

## **The Origin and Spirituality of Teaching Orders in the Church**

Michel Sauvage, FSC, S.T.D.<sup>1</sup>

Writing such an article as this presents several challenges. First, congregations and religious orders that can be termed "teaching orders" are numerous. Just to list them for France alone for the 19th century would be quite an achievement. It is known how they proliferated after the French Revolution. Some were formed on a diocesan scale or even at times from a few parishes. Perhaps it is less well-known that following the Catholic Reformation, the French seventeenth century also knew a similar proliferation, at least as regards female congregations.

Second, the term teaching congregations seems self-explanatory. In reality, the teaching aim (in the actual meaning) of most of the congregations is not the prime aim. From the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, they were born with the aim of evangelization, often missionary; and their activity was defined in terms of catechesis. The terms "teaching" or "instruction" have to be understood, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as concerned first and essentially with Christian doctrine and life. Later, the place of profane teaching will become more important, if not even preponderant over the primary aim.

Third, many female congregations right from the beginning and down through the years exercised many activities of a charitable and pastoral order: teaching, care of the sick, hospitals, old folks' homes, orphanages, work with the handicapped or delinquents, help in parishes, etc. Some orders of men and priests' congregations also included teaching in their tasks, or circumstances led them to do so. Because of this plurality of activities, the spiritual teaching which is addressed to these groups as a whole aimed at the spiritual needs of the life of the teacher.

Fourth, there exist very few monograph studies on the spirituality of orders and congregations as teaching institutions.

For all of these reasons, it seems necessary to restrict the study of our theme to a precise historical period and only in two places. We have chosen firstly Italy in the sixteenth century, because it is there and then that the first groups of men and women devoting themselves to the education of youth first appeared. Then we will pass on to France in the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries. We will speak only of those orders and congregations running "colleges" and schools; and this excludes both university teaching, as well as that given by many abbeys of men and women.

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## 1. Italy in the 16th Century

The Brothers of the Common Life have often been considered as the medieval ancestors of the teaching Brothers. However, if the disciples of Gerard Groote (+1384) and of Florent Radewijns (+1400) opened schools and boarded poor scholars, their essential motivations and community style of life answered wider objectives.<sup>2</sup>

The context in which the first teaching congregations arose is that of the Catholic Reformation, particularly in Italy where it arose before the Lutheran Reformation. The evils afflicting the Church have often been described; and among them religious ignorance is indicated as the most dangerous wound, the most radical evil. Those animating reform movements strived at fighting against this ignorance. Religious teaching of the faithful, including that of youth, takes on in their eyes a particular importance.

**1.1. Company and Congregation of Christian Doctrine:** Even before the Council of Trent, there arose in many Italian towns a movement in favor of teaching Christian doctrine to children.

Thus, in Milan in 1536, the Company of Christian Doctrine was founded by the initiative of the priest Castellino da Castello and the layman Francesco Villanova. They set up Sunday schools to give religious instruction (and elementary profane instruction) to the children of the people. This Company spread to other towns of the peninsula. Without doubt, it was not a religious congregation; its members were not bound by religious vows; the laymen involved remained busy at their work and often in their homes. But the rule they followed, besides disciplinary prescriptions, bore the concern for a certain spiritual animation.

After the Council of Trent, which gave a vigorous impulse to this catechetical movement, Charles Borromeo strengthened the Milan Company of Christian Doctrine. The rule he gave it preoccupied itself with the spiritual life of its members, with the virtues to be practiced (love of God, zeal for souls, brotherly love, patience, prudence), and with the spiritual exercises to be undertaken (confession and frequent Communion, mental and vocal prayer, spiritual reading and study of catechism).

The Company of Christian Doctrine was established in Rome in 1560 thanks to Marco Cusani with the help of priests who gathered around Philip Neri. On 6 October 1567, Pius V approved it in the brief *Ex Dibito*, which we will refer to later on in matters concerned with religious teaching. In it, the Pope exhorted the Bishops to organize everywhere Sunday schools by founding Companies of the Brothers of Christian Doctrine.

Gradually, many Sunday schools of the Company became daily schools, and profane teaching found more significance, though remaining elementary. In Rome, some companions of Cusani wished to be able to devote themselves exclusively to their apostolate and gathered around him and under the spiritual direction of the priest Enrico Pietra. Gregory XIII assigned them the Church of Saint Agatha and authorized them to have priests ordained “for the good of the congregation.” In addition to the constitutions of the Company (many times revised), rules were elaborated and published (*Constitutions and Rules of the Congregation of the Fathers of*

*Christian Doctrine of Rome*, drawn up by Giovan Battista Serafini, Rome 1604). In this Roman congregation of Christian Doctrine, we can see the first version of men's teaching orders.

This rule of 1604 underlines to excess the all-embracing if not totalitarian character of the apostolic mission of teaching Christian doctrine in the very life of the congregation. The spiritual life of the members is ordained to this end. Spiritual exercises and penitential practices are established to “obtain from God the grace to teach better and more fruitfully the Christian doctrine.” To this all-important ministry are ordained the other activities that the priests of the congregation can be led to exercise (sacraments, preaching). Likewise, if profane subjects are taught, it is to be able to lead to Christian doctrine. The rule concludes: “Finally, all that is said and done in this congregation is to achieve this aim.”

Later, the congregation founded by César de Bus in France was affiliated to the Italian one.

**1.2. The Clerks Regular:** The order of the Clerks Regular of the Pious Schools founded by Joseph Calazantius arose directly out of the Company of the Christian Doctrine. They were the first religious in the Church to make the special vow of “having particular care of the teaching of children.”

Before him, the different orders of Clerks Regular founded in Italy in the first half of the sixteenth century were not exclusively teaching ones. However, because of their interest in teaching doctrine to children and youth, the founders and disciples were brought to busy themselves with the education of youth and sometimes founded colleges. In this connection, also note Jerome Miani and his Somaschi brethren, Anthony Maria Zaccaria and his Barnabites, and above all Ignatius of Loyola and his Jesuits.

From his very first attempt at gathering disciples, Ignatius shared the general impetus in favor of teaching catechism to children. Even before the foundation of the Company, the first members taught catechism to the children of the streets. Mention would be made of this teaching in the first summary of the constitutions (August 1539). The Bull of Foundation (*Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae* 1540) mentions among the means that the Company will employ: “namely . . . the instruction of young boys and undereducated people in Christian doctrine.” When after 1548 the Jesuits opened colleges, this initiative had its “aftershocks” in religious teaching, not only inside these institutions, but also around them, for the Jesuits associated their pupils in the teaching of catechism to the children of the towns and the surrounding countryside.

In the spirituality of the teaching orders, a special place must be made for the Company of Jesus, whose influence was extensive and prolonged. The bibliography on Jesuit education is immense. The works dealing with it touch here and there on the question of the spirituality of the teaching religious, but it seems that an overall work on this subject is still lacking.

**1.3. Angela Merici and the Ursulines:** It was also in the ferment of the Catholic Reformation that the first congregation of active women “religious” was to be born, though not without difficulties which would be prolonged; and it is teaching which will constitute its first form of

active engagement for the “salvation of souls.” Angela Merici is recognized as the first foundress of female apostolic religious life.

