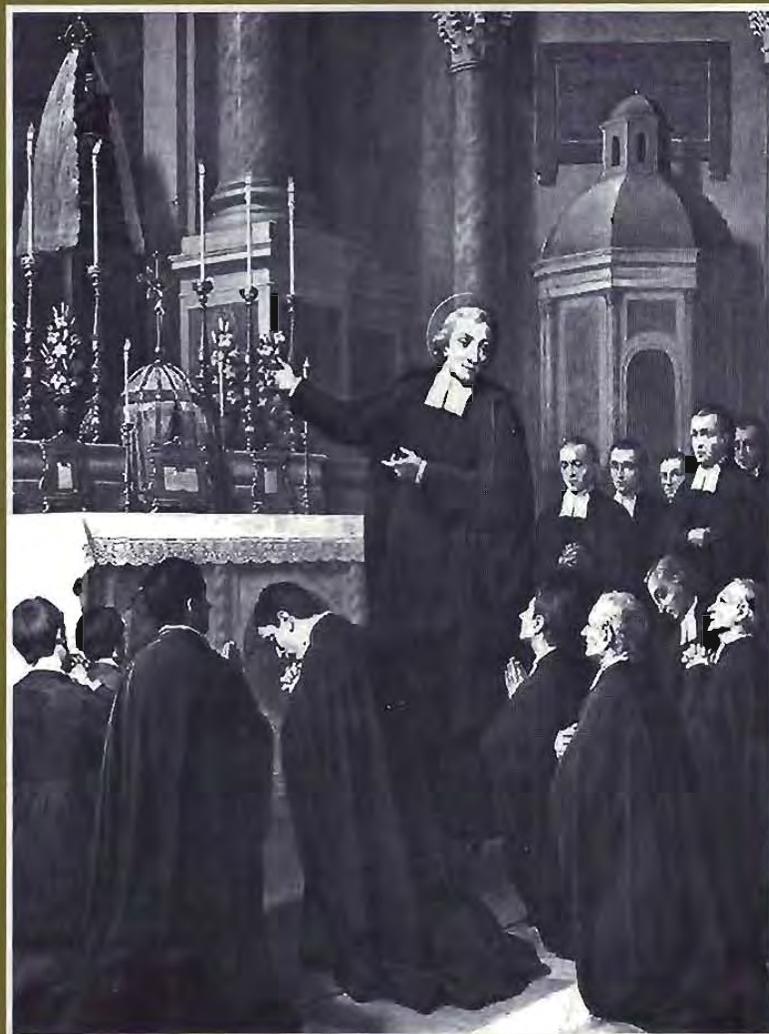


# The First De La Salle Brothers 1681–1719



Augustine Loes, FSC

The First  
De La Salle Brothers  
1681-1719



Frontispiece: "Brothers' pupils leaving church after Mass," painting by Jean-Joseph Lacroix. Photo E. Rousset (*J. B. de La Salle; Iconographie, Boulogne: Limet, 1979, slide 178*).

The First  
De La Salle Brothers  
1681-1719

by  
Augustine Loes, FSC

Lasallian Publications  
Christian Brothers Conference  
Landover, Maryland

## Lasallian Publications

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Cover: De La Salle and his Brothers at the shrine of Our Lady of Liesse, near Laon, in the year 1686; painting by Giovanni Gagliardi. Photo E. Rousset (J. B. de La Salle; Iconographie, Boulogne: Limet, 1979, slide 101, plate 42).

Gratefully dedicated to  
Luke Salm, FSC, STD,  
Lasallian scholar,  
loyal Brother,  
generous friend

## Lasallian Publications

Sponsored by Christian Brothers Conference (the Regional Conference of Christian Brothers of the United States of America and Toronto), Lasallian Publications will include nineteen volumes on the life, writings, and work of John Baptist de La Salle (1651–1719), Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and on the early history of the Brothers. These volumes will be presented in two series.

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*Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer.* Original translation by Richard Arnandez, FSC. Revised and edited by Donald Mouton, FSC. Volume 5 (1995) of Lasallian Sources: The Complete Works of John Baptist de La Salle.

