.7.

287. Cf. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, *Exercices de piété qui se font pendant le jour dans les Écoles Chrétiennes: reproduction anastatique de l'édition de 1760*. CL 18 (1963), 3-7, 21, 22-24; John Baptist de La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), 92 in CL 24 (1965); Da, 490: indications on putting oneself in the presence of God for all Christians, similar to those the Founder gives the Brothers.

288. See Pierre Pourrat, *La spiritualite chrétienne*, Vol. 4 (Garabaldi 1921), 390; Giacomo Lercaro, *Methodes d'oraison mentale* (Le Puy: Xavier-Mappus, 1958), 156; Fredien Charles, *L'oraison d'après saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle* (Paris: Ligel, 1955), 27; Ignacio Mengs, *Oración y presenciade Dios según san Juan Bautista de La Salle* (Universidad Pontificio, 1970), 95, 101. Nevertheless, on this point we can bring together the Lasallian teaching with that of various contemporaries, such as Francis de Sales or Demia (Pourrat, *op. cit.*, 390-391), Barré (Rayez I, 55 note 75), and Jean Francois de Reims (Lercaro, *op. cit.*, 156).

289. EM, 56.

290. EM, 22.

291. One also sees in this that the enumeration of "four" interior supports of the Institute is less a precise distinction between four different means than several approaches to a single general reality, that of the encounter between the person and God, of their interior dialogue.

292. De La Salle here speaks of "the depth of the soul," which he defines as "the most intimate part of the soul" (EM, 21); we know that this is a classical expression among spiritual writers. The progression De La Salle establishes – from multiplied reflections, to few but long continued reflections, to simple attention – shows that this "depth of the soul" is equivalent to "the unity of soul" (cf. F. Jette, *Fond de l'ame* in DS, Vol. V, columns 650-666).

293. M 70.3.

294. EM, 21-22.

295. EM, 65.

296. EM, 122-123.

297. The reflections that one makes on the Presence of God should "have for object only one manner of the presence of God." De La Salle develops this pedagogical notation at length (see EM, 47-48). Elsewhere in EM, he will insist on the *liberty* to follow spiritual attraction.

[298. Cf., Acts 17:27-28]

[299. EM, 31.]

300. EM, 31-33.

301. EM, 33.

302. EM, 87-89.

303. EM, 110

304. EM, 38.

305. EM, 30.

306. "The best fruit of the prayer of attention is that the soul is 'possessed' by God and, consequently, 'guided' by Him" (Andre Rayez, "La spiritualite d'abandon chez saint Jean-Baptiste de la Salle," *Revue d'Ascetique et de Mystique*, No. 121 (January-March 1955), 69. Cf. the famous passage in Romans 8:14: "They are children of God who are led by the Spirit of God." [Hereafter referred to as Rayez 2].

307. EM, 37-38.

308. EM, 26-27.

309. EM, 59.

310. EM, 67.

311. EM, 27-28.

312. Citing this text of Acts in M 175.1, De La Salle shows that it is in the human heart, after all, that all takes place; God reveals Himself to the one who seeks, even if one does not know this.

313. EM, 28-29.

314. EM, 30.

315. EM, 31.

316. See M 169.3.

317. EM, 39.

318. EM, 40.

319. EM, 43.

320. EM, 41-42.

321. EM, 43-44.

322. EM, 83.

323. See EM, 117: the virtues upon which one meditates are those of Jesus Christ; cf. EM, 134.

324. EM, 80.

325. M 125.3.

326. M 40.1.

327. See M 125.2.

328. See M 125.3.

329. EM, 22.

330. EM, 36. See also EM, 36-37, 54-55, 62-63, 136, 146.

331. EM, 143-144, sets the care for "spiritual exercises" established to obtain salvation above the desire to learn "exterior things such as writing and arithmetic."

332. M 205.2, in substance, says to the Brothers: Be solicitous for the salvation of those confided to you, and God Himself will take care of yours. See also R, 78: "Make no distinction between the duties of your employment and the business of your salvation and perfection . . ."