She was born March 21, 1474. After living in piety and austerity, she understood, following a vision, that she had to consecrate herself to the salvation of her neighbor. She started by instructing the inhabitants of the village of Brudazzo in the truths of faith. At the same time, she gathered the little girls and taught them Christian doctrine, while imparting the rudiments of profane knowledge. Settled in Brescia from 1516 on, she carried on this activity. Some young ladies came to put themselves under her direction to work with her in the apostolate of teaching religion. She grouped them into a small society placed under the patronage of St. Ursula. On November 25, 1535, thirty “associates” consecrated their virginity to God and vowed themselves totally to the service of their neighbor. The next year Angela dictated the rule of the company to a priest of Brescia, Gabriel Cozzano; the Bishop of the city approved it on August 6, 1536. Paul III gave his approval on August 6, 1544. Meanwhile, Angela died on January 27, 1540.

In the writings she left her daughters (rule, recommendations, and testament), Angela spoke of their educative mission. The task of education is service and grace: “You have more need to serve your girls than they have to be served and ruled by you. God in His mercy has wished to make use of you for your own greater good.”

She demanded zeal for souls, but above all a motherly affection “full of solicitude for the good and usefulness to the girls”; and sweetness after the image of Christ, meek and humble of heart; firm and respectful of their free will, for “God has given to each their free will and wishes to force no one.” This affection must be personal and must respect the originality of each girl, “not only their names but also their social condition, their temperament, their style and whatever concerns them.” This sweetness must be full of hope and dynamism. “Can you discern whether those who seem to you the most insignificant and the most deprived of value won't become the most generous and agreeable to His Majesty?”

After Angela's death, her uncompleted work rapidly encountered serious obstacles. Running counter to accepted practices and traditions, her institute provoked criticism. Right from 1545, it seems that a certain number of self-righteous folk of Brescia banded together to campaign against a mode of life apparently unstable. With reference to the “enclosure” people wished to impose on them, members of the association firmly maintained their wish to remain “in the world” while practicing evangelical charity; but they consented to don a modest and simple habit, which had been wished for by the Foundress. A new shock came in 1555, but the arrival of many choice vocations allowed them to triumph over it.

The rest of the history of the Ursulines lies outside the framework of our study: the introduction into France with the support of César de Bus and his Doctrinaires; following the directives of the Council of Trent, the passing of the Ursulines at the beginning of the seventeenth century to the monastic form of life (solemn vows, papal enclosure), each monastery remaining autonomous; and the setting up by the Holy See in November 1900 of the Roman Union of the Order of St. Ursula. Through the diversity of canonical situations, the Ursulines remained faithful to their primitive objective. As witness to this

are the papal Bulls of the establishment and the different constitutions of the monasteries. Besides, to strengthen their vocation as teachers, the Paris Ursulines (faubourg Saint-Jacques) pronounced from 1614 a fourth vow by which they obliged themselves to teach small girls, reckoning to satisfy thereby their God-given vocation.

The approach taken herein to the spirituality of the Ursulines of the monastic period was facilitated by the collection *Choice Texts from the 17th Century to the Roman Union* (Paris 1979). It provided the Bulls of establishment, constitutions, directory for the novices, and extracts from the writings of Marie de l'Incarnation, Catherine de Jesus Ranquet, and Marie de Saint-Julien. In this book, one can perceive the continuity of the spiritual inspiration, the soul of a spiritual élan, and a pedagogy. The source of the apostolic spirit resides in charity, the spirit of prayer, and docility to the Holy Spirit. Apostolic faithfulness is founded on consecrated virginity that makes the woman religious the spouse of Christ. Union with God, purity of heart, and humility favor such a spirit; as does penance also, "although the holy and continuous work of the Ursulines would not allow one to tax them with great austerities."

If at the time of the "mystical invasion," the graces of contemplation were not lacking amongst the Ursulines, warnings were also not absent in the documents.

The true devotion particular to the Ursulines is not a devotion of tenderness, levitation, or rapture. It is a strong and solid devotion which enables God to be found in the middle of the classroom bustle and spurs them on to warlike virtues through which they acquire practical ecstasies which are by far the best, as they make souls emerge from themselves and leave God, only to find Him by serving one's neighbor.

One can readily see that apostolic zeal gives birth to missionary care, as in the case of Marie de l'Incarnation, who inaugurated the missionary odyssey of the Ursulines in Canada.

## **2. France in the 17th and Beginning of the 18th Centuries**

At the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, the religious situation in France remained very troubled. The upsets brought about by the Wars of Religion had not allowed the much needed restoration. The decisions of the Council of Trent were accepted with difficulty in the kingdom of France. The movement in favor of provincial Councils was only a quick and passing sentiment. A pleiade of great Church men and women caused a Catholic renaissance in the seventeenth century, the accounts of which are well known: the reform of religious orders and clergy, the rise of home and foreign missions, the establishment of seminaries, and pastoral restoration.

The example of Italy often inspired the French effort. More precisely, the name of Charles Borromeo was due to appear as the very symbol of pastoral reform in most of those areas where it was due to be exercised. In particular, the action of the Archbishop of Milan in favor of catechetical renewal stimulated the powerful catechetical movement which swept through France in the seventeenth century, and which was connected even more than in Italy to a vast undertaking in favor of the popular school.

It is in this global context of the Catholic Reformation, and especially in relation to the catechetical school movement, that are going to appear the orders and congregations which will be taken up with the Christian teaching and education of youth: some more exclusively, some including this undertaking among others; some devoted rather to “colleges” and adolescents; and many others arising with the aim of reaching out, by elementary teaching, to the children of the working class; orders and clerical congregations (with various juridical statutes) and many female congregations succeeded in imposing a form of religious life, at first fought against, without “enclosure” or solemn vows; and finally the first realizations of the congregations of teaching Brothers, notably that of John Baptist de La Salle.

**2.1. Clerical Orders and Congregations:** The men of the Catholic Reformation (Vincent de Paul, Bourdoise, Olier, etc.) gave an important place to “Christian doctrine” in the works they created or renewed. However, they did not devote themselves thereto to the exclusion of any other ministry.

First, the model of the congregations of Christian Doctrine, which had been born in Italy, knew little success in France. However, this model was not totally absent as the foundation of César de Bus proved. He had been touched by reading a short life of Charles Borromeo. Influenced by Italian Jesuits and encouraged by M. F. Tarugi, Archbishop of Avignon, César de Bus, his friend Jean-Baptiste Romillon, and some companions opened in 1592 the first house which was due to become the Congregation of Christian Doctrine.

It was established by a brief of Clement VIII on December 23, 1597, and César de Bus was elected rector on June 27, 1598. On the same day, the Archbishop of Avignon issued a Bull allowing a second foundation of the congregation. The vicissitudes of history and the status of the members of these congregations are multifarious and complex.

They are termed “religious” down to 1659. At first they had optional vows; then from 1616 to 1647 joining with the Somaschi, they pronounced solemn vows of religion (with a fourth vow to initiate into Christian doctrine especially children and the lower classes). From 1647, the “secular” current became stronger and stronger; and it won the recognition of the secularity of the congregation. Simple vows, however, were maintained until their abolition by the chapter of 1776 and confirmed by a brief of Pius VI on 14 March 1783. This movement toward secularity, which extended over two centuries, was motivated in diverse ways, according to the times. In the first half of the seventeenth century, it was thought that the status of “regular” would seduce the wealthier novice. In the second half of the century, it was opposed to avoid the privileges of exemption. In the eighteenth century, the idea of the “Doctrinaire citizen” appeared; the seculars wanted to be complete citizens and enjoy all civil rights. This idea assumed a particular strength after 1760, for the ecclesiastical status was no longer conceivable for the seculars without their presence “in the world.” To do good in the world, one had to have relations with it.