*The Conduct of the Christian Schools.* Translated by F. de La Fontaine-rie and Richard Armandez, FSC. Edited with notes by William Mann, FSC. Volume 6 (1996) of *Lasallian Sources: The Complete Works of John Baptist de La Salle.*

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*So Favored by Grace: Education in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle.* Edited by Lawrence J. Colhocker, FSC. Volume 2 (1991) of *Lasallian Resources: Current Lasallian Studies.*

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*John Baptist de La Salle: The Message of His Catechism.* Jean Pungier, FSC. Translated by Oswald Murdoch, FSC. Edited by Gerard Rummery, FSC. Volume 4 (1999) of *Lasallian Resources: Current Lasallian Studies.*

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Augustine Loes  
4 March 1997

## Preface

Brother Maurice Hermans (1911-1987), the first editor of the *Cahiers lasalliens* (a series of over fifty volumes of texts, studies, and documents published by the Generalate in Rome, beginning in 1959), expressed the desire to publish a volume about the first disciples of John Baptist de La Salle.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, Brother Maurice did not live to fulfill this desire; eventually, it is hoped, such a volume, drawing on many documents in the Archives of the Generalate in Rome and elsewhere, will be part of the *Cahiers lasalliens*. In the meantime, the editorial board of Lasallian Publications decided to publish a book in English about the first De La Salle Brothers, based on published materials that are presently available.

Over 250 Brothers lived and worked with De La Salle during the forty years he dedicated himself to founding the Institute. Most of these Brothers persevered until death and gave many years of often heroic service to the varied apostolates established by De La Salle. Information about most of them, however, is often restricted to a few details regarding their lives, with little or no record of their work as Brothers.

The present study, therefore, is more like a documentary or a chronology rather than a history. Only in a few instances can something be told about a particular Brother's personality and the many assignments given to him. Nonetheless, there is a value in presenting this limited information about these first De La Salle Brothers, especially in consideration of the light which it shines on the person of De La Salle himself.

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1 *Cahiers lasalliens* 3, p. 24.

## Principal References

The sources of information about the Brothers who lived and worked with John Baptist de La Salle are quite limited. Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain, a contemporary and friend of De La Salle, wrote an extensive biography of the Founder but seldom gave the names of individual Brothers. As a supplement to his biography, however, he wrote a lengthy account of the life of Brother Barthélemy, the first Superior, and shorter accounts of five other Brothers known to the biographer.

Two other biographers of De La Salle were Brother Bernard Dauge, a young Brother who lived with him, and Dom François-Élie Maillefer, OSB, a nephew of De La Salle. Only part of Bernard's work, a manuscript of eighty-six pages, has been preserved. Maillefer wrote a biography of De La Salle in 1723 and then revised it in 1740. The *Cahiers lasalliens* contain photomechanical reproductions of the first editions of these works. Bernard's Life is in volume 4; Maillefer's is in volume 6; Blain's, in four books, is in volumes 7 and 8.

Two nineteenth-century publications by Brother Lucard (Jean-Baptiste Larrondo) give considerable information: *Vie du Vénérable Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, two volumes under one cover (Paris: Procure Générale, 1873), and *Annales de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétienness*, also in two volumes (Paris: Procure Générale, 1883).

Lucard often gives archival references not available today for some of his facts, but some of his other statements have been disproved by modern research. His work often provides sound information as well as interpretations of events not found elsewhere.

More recent studies of De La Salle include considerable research into documents found in municipal and episcopal archives or libraries, as well as in the Generalate Archives in Rome. One person in particular who has published many volumes of such research is Brother Louis-Marie Aroz, FSC, whose work is found in more than twenty volumes of the *Cahiers lasalliens*.

Cahiers lasalliens 3, by Brother Maurice Hermans, is a reproduction of two manuscript booklets, *Livret des Premiers Vœux*, a collection of the actual vow formulas of the original Brothers, and *Catalogue des Frères*, a register of the Brothers alive in the year 1714 and of those who entered afterward, up to the year 1725—for a total of 228 names. Some of the details of this register are incomplete, and it does not include Brothers who died or left the Institute before 1714.