333. One must be prudent when handling an argument of internal criticism. Other than the contrasts presented in the previous footnote, the question of authenticity can be raised by another passage in the same context: "If greed incites me to accept something from pupils or parents, *against the Rule and the vows . . .*" (EM, 144). This is the only instance in all his writings where one finds an allusion by De La Salle to this sin against the vow of gratuity (see Maurice-Auguste in CL 2 (1960), 62-66).

334. M 174.3 (attributed to Jesus Christ in the Gospels).

335. M 171.1.
336. M 111.1.
337. M 95.1.
338. M 189.2.
339. Frequent insistence on flight from the world: M 97.2-3; 100.1; 102.1; 105.1; 111.1; 114.3; 126.2-3; 127.2- 3; 129.1; 136.1; 143.1; 161.1; 170.2; 171.1; 182.2. See also M 41.2; 76.3.
340. M 174.2. See in R, 52, systematization on the necessity of exterior solitude [retreat].
341. RC XIV, XXVI, XXVII.
342. L 27.9; 28.18.
343. L 16.10; cf. L 17.18.
344. By the world one understands those people who live according to the spirit of the world, and all that there is in creatures that can lead us to sin, and the passion we have to show off to the world and to live in the glitter and pomp of vanity (Da, 234).
345. M 41.2.
346. M 84.1; 5.2.
347. M 196.2.
348. M 144.1. Cf. also M 60.1; 143.1.
349. M 114.3.
350. Blain 3, 204.
351. See R, 52, on the subject of interior flight [retreat].
352. M 137.1; cf. M 169.1; 180.2; 139.1.
353. R, 46-49.
354. R, 49-50.
355. R, 50-52.
356. Cf. Rayez 2, 48-50.

357. Cf. Blain 2, 27-38; 99-123.

358. M 5.3; EM, 136.

359. EM, 145.

360. M 93.1.

361. M 29.3.

362. M 95.2.

363. M 59.1.

364. M 66.3; 101.1; 105.2; 118.2; 129.1; 158.1; 161.2.

365. M 179.2.

366. See M 148.1.

367. RC 5.1. The context of this chapter of the *Rule* seems to indicate that the first corporal mortifications that the editor seems to intend are the privations of food (cf. Maurice-Auguste, *Pour une meilleure lecture*, 72).

368. R, 70-71.

369. M 148.1.

370. R, 62; 76; 86; M 80.1.

371. M 190.1; he returns often to silence: R, 5; 45; 47-48; 63-64. RC XXII; M 33.2; 64.3; 92.1; 95.2; 135.1; 177.2; L 10.9; 41.6; 71.1-3; 112.1-2; 113, 1-9.

372. R, 64.

373. RC XXIII; R, 74-75.

374. See R, 48-49.

375. R, 70.

376. In part because we have already mentioned the connection De La Salle establishes between obedience and faith (see above), and we will see that he considers it to be the community virtue par excellence.

377. R, 18-23; 50; 67-68.

378. M 7 to 15.

379. L 124; 50.5; 5.9; 60.15; 65.3.

380. R, 18.

381. R, 20; M 8.2; 10.3.

382. R, 20-21; M 8.2; 21.3.

383. R, 21; M 8.2.

384. R, 21.

385. R, 67-68.

386. For Berulle's spirituality of adoration, Condren substitutes one of sacrifice. And the creature "because one is nothing has no other means of honoring the absolute being of God than nothingness itself, that is to say, one's own destruction which, from this principal, will constitute the essence of sacrifice" (cf. L. Cognet, *La Spiritualité moderne* (Aubier, 1966), 387).

387. R, 50. One can reconcile this spiritual attitude with a certain concept of the Transubstantiation, which considers that "the bread and the wine are to be destroyed and consumed" in the sacrifice of the Mass (R, 59).

388. M 113.3; 95.2; 179.2.

389. See M 95.2, cited above; M 66.3; 156.3; 159.3; 28.2; there is a more nuanced interpretation of the opposition flesh-spirit in M 45.2.

390. M 180.3.

391. M 32.3; cf. M 137.1; 130.1.

392. See above pp. 71-73.

393. See Blain 4, 198-199.

394. Cf. CAL, 41, #32; IC, 187-189.

395. Kierkegaard, *Journal*.

396. The precariousness of resources often appears in the Saint's correspondence, above all with Gabriel Drolin who besought his help. See L 19.3, 6, 15; 14.17; 13.3; 15.3-7; 21.3; 23.2-3; 24.1-4; 25.4-5; 28.8; 31.1. Cf. also L 38.5.