This last remark draws attention to the question, both concrete and spiritual, which was addressed and continued to be addressed to religious teachers – the balance between “presence in the world and the radicality of the Gospel,” between the priority given to evangelization and

those ministries to which it is reckoned to be more directly aimed, and the incarnation in the human realities in order to better comprehend and serve humankind. In fact, the “Doctrinaires” (a term used to refer to the members, perhaps coming from the word “doctrine”) had rapidly oriented their apostolate toward teaching in “colleges.” The first they founded was at Brive in 1619; and between 1619 and 1790, they took charge of 39 others. This extension was in line with their essential apostolate, that of Christian doctrine. The “Book of the Congregation” has preserved the propositions of the founder on the occasion of the first Assembly of the Doctrinaires. This very significant text describes in terms of “Christian Doctrine” the specific apostolate of the new society.

“We are going to embrace an institute totally apostolic and let us not forget that Jesus Christ prayed for His apostles, so that they should be one among themselves, just as He is one with His Father. Let us remember that the Christian doctrine that we make profession of teaching offers to us only one Lord, one faith, one baptism. To do honor to all these unities, let us be united among ourselves and with God by eternal bonds and knots so strong that nothing may be capable of breaking them and separating ourselves.”

He continues by underlining the interior bond that must exist between the ministry and spiritual life; it is our whole life and not just the word that must catechize. “Everything in us must catechize, and our conduct must be so well regulated and agree with the truths we teach that it will become a living catechism. It is for us a small thing to practice in common the virtues which Christian doctrine teaches us. We must be just as raised up above those that we teach as are the stars, the source of light, are raised up above the earth upon which they shine.”

The whole life must then be regulated by the light of Christian doctrine. A succinct sort of program of spirituality is presented on the basis of a fourfold schema of a catechism typical of the age:

“We must believe the truths contained in the Creed with a faith capable of moving mountains, accomplish the requests contained in the Lord's prayer with a hope never to be confounded, carry out the ten commandments with a love as strong as death and as hard as hell, and receive and administer the sacraments with a purity worthy of this unspeakable water which gushes into eternal life of which they are the fountains and canals.”

Second, when John Eudes founded the Congregation of Jesus and Mary in 1643, he assigned to it two aims: the formation of priests and preaching parish missions. On founding the Lisieux seminary, he was forced to take charge of the “college” of this town (1653). He then added to the constitutions of the congregation a new section concerned with the direction of this “college.” In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Eudists took charge of three other “colleges”: Avranches 1693, Dofront 1722, and Valognes 1727.

The spiritual advice addressed by John Eudes to his confrères engaged in teaching are contained in the *Constitutions*, as well as in a letter to the Governors of the College of Lisieux. In this last text, he praises the excellence of this ministry, “the work of God and Jesus Christ, since it

concerns the salvation of souls; the work of the Mother of God, of the apostles, and the greatest saints.” Its importance is bound to the fact that in children, “in whom you have to cast the foundations of the Kingdom of God, there are ordinarily far fewer obstacles generally to divine graces than are found in older people.” They are, besides, children of God and particularly beloved by Jesus Christ. That they might better accomplish this work, Eudes recommends to the governors purity of intention; a strong resolution “to bring all possible care to teach children, first of all the knowledge of salvation and secondly profane letters”; and a great care to preserve and increase in them the spirit of piety and virtue so as to avoid the reproach, “You who teach others and do not teach yourselves.” He also recommended that they imitate our Savior and fulfil in the children the words, “He began to do and to teach.”

Third, in founding the Oratory, Bérulle had excluded the function of teaching, not wishing to establish “colleges” next to those of the Jesuits. Paul V obliged him to accept the charge of “colleges” that would be presented to him. In 1614, Cardinal Joyeuse, Archbishop of Rouen, made him take over the one in Dieppe. Many others were taken in charge by the Oratorians under the Ancien Régime.

The thesis of P. Lallemand (*Essay on the History of Education in the Former Oratory of France*, Paris 1887) has a chapter on the formation of headmasters, the novitiate, and the ideal of the Oratorian “college.” He quotes texts taken, above all, from the letters of the Generals in which the successors of Bérulle, Condren, Bourgoing, Senault, and Sainte-Marthe insist on the risk of an excessive zeal for profane studies. They desired to balance this zeal by a spirit of piety, love of prayer, and self-forgetfulness, a theme that is often taken up again in teaching orders and congregations. It is a question above all of maintaining the hierarchy of objectives and seeing to a constant purification of the heart and mind.

Condren wrote to the Oratorians of Troyes: “If we have Cicero on our lips, we should have Christ in our hearts, and zeal for souls in our will . . . we must not make a profane Parnassus and a house of Apollo out of our house of prayer and our oratory, which the Gospel would condemn. Teaching things which are not religious and teaching outside the seminary should only be for us a means of exercising charity, and this exterior service we render people should only be to serve them by the instructions of souls whose salvation is so dear to our Savior.”

Nearer to our day, L. Laberthonnière showed how “the role of the Catholic educator in teaching is to prepare and provoke in souls the interior and supernatural meeting with God . . . it is his duty through his charity at the same time as by his explanations, which confirm each other reciprocally, to show the pupils that the Christian revelation does no more than express, under its diverse aspects and with an infinite richness, the divine charity which seeks them out in their darkness and misery . . . To teach under these conditions, to shake the apathy of the minds and to lead them to live by the truth, one must begin by taking the trouble to live by them themselves. It is in fact a trouble to take, an effort to be made and constantly renewed; and the real danger to be feared is to lack courage. Here, as elsewhere, only life can communicate life.”

**2.2. Female Religious Teaching Congregations:** The innovation constituted by the foundation of the Ursulines in Italy produced more than one echo in France at the end of the sixteenth



century and down through the seventeenth century. The promotion of women to the apostolate continued, increased, and diversified. However, the difficulties to have this novelty fully accepted persisted. Hesitations, advances, and retreats marked the search for a new canonical status.

These congregations uniting in community consecrated women, but engaged in the service of humankind and the apostolate, wished and realized considerable transformations regarding “enclosure,” the regulations of the vows, and office in choir; but the rigorous insistence of the Council of Trent on “enclosure” often prevented them from being either recognized as truly religious or completely free in the exercise of their apostolate.

First, new foundations remained fairly rare in the first half of the French seventeenth century. The first initiative was due to Jeanne de Lestonnac (1556-1640), niece of Michel de Montaigne. Daughter of a Catholic father and a Calvinist mother and reared by Protestant mistresses, she had to oppose her mother to remain a Catholic. After 24 years of marriage, she wished to embrace religious life with the Cistercians, but was unable to bear the austerities of the novitiate. At Bordeaux in 1605, she was put in touch with the Jesuit Jean de Bordes, struck himself by the situation of abandon in which youth obliged to frequent Calvinist schools found themselves and wishing to found a female order, which, modeled on the Company of Jesus, would work for the defense and propagation of the faith. Bordes saw in Jeanne the woman who could realize this project. Through obstacles, trials, and humiliations, Jeanne managed to found the Company of Mary Our Lady. An account presented in 1606 to Cardinal de Sourdis, Archbishop of Bordeaux, presented thus the origin and aim of this new society:

In several good towns of this kingdom of France and especially in Bordeaux, many Catholic girls are forced to attend the schools of heretical mistresses to learn how to read, write, and sew . . . it seems that the divine goodness moved to compassion by so many innocent souls who are in danger of being lost, wishes to provide some remedy in proportion to the greatness and type of malady, having in these lost and corrupt days called Dame Jeanne de Lestonnac . . . and several other daughters who present themselves according to their small power to help as instruments, although quite useless, these tender souls who silently demand the milk of the salutary doctrine and instruction of Christian and Catholic prayers (Christian doctrine and sacramental practice) . . . In short to flee from vice and embrace virtue, both by their good example as also by their talks and spiritual advice . . . To attract girls to their schools, the said religious women will take care to teach them, besides the above mentioned spiritual things, everything that a modest girl from a good family ought to know, like reading well, writing, sewing, needlework, counting and calculation. The religious women will teach and practice these things free of charge. The above seems enough to show the great need the world has of these helps for the reform of morality, the preservation of the faith, and increase of the glory of God among Christian souls.