In addition to the Cahiers lasalliens, the following titles are the main sources used in this study of the Brothers who lived and worked with John Baptist de La Salle:

Blain, Jean-Baptiste. *Abrégé (Summary)*, a supplement to the life of John Baptist de La Salle in which Blain gives biographies of six Brothers. Cahiers lasalliens 8, last section, pp. 1–123.

Brisebois, Raymond. *Les Premiers Frères dans l'Institut des F.É.C.* Longueuil, Québec: Frères des Écoles chrétiennes du Canada francophone, 1995.

Calcutt, Alfred. *De La Salle, a City Saint*. Oxford: De La Salle Publications, 1993.

Lett, Émile. *Les Premiers Biographes de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*. Paris: Ligel, 1956.

Gallego, Saturnino. *Vida y Pensamiento de San Juan Bautista de La Salle*. Volume 1, *Biografía*. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1986.

La Salle, John Baptist de. *The Letters of John Baptist de La Salle*. Translation by Colman Molloy, FSC. Romeoville, Ill.: Lasallian Publications, 1988. Citations either give the number of the letter and of the paragraph (1.2 signifies letter 1, paragraph 2) or refer to the page number in the case of a commentary.

La Salle, Jean-Baptiste de. *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*. Édition critique par le Frère Félix-Paul [Vandamme]. Paris: Procure Générale, 1952. Citations give the page number of the commentary.

Poutet, Yves. *Le XVIIe Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*. Volumes 1 and 2. Rennes: Imprimeries réunies, 1970.

Rigault, Georges. *Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes*. Volume 1. Paris: Plon, 1936. Volume 2. Paris: Plon, 1938.

Vie du Frère Barthélemy. Paris: Procure Générale, 1933.

Vie du Frère Irénée. Paris: Procure Générale, 1930.

Because the data found in these sources are sometimes contradictory, certain questions about the facts cannot always be resolved.

Monsieur de La Salle est celui qui a fondé les frères dits De La Salle, qui font les petites écoles. [Monsieur de La Salle is the one who founded the Brothers, known as De La Salle Brothers, who conduct the Little Schools.]

From a 1720 document of Père François Leschassier, Superior of the Society of Saint Sulpice, in *Cahiers lasalliens* 41/2 (Rome, 1979), p. 269.

Founded in France by Saint John Baptist de La Salle (1651–1719), the Brothers' Institute has as its official title, Brothers of the Christian Schools (in Latin, *Fratres Scholarum Christianarum*). The Brothers are variously known in the English-speaking world as Christian Brothers, as De La Salle Christian Brothers, or simply as De La Salle Brothers.

# Chapter One

## A New Religious Family

The original prayer of the Church for the Mass in honor of Saint John Baptist de La Salle credits the saint with "forming a new religious family in the Church." In his first book on De La Salle, Brother W. J. Battersby devotes a chapter to De La Salle's creation of a "new religious order," the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He says that the idea of forming a congregation of laymen for the Christian education of the poor was "a complete novelty."<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of Christian education of the poor did not make it a novelty, but the fact that it was a congregation of laymen. There were congregations of priests formed to teach the poor, but as Battersby points out, they tended to drift away from the education of the poor. Clerical education in Latin and Greek led priests to have a preference for teaching the classics in college. For this reason De La Salle forbade his Brothers to study Latin or aspire to the priesthood.

De La Salle did not start out to establish a religious order, and he never made the move to have Rome officially approve what he founded.<sup>2</sup> Neither, at first, did he want to be involved with schools for the poor. Only gradually, out of his natural kindness, did he become involved, first by helping a zealous layman, Adrien Nyel, to start three schools for poor boys in Reims. Then, led by circumstances, he gave more and more help to the teachers conducting these schools. Finally, after about four years of increasing involvement with the teachers, from 1679 to 1683, he realized that the work of staffing elementary Christian schools for the poor was the life work that God was asking

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1. Battersby, *De La Salle, A Pioneer of Modern Education*, p. 50.