397. M 81.1; cf. R, 75.
398. M 166.1.
399. M 35.1; 44.1.
400. M 173.2.
401. See M 88.2.
402. M 130.1; 64.2; 18.1; 88.1.
403. M 16.
404. M 167.1; 123.2.
405. M 97.3.
406. Cf. the ladder of Jacob, M 198.
407. M 98.2; cf. M 127.3.
408. M 177.3.
409. EM, 32-33, 52.
410. EM, 59.
411. EM, 33; cf. EM, 27-28, 33-34.
412. EM, 61.
413. M 88.1.
414. M 199.3, citing Ephesians 3:3, 8.
415. M 102.1; the same observation in M 161.1; 189.2.
416. M 143.1.
417. M 101.1; cf. M 135.1.
418. M 135.1.
- [419. M 64.2]

420. M 64.1-2.

421. M 126.1; cf. M 129.2; 148.2.

422. M 95.1.

423. M 97.2.

424. M 131.1.

425. Cf. Above in the text, pp. 12-16.

426. M 171.2.

427. Cf. M 201.3.

428. M 93.3.

429. It goes without saying that this presentation of De La Salle's thought, having been derived from his writings, for the clarity of the exposition distinguishes depths of profundity that in the Founder are not always neatly separated.

430. M 78.1; 182.1.

431. M 167.2; 182.1; 78.1; 139.1; etc.

432. M 144.2-3; 167.2; 147.1-2; 59.2.

433. M 199.2

434. M 196.2.

435. Da, 24-62.

436. Da, 184-192.

437. M 203.1.

438. M 200.1.

439. M 202.2; cf. EM, 127.

440. M 33.

441. M 196.1.



442. Cf. Campos 2, 121, 208.
443. RB [III-IV].
444. M 196.3; cf. Da [V].
445. See EM, 84.
446. EM, 107.
447. EM, 86-87, 92, 103-104, 108,
448. M 86.1, 3; see also M 173.2; Da, 34; L 38.4.
449. Cf. M 93.2; 6.2; 152.1.
450. R, 68; cf. EM, 117; M 7.1.
451. M 176.3.
452. For example, M 89.2; 152.3; 165.3.
453. M 195.1; cf. M 25.3.
454. M 25.1, citing Hebrews 10:4-10.
455. M 112.2, citing Philippians 2:6-7; Matthew 1:21; Isaiah 53:4-5.
456. M 27.3, citing Hebrews 6:6. The same citation is found in M 89.3.
457. M 63.3.
458. M 28.2, citing 1 Peter 2:21, 24 and 4:1-2.
459. M 29.2, citing Romans 6:4-12.
460. See M 93.1-2, citing Hebrews 10:5-7; Colossians 2:11; Romans 2:26-29; Galatians 5:24; Colossians 2:13-14; Hebrews 9:11-15.
461. M 29.3. Cf. M 159.3, citing Ephesians 4:22-24; M 92.3.
462. M 4; cf. R, pp. 71-73.
463. See, for example, M 95.3; 100.3; 109.2; 118.1; 119.2; 120.2-3; 124.1, 2, 3; 126.2; 136.3; 140.3; 145.1; 149.3; 154.2-3; 155.1, 2, 3; 159.3; 162.3; 167.3; 175.3; 182.2-3; 183.2-3; 78.3; 84.2; 87.3. Cf., also M 201.1; 28.3 and 121; 152; 165; and many others.

464. M 100.3.
465. Cf. *Announcing the Gospel to the Poor* (Romeoville, 1981), 52-61.
466. M 167.3; 87.3.
467. M 41.1-2; 167.3.
468. M 119.2; 120.2-3.
469. M 155.3; cf. M 162.3.
470. EM, 136.
471. M 126.2.
472. See M 166.3.
473. M 124.3; 95.3; 78.3; 167.3.
474. M 152.1; 73.3; 31.3.
475. M 145.1; cf. M 144.2.
476. M 145.3.
477. M 201.1; cf. EM, 136.
478. M 195.2, citing 2 Corinthians 5:20; 3:3; 4:6; cf. M 201.2.
479. See M 202.1.
480. M 196.3.
481. M 205.3
482. M 201.2.
483. M 195.3; see EM, 29-31.
484. See the beautiful prayer in EM, 77-78; cf. R, 67.
485. EM, 110; cf. EM, 129-130, 145-146.
486. See R, 155-157; Da, 73,229.