The finality of the congregation is clearly situated in the movement of the Catholic Reformation. The preoccupation to announce to young girls the Christian message and educate them according to a living faith has priority. Secular teaching is explicitly foreseen, even if the wording makes it seem secondary. However, the aim is to prepare women able to exert an influence on the society

of the day. An integral project of education is adopted aimed at shaping “well-made heads rather than well-stuffed heads,” according to the expression of Montaigne.

The original texts contain the spiritual orientations in keeping with the apostolic objectives of the Company of Jesus. Jeanne de Lestonnac went to “the school” of the Spiritual Exercises. She recommended to her daughters mental prayer, the discernment of spirits, and the method of rendering account by the women of their spiritual progress. She found it so good that she made a rule of it . . . The religious woman's life is neither all activity nor all contemplation, but a composite of both. In this, it is similar to the Virgin Mary's; and it is, therefore, indispensable that “prayer and meditation and interior devotion always hold the first place and be like the right arm giving movement and strength to all one's exterior actions.” One discovers also echoes of Ignatian obedience in the rules. Obedience occupies the first place among the virtues in which a religious woman must make progress for it guarantees the pliancy and cohesion of the apostolic body. It implies openness toward the superior responsible for the forwarding of the mission.

With reference to the choir, it is noted in the *Abrégé*: “Though choir duties are praiseworthy in themselves and suitable for other religious, nevertheless, in this Congregation they cannot and must not be obligatory, as this is incompatible with the usual and daily instruction of little girls, of which it makes profession according to the Institute.” On the other hand, it opts for enclosure. The brief of Paul V (*Salvatoris et Domini* 1607) will add many precisions on this matter, but one can perceive the solicitude to be faithful to the prescriptions of the Council of Trent, while creating a system that will not isolate the girls from the world that is theirs.

Second, from the same period is also the Congregation of Our Lady (Canonesses of St. Augustine) founded by Pierre Fourier (1565-1640) and Alix Le Clerc (1576-1622).

Pierre Fourier, Canon Regular of the Abbey of Chaumousey (Lorraine), very open to the reforming movement of the Council of Trent, tried at Mattaincourt where he became parish priest in 1597, a “parish revolution,” applying himself to the renewal of worship, preaching and catechizing, but also paying attention to the economic and social conditions of the life of his parishioners. The neglect of children and the inadequacies of teacher preparation led him to deplore that there was not yet any religious order in the Church to dedicate itself to small boys as well as to those youths who do not all have the means nor even the wish to go to “college” to acquire knowledge. He was convinced that girls needed instruction as much as boys. “Their mischievousness or their piety is of more importance than one would believe to the Christian Republic.”

Closely connected with the Jesuits at Pont-a-Mousson and informed by them of Italian catechetical achievements, he had heard of the Company and of the Congregation of Christian Doctrine, of the creation of Angela Merici, of the activities and way of life of the Ursulines. He dreamed of being able “to employ persons of both sexes to work gratuitously at the education of small children.” He tried to group some young people in the hope of making teachers out of them. He preached on the excellence of virginity and influenced “the conversion” of a young lady, Alix Le Clerc, soon to be followed by others. He thought first of directing Alix to the Poor Clares of Pont-a-Mousson; but she, seized by the imperiousness of God, was likewise won to the apostolic views of her parish priest. She discovered the needs of the poor and had a presentiment

that a new house for girls had to be set up to practice all the good one can and that a religious institution had to be created which would have a door wide open to the conquest of souls.

On the night of January 19 or 20, 1598, Fourier decided to set about the building of this house whose principal aim would be to build free and popular schools for small girls. He set about it with Alix and carried on a long battle so that these religious women of a new type could practice their apostolate under modified conditions. He obtained from Urban VIII on August 8, 1628, a Bull granting papal approbation and the right to a fourth vow consecrating themselves to the Christian education of youth, the title of Canonesses Regular of St. Augustine, and all the privileges of the Order.

Here to be consulted above all is H el ene Derr eal's *A Missionary of the Counter-Reformation: St. Pierre Fourier and the Institution of the Congregation of Our Lady* (Paris 1965). The epilogue traces the history of the Congregation from 1628 to our day recalling in particular the difficulties arising after the death of Fourier as regards the interpretation of the constitution. An excessive rigor was urged in the application of the canons relative to "enclosure," which practically ended up in isolating the boarders from the day students and set up a certain social discrimination between the two which had been the opposite of the original intention of the founders. Moreover, under pressure from the Bishops, individual monasteries had cut themselves off in complete autonomy.

The spiritual directives of the Congregation came essentially from the writings of the two founders. In the preserved fragment of the provisional rules of 1598, Fourier thus underlines the apostolic aim:

The first and principal of our ends, and the one by which we hope to bring it about that God be honored and well served by many and that we all be enriched and advance in merits and perfection and our neighbor be helped by our small efforts, is to found popular schools and teach the girls gratuitously to read, write, and to do needle-work and learn Christian doctrine, striving according to their ability to have them listen to catechism and to initiate them to piety and devotion.

Taking up the same theme, the constitutions of 1640 spell out even better the spiritual perspective of this mission. The service of devoting oneself diligently to the instruction of lay girls is expressed concretely in the solemn vow of their profession. Thus, the apostolic service is an act of "spiritual worship." Zeal for souls is one of the most agreeable sacrifices that the women could offer to God. The humanism of the educative action is transformed by the theocentric relation which it expresses and by which it is nourished. The constitutions also note the ecclesial function of the religious' ministry. They will strive to be profitable to a large number of young people, who although small in age are not a despicable portion of the Church of God already; and in a few year's time, they will be able to do a lot of good.

The sake of the mission, therefore, is the coming of the Kingdom of God through the salvation of souls. Alix Le Clerc invited her daughters to consider their vocation as an eminent gift of God. "She used to say that the religious, if they knew how to husband the talent of their vocation, like an eminent gift of God, would realize one day the grace that

God gave them in calling them to such a worthy employment, adding that their principal care ought to be to work so as to honor the designs of our Lord tending to preserve the souls of the little girls in the state of innocence by inspiring the fear of God.”

The provisional rule established a link between the mission and the style of religious life from a double point of view. On the one hand, the specific apostolate of the congregation required community life; it had to be accomplished by daughters gathered together, for “one cannot easily teach with progress the pupils, if there are not several teachers together.” On the other hand, the prime, irreplaceable, and most authentic announcing of the Gospel is an existence conformable to it. The mission of the Congregation has to be assumed by

daughters striving to live well: to serve God as a most suitable and efficacious instrument in this undertaking, to acquit themselves of their duty with utmost diligence and fidelity for the love and fear of God, and to give to the little children, with the milk of doctrine, an example and perfect mirror of all virtues, which has more power over their tender souls than all the words and reasonings.

Another fundamental spiritual orientation and one which is able to make an apostolic religious vocation live in unity is that of following Christ, implying the imitation as far as they can of the Christ of the Gospel, after the example of the Virgin Mary, and establishing a personal entry into the mystery of Christ. The following of Christ, meek and humble of heart, invites again to an interior attitude of humility which should be transferred to the educational relationship and urges us to the preferential service of the poor.