2. *Cahiers lasalliens* 11, pp. 92-101.



Detail of the engraving by J. B. Scotin of a lost painting by Pierre Léger. This engraving has been the primary source of all subsequent efforts to portray an image of John Baptist de La Salle. It first appeared on page 117 of Blain's *Life of De La Salle*, published in 1733. Considering the challenge to an engraver and the fact that the face of the original print from which Rousset's photo was made is less than an inch high, it is remarkable how much of De La Salle's personality seems to be revealed, notably his tranquility and affability. Photo E. Rousset (*J. B. de La Salle, Iconographie*, Boulogne: L'Imet, 1979, slide 295, plate 10).

him to do. As he wrote in a memoir several years later, "God willed to commit me entirely to the development of the schools [and led me] in an imperceptible way . . . so that one commitment led to another in a way that I did not foresee in the beginning."<sup>3</sup>

De La Salle was a practical person. He realized that the success of good schools depended on the competence and dedication of the teachers. He also realized that schools for the poor could not provide teachers with adequate financial security, and he came to the conclusion that their work had to be motivated by religious dedication, supported by the strong bond of community life. It was the same practicality that excluded the study of Latin, both for teachers and for pupils, and restricted membership in the community to laymen.

So De La Salle concentrated on the religious formation of a community of lay Brothers and on the efficient operation of the schools. He studied the lifestyle of religious orders, and he learned as much as he could about different school programs that were developed, or were in the process of developing, during his time. His thoroughness in doing this gave his project the stability to continue despite suppression of the Brothers during the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century, then again at the beginning of the twentieth century. The religious formation that he gave the Brothers fostered not only the stability of the teachers but also their dedication to the educational efficiency of their work with children.

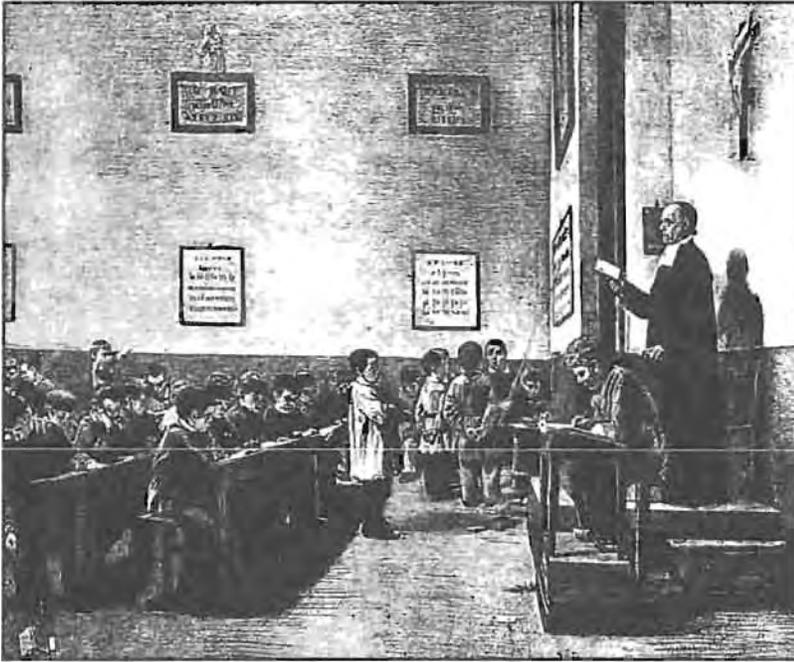
In his work, then, with the first Brothers of the Institute, De La Salle created an original program for the training of apostolic laymen. Brothers Michel Sauvage and Miguel Campos express this clearly:

— it was his determination to dedicate his community wholly to the effective service of poor and abandoned youngsters that chiefly explained the decision initially taken, and then vigorously asserted and defended by the Founder and the first Brothers, of having all the members without exception remain laymen. The evangelical service of the poor thus gave rise to a new type of religious society.<sup>4</sup>

It has become clear since Vatican II that the forming of the laity in the work of Christian education, especially for the poor, is still a principal part of the charism of the Institute founded by De La Salle. The story of the first Brothers formed by the Founder has, therefore, an interest and a relevance today.