487. M 195.1.

488. Da, 211-213.

489. Da, 99.

490. The collection of the most important in M 47 to 55; cf. R, 57-61, 91-95; Da, 241-273; IP, 5-96, 234-281.

491. A study of the whole of the Lasallian teaching on the Eucharist has certain shortcomings. All the same, we note: F. Emiliano Savino, *La SS Eucharistia negli scritti ascetico pedagogici de S. G. B. de La Salle*, in *Rivista Lasalliana*, vol. 27, no. 2-3, June-September 1953; F. Louis, *L'education liturgique d'apres saint J. B. de La Salle*, in *Catechistes* 24, pp. 305-329; F. Bercret, *Essai sur la Catechese eucharistique de St. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, in *Lasallianum* 3, November 1964, pp. 29-78. A thesis in theology (not published) does not appear to us to live up to the promise of its title: R. Lachance, *L'Eucharistie chez Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle* (Faculte de theologie de Quebec, March 1969, 300 pages).

492. R, 58-60.

493. R, 60.

494. M 50.1-2.

495. M 48.3.

496. M 54.3; cf. Da, 249-250.

497. See above pp. 48-56.

498. Cf. M 26.3; 140.2; 144.3; 147.1. The *Meditations* for the Octave of the feast of the Blessed Sacrament return to the theme of frequent Communion: M 48.2; 50; 51; 54; 55. Cf. also F. Bercret, *op. cit.*, 76-77.

499. M 55.2.

500. M 55.3

501. M 26.2.

502. M 196.1.

503. See M 62.3; EM, 43-46.

504. EM, 110; cf. EM, 88-89, 90-91.

505. See EM, 110-111.

506. EM, 38; cf. EM, pp. 28-29, 52, 61-62, 109-110.

507. M 195.2; cf. M 62.2. See Pierre Berulle, *Lettres* III, 551: "Give yourself entirely to the Spirit of Jesus and to this Spirit of Jesus as the Spirit itself operates and imprints in souls a lively image and perfect similarity to its own states and conditions on earth. Perform the works of Jesus by the Spirit of Jesus and not by your own spirit."

508. These commitments are treated in *Announcing the Gospel to the Poor* (Romeoville, 1981), 137-184.

509. During the Founder's lifetime, the Brothers did not pronounce the three vows of religion. The vowed commitment, for those who made them, was to association for gratuitous teaching and to obedience.

[510. M. 46.3]

511. M 46.3, to compare with the formula of vows.

512. EM, 44.

513. EM, 102.

514. M 25.1; cf. M 112.2.

515. M 93.2.

516. M 112.3.

517. EM, 102.

518. See EM, 45-46; 39-40.

519. Cf. Da, 298; M 205.1.

520. Da, 409.

521. Da, 489-490.

522. CE, 103.

523. In many instances, De La Salle identifies this new consecration with the vow of virginity: cf. M 95.1; 130.1; 163.3; 191.1. It clearly reveals the mystery of Christ's union with His Church: M 177.3. Other more general expressions: M 102.2; 92.2; RB, 19-20; R, 24; M 59.2; 76.3; 77.2.

524. M 162.1; 104.2; cf. M 151.1.

525. M 123.2; cf. M 58.1; 104.2; 114.3; 146.3.

526. M 191.1. The "heroic vow" of De La Salle with Vuyart and Drolin had been pronounced on 21 November 1691, the day that was marked at Saint Sulpice by the renewal of clerical promises.