Third, the Company of the Daughters of Charity arrived a little later. At the end of 1624 or the beginning of 1625, Louise de Marillac (1591-1660) met Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) for the first time. On November 29, 1633, the first young ladies to dedicate themselves to the service of the poor in different parish confraternities of charity gathered around Louise. In 1642, some of them made private vows. The Archbishop of Paris approved the company on 20 November 1646 (papal approval was given in 1668). The experience of many of his predecessors in the attempt at creating an apostolic religious congregation and also his own knowledge of law, allowed Vincent de Paul to found and maintain a new form of consecrated, community life which on the whole has been maintained down to our present day (private and annual vows; the Company of the Daughters of Charity is a society of communal life without public vows).

The specific feature of the Daughters of Charity is the service of the poor under all its forms (numerous religious congregations founded after the seventeenth century followed the same road and opened a very broad fan of types of apostolic service). It is not a question of a specifically teaching order, although right from the beginning numerous schools were run by the Daughters of Charity. A conference of Vincent de Paul (August 16, 1641) on the explanation of the rule indicated two principal orientations offered to the new congregation: “to teach little girls is one of the reasons for which you offer yourselves to God; the service of the sick, poor people and the teaching of children and that principally in the countryside.”

In 1641, Louise de Marillac had obtained from the precentor of Notre Dame permission to open a small school “to teach poor girls only.” Such schools spread in Paris, the provinces, and outside France. In 1660, 20 schools were run by the Daughters of Charity in Paris and 49 in the provinces. On May 7, 1655, Vincent de Paul wrote to M. Ozenn, superior in Warsaw: “I praise God that the Daughters of Charity have opened the little schools.”

The spiritual teaching left by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac goes beyond the framework of the teaching mission. Let us choose some instances which are coherent with the main lines of Vincentian action and spirituality. In the first place, what characterizes the commitment of the Daughters of Charity and was due to constitute the distinctive seal of their spirit, is the service of the poor. In a conference on the spirit of the company, Vincent said on February 9, 1653:

Your company, my dear sisters, has moreover for its aim to instruct the children in school in the fear and love of God, and this you have in common with the Ursulines. But because they have large and rich houses, the poor cannot go there and so have recourse to you.

The same comparison occurs again on November 2, 1655; the pupils of the Ursulines are usually “well-off”; those that the Daughters of Charity have to teach, wherever they find occasion, are the poor. “You must have the virtue of the ladies of St. Ursula, since you do what they do.”

“We must strive to enter spiritually into the mystery of the poor.” Vincent de Paul often takes up again this leitmotif of all his personal action and of his foundations: the poor, that is Jesus Christ.

Servants of the poor; that's just like saying servants of Jesus Christ, since He considers as done to Himself whatever is done for them and that they are His members. And what He did do while on earth was only to serve the poor... You serve Jesus Christ in the person of the poor. And that is just as true as that we are here. A Sister will go ten times a day to see the sick, and ten times a day she will find God there . . . Go and see the poor convicts in chains, and you will see God. Serve these poor children, and you will there find God.

This preferential service for the poor expresses and nourishes love for Jesus Christ; it is the very heart of the spiritual teaching of Vincent. You must take care to sustain affective love and practice effective love.

A heart which loves our Lord cannot bear His absence and must hold on to Him by this affective love which produces effective love. You must possess both. You must pass from affective love to effective love which consists in practicing works of charity, the service of the poor undertaken with love, courage, and constancy. These two sorts of love are, as it were, the life of a sister of Charity, for to be a Daughter of Charity is to love Jesus Christ tenderly and constantly; being very glad when people talk of Him and when one thinks of Him, and quite full of consolation when one dreams of Him: What! My Lord has called me to serve Him in the person of the poor! Oh! What happiness!

Love for Jesus Christ normally leads us to the imitation of His conditions, of His virtues, and of His practices, “not only in spiritual matters, but even in those corporal ones He practiced on earth.” This is an imitation which must be sustained and animated by the sharing of His Spirit.

They will perform all their exercises, both spiritual and corporal, in a spirit of humility, simplicity, and charity, and in union with those that our Lord Jesus Christ performed when He was on earth . . . and they will realize that these three virtues are like the three faculties of the soul, which must animate the whole body in general and each member in particular of their community. In one word, that is the spirit of their company.

In the eighteenth century, the schoolwork developed even more. In 1727, a conference of the Superior General, entitled “On the care that the Daughters of Charity must have for the Christian schools confided to them,” shows that the primitive spirit was still lively. This task is highly praised, in opposition to anyone who might be tempted to scorn or not sufficiently esteem the function of schools and the teaching of children.

There are not in the community functions more fitting to glorify God, to sanctify yourself, and to edify the Church than the instruction of young girls, to give them the first elements of piety, virtue, and the fear of the Lord.

The essential objective is not profane instruction, nor even the formation

to honest practices and Christian civility. It is principally to teach them to learn to know God and love Him and serve Him and by this means to deserve eternal life. It is to teach them the dogmas of our holy religion and the rules of Gospel morality.

Fourth, from the spiritual point of view, Nicolas Barré (1621-1686), a Minim, deserves special mention. In Rouen in 1666, he had constituted a group of mistresses of the charitable schools of the Holy Child Jesus. In 1669, the first Sisters signed a document consecrating their entry into the community and making clear the spirit of their Institute of the Sisters of the Child Jesus.

The spirit of the Institute . . . being to teach neighbors of their sex the first elements of Christian doctrine in an apostolic way in that spirit of disinterestedness which urged the apostles to instruct the whole world therein, it is necessary that all those persons who present themselves for admission be well informed thereof and they must realize that the house of the Institute is not, like those of other Institutes, that of a permanently fixed establishment . . . The intention of Barré . . . being to render them so dependent on the wise, loving, and powerful providence of God on which they totally depend unceasingly and for always for their temporal sustenance.

This text expresses clearly the major theme of the spirituality of Barré: surrender to God.

If the Institute has its origin in the very heart of God who loved the world so much as to give His only Son to instruct humanity and teach them the road to salvation; if charitable schools are the work of God then we must abandon their management to Him; if men lay

their hands to this work, then God will withdraw His; but at the same time we must omit nothing of the good we can do.”

Surrender to God is in the case of Barré inseparable from the mystery of Christ; through us He continues to accomplish His mission and unites us to His life. Barré shows how his teachers are united to the sacrifice of Christ, to the mystery of the cross, to His love for the Father and for humanity. Thus to abandon oneself to the good pleasure of the Father in Christ is to measure the risk of apostolic service or the building of the spiritual temple: “

To instruct or to try to win souls to God is much greater than building churches for Him or adorning altars; for it is preparing for His majesty spiritual dwellings and living temples.

While stressing the spiritual depths of their apostolate, Barré shows the mistresses their concrete implications. His pedagogical guidelines are realistic: attention to each one, an effort to leave self behind and go toward those girls who are at risk, and the importance of study and professional competence. He insists above all on sweetness and humility.

You must creep into souls through sweetness in order to win them over, and you must never act through haughtiness but always with much humility and modesty.

After entering through a humble sweetness, you must make use of unction and ardor full of charity. You attract people more by this sympathetic means than by the authority and rigor of precepts. This is the way the Holy Spirit wins our hearts.

Barré offers the Sisters a unified teaching, that of a great spiritual man and an apostle open to the demands of the teaching vocation, including the most concrete. Let us pick out some of his original and vigorous observations on the subject of fleeing toward the contemplative life:

It is a temptation which will shake some sisters . . . of wishing to withdraw from their employment under the pretext of working at their own perfection. It will even come to their mind that one must love God and love Him perfectly before making Him loved. What a big abuse! What a big mistake! When a mistress is tempted to withdraw to enter a religious house, let her beware! She is abandoning a state more evangelical, more dependent, harder, poorer, and more scorned in the world for another one more comfortable and more honored but which is useful to her alone.