3. Blain, vol. 1, book 1, chap. 9, *Cahiers lasalliens* 7, p. 169.

4. Sauvage, Michel, and Miguel Campos, *Announcing the Gospel to the Poor* (Romeoville, Ill.: Christian Brothers National Office, 1981), p. 68.



"A Brother in Class," engraving by F. Bouvin, 1873. Photo E. Rousset (*J. B. de La Salle; Iconographie*, 1979, slide 116, plate 146).

De La Salle himself was heroic in leaving his original world of the upper class of society and laying aside in his everyday life the status and privilege of his own priestly vocation. He never lost a high regard for the priesthood, but he left one world to become part of another on an entirely different social level in order to live with and train the Brothers. He also entered the world of the poor to organize schools for their children, supervising the classrooms in order to understand and assist the work of the Brothers, and on several occasions he took up the task of teaching as a substitute for a sick or otherwise absent Brother. He earned the title conferred on him by the Church in 1950, Patron Saint of All Teachers and Student Teachers.<sup>5</sup>

To appreciate fully what De La Salle accomplished, it is necessary to know that good schools for poor boys did not exist at that time. There was no free public education such as exists today. Education was not considered the task of the state but belonged almost exclusively to the Church. There were schools, called Little Schools, which

5. Pius XII, *Ad Perpetuam Rei Memoriam*, 15 May 1950.

were organized by the diocese, but these took care mostly of those who could pay a tuition. There was also the Guild of Writing Masters under the authority of the king, but these teachers also required a fee. Some parishes conducted Charity Schools for poor boys, but they served very few pupils. The teachers were not trained for teaching, were generally poorly paid, and were usually not committed to stay in the work if they were able to secure some other employment.

The need De La Salle saw and set about to serve was very clear and very serious. It was his genius to develop a corps of dedicated laymen to meet this need. By modeling his group of Brothers on a novel adaptation of religious orders, he secured a permanence in his efforts that escaped those of others who had tried to accomplish the same thing.

Another reason De La Salle succeeded was his respect for the laymen he was training and for their ability to organize their own lives and assume responsibility for the direction of their work and their religious consecration. This again was an aspect of his practical approach to the work he had set out to accomplish.

Within seven years of the beginning of his association with the Brothers—that is, in 1687—De La Salle had the Brothers elect their own Superior to replace himself. His principal biographer, Blain, intent on proving the heroicity of the Founder's virtues, attributes this move to De La Salle's humility, in accord with one of the ideals of the spirituality of his time. There is no doubt that the move illustrates an unusual amount of humility to step down from a position of authority and assume a lesser role, albeit still one of adviser and guide. In his day especially, it was quite a move for a priest to become subject to a layman. But it is a mistake to make the practice of humility the prime motive for De La Salle's action, which the vicars-general of the archbishop of Reims required him to revoke almost immediately.

De La Salle consistently urged the Brothers to take charge of the society they were forming. The rules for their spiritual life and for the operation of the schools were formulated over many years of experience by the Brothers together with De La Salle. The texts were probably written by De La Salle but with the full cooperation of the Brothers.

In 1694, when twelve Brothers made perpetual vows with De La Salle and a rather definitive Rule had been written in manuscript form, De La Salle felt that the establishment of their society was fairly complete. He then moved again to have the Brothers elect one of their own as Superior. This time, however, he was the one they re-elected unanimously, not just once but immediately after the first vote,

when he begged them to reconsider and vote again. The next day, to make his point emphatic, he had them all sign a document that clearly stated that they would never afterward accept anyone to membership who had received Holy Orders and no one as Superior other than one of their own.