527. M 70.2.

528. M 135.2.

529. M 137.3.

530. M 201.3, citing John 10:10.

531. M 205.2.

532. M 198.2, citing 1 Thessalonians 2:8.

533. M 201.1, citing 2 Corinthians 6:3-9.

534. M 199.3; 205.3, citing Ephesians 2:22.

535. Da, 65-66; cf. CAL, 154-155.

536. M 43.1.

537. M 196.3; 198.3.

538. M 201.1, citing 1 Corinthians 12:28 & 5:9. Cf. M 170.3.

539. M 43.2-3; cf. Da, 61.

540. M 195.2; 193.3.

541. M 195.3.

542. M 45.1.

543. M 44.2. As above, pp. 93-94.

544. EM, 111; cf. EM, 28, 37-38, 51-52, 61.

545. EM, 113; cf. EM, 79-80, 112, 131, 149-150.

546. EM, 29, 37; cf. MR 193-194.

547. Cf. M 3.2.

548. M 45.3.

549. M 66.3.

550. M 43.1.

551. M 66.3; cf. M 79.1.

552. M 62.2.

553. In the prayer of simple attention, one goes before God "aware of the need we have of the merits of our Lord, to be united to Him and to be directed by His Spirit," EM, 149-151.

554. A significant bringing together of EM, 31, where one is asked to let oneself be directed by the Spirit to fulfill one's duties of state, and M 204.2, where the Founder recommends that one abandon oneself to the Spirit before punishing a pupil.

555. M 45.3.

556. EM, 51-52.

557. In his work, already quoted several times, Brother Clément Marcel, *Par le Mouvement de L'Esprit. La Dévotion au Saint-Esprit dans la écrits de Saint Jean-Baptiste de la Salle* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1952), shows how De La Salle's teaching on docility to the Spirit and on the effort at detachment and inner purification, which are inseparable, may be compared to that of Bérulle, Condren, Olier, Father Lallement (*op. cit.*, 128-150, XXV-L).

558. M 180.3.

559. See L 114.1; 86.3, 8, 9.

560. R, 50.

561. R, 79, #3; cf. R, 79, #11.

562. M 99.2.

563. M 123.1-2.

564. See the different effects of the action of the Spirit, for example, in comparing M 100 & 118, 132.1-2 & 174.2, 167 & 143, 177 & 97.

565. M 115.2; cf. M 96.1; 97.1.
566. M 169.1.
567. M 115.2.
568. L 106.5.
569. M 33.1.
570. M 86.3.
571. M 99.3.
572. L 106.5.
573. M 123.1.
574. M 42.2.
575. L 106.5.
576. R, 80, #9.
577. R, 80, #10.
578. M 181.3.
579. EM, 38; cf. M 62.1.
580. M 82.3.
581. M 163.3; cf. M 191.2-3.
582. M 141.1.
583. M 141.2.
584. M 141.3.
585. M 26.1; 48.3.
586. M 48.1.
587. Rouen *Memoire* of 1721; CL II, p. 128.

588. EM, 21; R, 51; L 76.3.

589. M 47.3; cf. M 58.1.

590. M 137.1; 180.2. RC XIII 12; R, 52, 63, 91; M 16.2; L 6.5.

591. R, 78.

592. M 58.1.

593. We have here consulted the *Lasallian Vocabulary*. It does not seem useful to us to multiply the references. De La Salle speaks like this of the spirit of poverty, of the spirit of religion, of the spirit of prayer and of interior prayer, of the spirit of penance and of mortification, of the spirit of withdrawal [retreat], of the spirit of infancy and of simplicity, of the spirit of disinterestedness, of the spirit of justice, of the spirit of humility, of sacrifice, of obedience, of charity, of adoration, of regularity, of community, etc. . . He speaks also of the spirit of vocation, of state, and of the profession of the Brother as the spirit of Christianity in which he agrees to educate the pupils and which opposes itself to the spirit of the world. We have already encountered, with reference to interior prayer, the expressions: the spirit of a mystery, of a virtue, and of a maxim.

594. See Maurice-Auguste, *Pour une meilleure lecture*, 11-12.

595. RC 11.1.

596. EM, 21, 47, 51, 55, 96-97.

597. EM, 129-130, 65-66.

598. EM, 57, 53-54, 79-80.

599. EM, 79, 52.

600. EM, 151.

[601. EM, 75.]

[602. EM, 77.]

603. EM, 75, 77, 79.

604. M 62.3.

\*\* Editors of AXIS have added some identifying material to the Endnotes that did not appear in the earlier edition of these two chapters for clarity and cohesiveness of style. In addition, bracketed [ ] endnotes are new notes that did not appear in the earlier edition, and they have been added to aid comprehension and order.