One text from the *Maxims* seems to summarize the essence of Barré's spiritual teaching to his sisters in the schools.

Charitable mistresses, to succeed, must possess three things: 1) discernment of the spirits of the children and persons they teach in order to educate each one according to her talents; 2) a great love for souls, but a spiritual and graceful love toward people in their charge; behaving and acting like mothers who put up with everything, forgetting themselves for their children and omitting nothing that can be of use to them; and 3) an

interior groaning before God to obtain the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit necessary for themselves and the persons they wish to win over and sanctify.

In the same context as that of Barré one can cite canon Nicolas Roland (1642-1678), who established in Reims the Congregation of the Daughters of the Child Jesus. This community had its beginnings animated by a Sister coming from the Congregation of Barré. One can consider Roland as the spiritual son of Barré.

Fifth, A Great Crowd: We complement the above by giving a list of other female Congregations devoting themselves to Christian education: English Ladies, founded by Mary Ward (+1645); Daughters of Notre Dame, founded at Mons in 1608; Daughters of the Cross, founded at Roye in 1625 by P. Guérin and Marie l'Huillier (+1650); Presentation Sisters, founded at Senlis in 1628 by Nicolas Sanguin (+1653); Sisters of St. Charles, finding their inspiration in Charles Démiá (+1689); Daughters of St. Genevieve, founded in Paris around 1636; Daughters of St. Joseph of Providence, founded in Bordeaux in 1638 and in Paris in 1645 by Marie Delpech de l'Estant (+1671); Daughters of St. Joseph, founded in Le Puy around 1650 under the inspiration of J. P. Médaille (+1669); Daughters of Providence of God, a secular company founded at Paris in 1651 by Marie Lumange, widowed Polaillon (+1657); Holy Childhood Sisters, founded at Toulouse in 1662 by Jeanne de Mondonville (+1703); Daughters of Instruction of the Infant Jesus, founded at Le Puy around 1667 by Anne-Marie Martel (+1673) and Louis Tronson; Sisters of Charity and Christian Instruction, founded at Nevers in 1682 by J. B. de Laveyne (+1719); Daughters of Providence, founded at Charleville in 1694 by Jeanne-Idelette Morel; Sisters of Christian Doctrine, founded at Nancy in 1700 by J.B. Vatelot; Daughters of Wisdom, founded at Poitiers in 1703 by Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort (+1716) and Marie-Louise Trichet; and Daughters of the Holy Ghost, founded in Bretagne in 1706 by Jean Leuduger (+1722).

**2.3. John Baptist de La Salle and the First Community of Teaching Brothers:** The article already dedicated to John Baptist de La Salle<sup>3</sup> explained his life, foundation, writings, and spiritual doctrine. We plan to present here a specific presentation of the spiritual life of the teaching Brother such as he elaborated it down the years.<sup>4</sup>

First, A Spirituality of Ministry: The spiritual teaching of De La Salle is centered on the “ministry” rather than on the “teaching” of the Brother. The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was founded to place the means of salvation within the reach of poor and abandoned youth. De La Salle invited his disciples often to contemplate in meditation the saving mystery of God accomplished in Jesus Christ and actualized in the Church.

This contemplation implies a kind of triple movement. God is love, and this love undertakes the salvation of sinful humankind. The salvation of all is accomplished in Jesus Christ. However, in fact, because of their historical situation, some people remain remote from this salvation. This is the case especially in the context of the Founder's time, for a whole category of young people is deprived by their social condition from all announcement of the Gospel. But God enlightens the hearts of those whom He calls to meet these young people, to place within their reach the salvation which is in Jesus Christ, and make them enter the Church. This contemplation of the mystery emerges onto a contemplation of the calling, of the Brother's vocation:



Not only does God wish that all reach the knowledge of truth, but He also desires that all be saved; and He cannot really wish this without giving them the means, and consequently, without giving children the masters who will contribute in their regard to the execution of this design. That, says St. Paul, is the field that God cultivates and the building He raises; and you are the ones He has chosen to help Him in this undertaking by announcing to these children the Gospel of His Son and the truths contained therein (M 193.1).

This contemplation untiringly repeated, of the mystery of God the Savior in the course of realization in concrete history, nourishes prayer, which sustains and energizes apostolic enthusiasm. This is a kind of prayer whose two poles are summed up by two expressions familiar to De La Salle. Thank God: The ministry is a gift from the Father; prayer associates the Brother with the ministry of Christ, the unique envoy; it manifests the action of the Spirit in the Church for the completion of the Body of Christ. Honor Your Ministry: The ministry makes you co-workers with God, responsible for one part of His work; it establishes you as ambassadors of Jesus Christ, His representatives and witnesses in regard to the youth confided to you; it calls you to be docile to the Spirit, to act by the movement of the Spirit, and to give yourself often to the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The Trinitarian impregnation of the spiritual teaching of De La Salle appears constantly in his applications to the spirituality of this ministry. It is in this way that he explains, for example, the theme of the imitation of God (M 201.3) or that of the Good Shepherd (M 33.1), who knows His sheep or who goes looking for the lost sheep (M 196.1), or that of openness to the Spirit and what the Spirit proposes (M 43.3).

Second, A Ministry of the Word: In the eyes of De La Salle, and besides in the reality lived by his first disciples and which has remained central in the history of the Institute, the Brothers are above all catechists, ministers of the Word of God in regard to the youth confided to them. The *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* apply, in regard to the Brother, the great texts of St. Paul on the evangelical ministry of the Word. If he wrote pedagogical works (especially *The Duties of a Christian*) to help the Brothers on the technical plane of the exercise of this ministry, De La Salle strives in other writings (the *Collection* and *Meditations*) to work out the spiritual implications.

a. The Minister is the Instrument of God: The minister is a “voice” (M 3.1 and M 168.2). Although human action is indispensable to achieve the aim of ministry, it is, however, not adequate. The minister must humble oneself, renounce oneself, and consent to a spirituality of littleness, interior poverty, and of childhood (M 79.2). God alone is able to touch the hearts of those the minister addresses (M 37.3 and M 157.1, and M 196.1).

Prayer must nourish and sustain the minister's actions (M 95.1, M 107.3, M 189.3, M 56.3, and M 37.3). “You must apply yourself much to prayer to succeed in your ministry, exposing to Jesus Christ the needs of your disciples, showing to Him the difficulties you have found in their conduct” (M 196.1). Prayer is a humble demand made of God for the necessary graces to cooperate in the salvation of souls through the ministry. It is even more a manifestation of a spiritual attitude of poverty, and under this title it draws down the help of the “God of the poor” (M 186.1). Moreover, prayer is itself a gift of the Spirit, for we do not know what we ought to

ask of God in our prayers. To ask for it properly, “it is necessary that the Spirit of God should make us know what suits us and should place us in a condition to receive it from God by our prayers.”<sup>5</sup>

The demands that the Brother addresses to the Lord in prayer concern the fulfilling of the ministry. The Brother must request the grace to possess well the truths to be taught (M 195.1), the necessary psychological understanding of the students (M 197.3), and the self-mastery indispensable to the educational relationship (M 204.2). The essence of what is demanded is zeal itself (M 119.3). Finally, the prayer of the Brother should be directed more toward the needs of youth than toward his own needs; in praying for the salvation of his disciples, he draws upon himself the blessings of God who Himself takes care of the salvation of His minister (M 205.2).

b. The Minister Is the Ambassador and Witness of Christ: Young people will more easily accept the Brother's words as the words of Christ (M 207.3) if they discern in his features something of those of the Savior. The Brother is invited to follow Christ, to imitate Him in His surrender to the Father, His poverty, His obedience<sup>6</sup> in adhering to Him, and to identify progressively with Him. The spiritual and ascetical effort, the contemplation of the mysteries of Christ, sacramental sharing in these mysteries, especially through the Eucharist (M 47 through M 55), will help the Brother not to bear in vain the glorious names of Christian and Minister of Jesus Christ (M 93.3).

The branch can only bear fruit if it is united to the trunk; the minister of Christ will exercise an efficacious apostolic action only by remaining united to Christ (M 195.3 and M 189. 1). Religious obedience here assumes a new harmony, for union with Christ is expressed and nourished by adhering to the visible body of the Church and its leaders (M 72.2). The Christocentrism of De La Salle is evident. It cannot be separated, in teaching of De La Salle, from the vision of the ministry of the Brother. Finally, what De La Salle asks of his Brothers is to enter more and more into communion with the mystery of the God of love, manifested in Jesus Christ. “Strive by your zeal to give visible signs that you love those that God has confided to you, as Jesus Christ has loved His Church” (M 201.2).

c. To Fill Oneself with the Spirit of God: It is the Spirit which is the agent of the sanctification of the minister and who renders the minister apt to cooperate in the sanctification of others (M 43.3). In order to act only by the movement of the Spirit in the manner of people of God (M 3.2), the Brother must renounce his own spirit and for this purpose often give himself to the Spirit of our Lord, so as to act only through Him (M 195.2 and M 79. 1).

The main place that De LaSalle gives to the Spirit in the life of the Church and in the spiritual life of the Brothers is inseparable from the perspective he gives to their ministry.<sup>7</sup>

d. To Eat the Word of God: It is not humans who can save, not the speeches of human wisdom (M 3.1 and M 159.1). What the minister says must come from God. He must therefore work at filling himself with the word of God, that is to say with God Himself (M 100.2 and M 80.2). This requires assiduous meditation and the study of Scripture: “It is the divine books that the true servant of God must eat and fill himself with, so as to communicate and develop the secrets

contained therein to those they are obliged to instruct and mold into Christianity on God's behalf" (M 170.1 and M 159.1).

The rule of the daily reading of Scripture which is found in the great monastic tradition of the *Lectio divina* is not fulfilled solely by the material exercise. What the Founder is aiming at, as is proved by numerous texts, is a delightful familiarity with the aim of an assimilation in the true sense of the word; to become similar to Him who is the substantial Word of God. What must be aimed at is a kind of becoming part of the living message that has to be transmitted, and an ever more universal communion with the designs of God revealed in scripture, to the will of the God of Jesus Christ who wishes to save all.<sup>8</sup>

e. Through Meditation the Spirit Will Come to You: De La Salle's insistence on meditation is linked with this priority of the catechetical ministry of the Brother. By daily rising up to God through meditation, the Brother can learn everything he must teach youth (M 198.1). It is by meditation that the Holy Spirit will come into you and will teach you, as Jesus Christ promised His apostles, all the truths of religion and the maxims of Christianity (M 191.2). Meditation helps one to live intimately with the company of Jesus Christ like the twelve apostles (M 78.2).

In meditation, the Brother contemplates the mysteries he has to teach. In meditation, he relishes the Scripture he has to announce.<sup>9</sup> In meditation, he begs of God the deep understanding of the truths he has to present (M 145.2), for only the Spirit of God enables one to penetrate the mysteries of God (M 189.1). Meditation alone will guarantee to his words the penetrating unction necessary to touch hearts (M 129.2, M 126.3, M 148.2, M 43.3, and M 159.2).

Third, That They May Have Life: To sum up, the catechetical ministry of the Brother is directed not only to the simple knowledge of Christian truth, but toward a life lived according to the evangelical maxims, toward a life according to the Spirit. De La Salle frequently returns to the uselessness of a knowledge which would belie existence. The Brother must strive to teach youth to behave well, which includes formation in prayer and liturgical life, moral education anxious to reach all the sectors of the actual existence of youth, education according to the Gospel, aiming at rearing them in the spirit of Christianity, which will give them the wisdom of God that no prince of this world has known, and which is strongly opposed to the spirit and the wisdom of the world, for which they must be inspired with much horror, because it serves as a covering for sin.<sup>10</sup>

Following the logic of this vital orientation of the ministry of the Word, De La Salle demands of his Brothers that their actions be a lively expression of what is expressed in the Gospel. The superfluity of words is significant. The Gospel is only effectively proclaimed to the extent that it appears as a reality in deed. Like Christ who began to act before teaching (M 69.1 and M 202.3), the minister of the Word is called through his very ministry to become in some way a living Gospel toward those God has confided to him. The Founder often recalls the importance of "good example" (M 91.3, M 39.2, and M 100.1 and M 194.3), but his thought goes even deeper and further. He does not so much refer the young student to the Brother as a model, as he refers

both of them to that mystery whose salvific action is present at the very heart of the world. The behavior of the minister of the Word testifies visibly to the invisible reality that he announces.

Thus, for De La Salle, poverty and detachment are a living proclamation of the faith which surrenders itself to Providence (M 67.2 and M 134.1). Likewise, the charity, goodness, and patience of the master announce in their own way to the youth who profit there from, the Good News, the transforming power of the Gospel (M 132.1, M 153.2, and M 155.2 and M 206.3). And above all, the love shown to youth by the Brother becomes for them like the visible love of God in their regard.<sup>11</sup>

Such behavior can only spring from a living relationship with God, which relationship De La Salle terms “piety.” The essence of what the Brother has to carry to his disciples is the loving presence of God in the most intimate center of people's lives. It is a living relationship which is, first of all, the acceptance of a prepossessing gift which manifests the strength and efficacy of the Word of God.<sup>12</sup>

Fourth, It Is the Poor That You Have to Teach (M 153.3): The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was established for the Christian education of the children of the artisans and the poor. It was a question of making school available to this deprived social category. To achieve this aim, De La Salle tenaciously defended school gratuity and made it an essential rule of the Institute. In his writings, he often came back to this point, less as an imperative than as a declaration. “You are with the poor every day” (M 166.2, M 189.1, M 143.2, and M 133.3). If the Brothers thus gave themselves to this service, it is that, precisely because of their deprived social situation, these children were remote from the sources of the Gospel message. The founding of gratuitous schools had for its aim to put within their reach those means of salvation of which they were deprived.

The ministry of the Brothers vows them to the evangelical service of the poor. De La Salle frequently invited them to live this mission spiritually. He thus invited them to recognize the Spirit at work in the Church for the salvation of the poor. In the whole history of the People of God, the Spirit raises up saints to serve the poor. The birth of the Institute of the Brothers is to be understood in the guideline of this evangelical constant, and De La Salle also underlines the link between this devotion to the service of the poor and the renouncing of all one's goods to follow Christ, who lived as a poor man of God and manifested His preference for the poor and proclaimed the beatitude of poverty.<sup>13</sup>

De La Salle invited his disciples to live also the evangelical requirements of the service of the poor. He requested them to prefer, honor, and love the poor because one has to honor Jesus Christ in their persons (M 133.3, M 80.3, and M 150.1). He invited them also to live more and more “in conformity with the poor and with Jesus Christ.” He wrote, for example, in the Christmas meditation: “You will only attract them toward God in the measure you have conformity with them and Jesus being born” (M 86.3).

Fifth, The End of This Institute Is to Give a Christian Education to Children: It is for this reason that schools are run. The ministry of the Word of God is performed by the Brothers in the very bosom of a school, wholly conceived by De La Salle as the nursery of the children of the living

faith. The whole activity of the Brothers must be lived spiritually. The spiritual teaching of the Founder bears in a certain way on the teaching function of the Brother, but much more fundamentally on his role as educator, his role as shepherd.

The profane teaching given by the Brothers in the small, gratuitous schools they directed remained very rudimentary. It was a question of reading, writing, and arithmetic. However, De La Salle recognized all the value of this task: for the school tends to prepare the children for their professional life. It helps to prepare them to be employed in work when their parents wish to employ them (M 194.1). Thus, De La Salle and his disciples were quickly led to recognize and introduce into the time-table and teaching methods transformations which were important and difficult for the time. Strife arose – as in the question of gratuity – and the realism of Lasallian teaching in the face of these persecutions is better understood from within the difficult history of these struggles often provoked by narrow and selfish guild interests.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the Lasallian insistence on what we can here hardly call a spirituality of the teacher tends, above all, to underline the fact that professional competence, technical requirements, become for the Brother a worry of the spiritual order. Examinations of conscience proposed by De La Salle to his disciples invited them to query themselves as to the seriousness with which they treated the profane subjects which were a strict obligation for them (M 206.1, M 91.3, and M 92.3).

De La Salle insisted more on the educational and pastoral role of the Brother. The aim of the Institute is to give a Christian education to the children, “and it is for this reason that they run schools.” In his meditations, the Founder often comes back to the obligations which derive there from for the educator; pedagogical obligations which must be taken up and lived spiritually. They must adapt themselves to the capacity of the pupils (M 198.1, M 197.1, M 197.2, M 204.1, and M 33), take into account their condition and age (M 91.3), treat each one according to that one's temperament and disposition (M 33.2 and M 64.2). They must be known individually, and the way one ought to treat them discerned, just as the Good Shepherd knows His sheep. This adaptation to each one “depends on the knowledge and discernment of spirits. This is what you must often and earnestly ask of God as one of the qualities most necessary to you for the guidance of those in your charge” (M 33.3).

On the other hand, if the weaknesses of the master can contribute to estrange the children from God whom the master is supposed to represent and announce, the goodness, affection, and even the fondness that the master will show them will help the master to win over the hearts of these young children and dispose them to accept the Gospel (M 115.3, M 114.1, and M 207.3).

The educational and pastoral ministry is also the ground for the exercise of many virtues: unselfishness,<sup>15</sup> regularity,<sup>16</sup> obedience,<sup>17</sup> humility,<sup>18</sup> patience,<sup>19</sup> and above all kindness.<sup>20</sup>

This historical enquiry ought to be prolonged into the nineteenth century. We limit ourselves here to point out among the multitude of foundations some of those whose founders have been written about elsewhere in articles in the *Dictionary of Spirituality*: Brothers of the Sacred Heart of André Coindre (1787-1826); Society of Mary, or Marianists, of Guillaume-Joseph Chaminade (1761-1850); Little Brothers of Mary of Marcellin Champagnat (1789-1840); Society of Mary, or Marists, of Jean-Claude Colin (1790-1875); the Teaching Third Order of St.

Dominic of Lacordaire founded in 1852; the Congregation of the Holy Cross of Basile-Antoine Moreau (1799-1873); the Salesians of Don Bosco (1815-1888); Brothers of the Christian Doctrine of Matzenheim of Eugène Mertiaen (1823-1890); Augustinians of the Assumption of Emmanuel d'Alzon (1810-1880); and Congregation of Our Lady of the Assumption of Marie-Eugénie Millerat (1817-1898).

**3. Conclusion:** Regarding the history of the teaching orders and congregations, the bird's eye-view we have presented of the spirituality they have lived, and that only in Italy and France at times which were indeed important, does not at all pretend to be a synthesis. This seems to be out of the realm of the possible, given the abundant number of congregations, the variety of foundations in time and place in different cultures, etc.

The conditions of the spiritual life of the religious who have devoted themselves to the education of youth have varied much in function of the particular historical conjuncture in which they found themselves situated. We have just attempted here to trace out in a few bold strokes, from the congregations we have studied, what one can think of as fairly constant.

Today, after Vatican II, orders and congregations have been led to redefine their mission and their specificity with a firm attention to the needs of populations, the solitudes of the Church, and all of this, with respect to the intentions of their founders. A return to the origins and the spiritual concern for evangelical authenticity have often converged to arouse research, but these efforts are too recent and often too specific to the particular congregations themselves to be able to provide a synthesis for our day.

### Notes

1. 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, remains very relevant to the problems of today.

2. Beginning at this point in the original article itself, the author provided the reader with numerous bibliographical references. For the most part, these have not been included here since they are not available in English. Also, many of the references are to articles on related topics that appear elsewhere in the *Dictionary of Spirituality*. However, the references that are specifically concerned with Lasallian texts have been included; and, where possible, it is the English language edition of the text that is referenced.

3. *Dictionary of Spirituality*, Vol. VIII, Col. 802-821. This is the article found in *Spirituality in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle* (Landover, 1999), pp. 189-219.
4. See also Michel Sauvage and Miguel Campos' *St. John Baptist de La Salle: Announcing the Gospel to the Poor* (Romeoville, 1981), and Jean Pungier's *Ministers of Grace: The Work of Christian Educators According to St. John Baptist de La Salle* (Rome, 1983).
5. See Clément-Marcel's *By the Movement of the Spirit* (Paris, 1952), pp. 87-96 in this French only edition.
6. M 24 and M 86; *Collection*, p. 130 in the 1932 New York La Salle Procure English edition; and *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer*, pp. 87-89 in the Paris Procure 1912 English edition.
7. See Clément-Marcel, pp. 197-235 in this French only edition; and Robert Laube's *Pentecostal Spirituality* (New York, 1970), pp. 101-224.
8. See Luis Varela's *Bible and Spirituality* (Salamanca 1966), pp. 235-242 in this Spanish only edition, and *Announcing the Gospel to the Poor*, pp. 98-111 in the Paris 1977 French edition.
9. *Collection*, pp. 23-24 in the 1932 English edition; *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer*, pp. 63, 102-103, 122, etc. of the Paris Procure 1912 English edition; and Varela, pp. 254-258 in this Spanish only edition.
10. M 194.2; Michel Sauvage's *Catechesis and the Laity* (Australia 1991), pp. 272-316; and *Announcing the Gospel to the Poor*, pp. 75-93 in the 1981 English edition.
11. See *Announcing the Gospel to the Poor*, pp. 110-115 in the 1981 English edition.
12. M 195.1 and M 207.3 and M 167.1 and M 180.2; see *Announcing the Gospel to the Poor*, pp. 111-116 in the 1977 French edition.
13. M 202.2; see *Announcing the Gospel to the Poor*, pp. 93-101 in the 1981 English edition.
14. See *Announcing the Gospel to the Poor*, pp. 196-199 in the 1977 French edition and pp. 52-55 in the 1981 English edition.
15. M 134.1, M 108.2, M 153.2, and M 92.3
16. *Letter* 92 in the 1988 Romeoville English edition and M 92.3.
17. M 7.1 and M 57.2, and *Letter* 36 in the 1988 English edition.
18. M 196.3, M 86.3, M 3. 1, and M 113.2.
19. M 155.2, M 206.3, and *Letters* 92 and 8 in the 1988 English edition.

20. M 65.2, M 101.3, M 134.2, and M 139.2 and *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, pp. 80-81 and 165 in the 1935 McGraw-Hill English edition.

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