This is a remarkable conviction of De La Salle. He worked consistently to give the Brothers full responsibility for their own lives. The Brothers showed this from time to time by confronting the Founder himself when they felt he was not making the right decisions. They wrote papers setting out their arguments, and they overruled decisions he had made, for example, about accepting back Brothers who had left the Institute and wanted to return. They simply felt he had let his kindness sway his good judgment. Toward the end of his life, in 1714, when he was staying in one of the communities in the south of France, in Grenoble, and it seemed that he had no intention of returning to Paris as Superior, the principal Brothers around Paris sent him a directive, based on his perpetual vow of obedience, to come back and resume the role of Superior. He did return, but even then, partly because of illness, he made it his goal to step aside and let Brother Barthélemy, Director of Novices, carry on the administration of the Institute.

De La Salle also trained his Brothers to recognize and accept an autonomy of their own, in some ways independent of the clergy, though respectful of clerical status and authority. He made it clear to them, because of the conflict among the bishops themselves regarding the authority of the pope, that his lay Brothers had to make judgments about Church leaders and follow some but not others. His successor, Brother Barthélemy, was both diplomatic and shrewd in dealing with bishops whose practices and policies did not conform to what De La Salle had trained the Brothers to accept.

Some understanding of the spirituality prevalent in seventeenth-century France also helps us to appreciate the lives of the early Brothers. De La Salle trained his men in the same discipline he had developed as a seminarian under the teaching of the Sulpicians as well as the other teachers during his years of study for the doctorate in theology. Certain Christian truths were basic to this spirituality: the infinite majesty of God, the supreme importance of Christ, and the sinfulness of human nature. Perhaps central to these basic truths was the imitation of Christ in the mysteries of his life, especially the Incarnation and the Redemption by his death and resurrection. The Brothers were trained to imitate the mind and action of Christ when he humbled his divinity by becoming a man and humbled his humanity

by dying on the Cross. Certain other elements characterize De La Salle's contribution to the spirituality of the Brothers: a focus on the presence of God in daily life as well as in prayer and a tender love for the poor, especially the poor children in need of Christian education.

In everyday life, this meant the practice of great self-control, silence, interior recollection, attempt at continual prayer, acts of self-denial and mortification, and blind obedience to superiors as the primary virtue of community life. Many of these practices are not emphasized the same way in the spirituality prevalent today, so that an appreciation of this cultural difference is necessary for a good understanding of the lives of the early Brothers. So also is a knowledge of what it was like to live together in community.

From the beginning, De La Salle and the Brothers worked diligently to draw up regulations, based on experience, to govern their daily lives.<sup>6</sup> These regulations were at first simple directives which the Founder borrowed from his own experience at home and in the seminary. For example, there was a set hour for rising and for retiring. As stipulated in the Practice of the Daily Regulations, rising every day was at 4:30,<sup>7</sup> retiring (candles out) at 9:15.<sup>8</sup> The Rule itself also stated that all the Brothers sleep in a common dormitory.<sup>9</sup>

The documents of these regulations were in manuscript form, the earliest extant being the Rules of 1705. Nothing was printed until 1726, but it is clear that as early as 1694, De La Salle and the Brothers began making manuscript copies of the way of life that they had been living over the years.

It was a strictly organized life. Besides specific times for rising and retiring, communal prayer was scheduled for 5:00 A.M., followed by Mass. The study of religion (catechism) preceded breakfast at 7:15. During breakfast a book was read that De La Salle and the Brothers had put together as a teacher's manual on the operation of the school, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*.<sup>10</sup> After breakfast, before going to school, the Brothers recited together three decades of the rosary.

Such detail was typical of the regulations for the whole day. Silence was the norm, unless there was an absolute necessity to speak. Recreation consisted of two periods of spiritual conversation, one after dinner, which was at the mid-day break from school, and the other

6. Cahiers lasalliens 25, pp. 3-5.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

10. *Conduite des écoles chrétiennes*, Cahiers lasalliens 24, for the English edition, see La Salle, John Baptist de, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*.



"The Thursday Walk," a painting by Gautier, 1853. *Photo E. Roussel (J. B. de La Salle; Iconographie, 1979, slide 120, plate 147).*

after the evening meal. Each lasted half an hour; the Rule specified the topics to be discussed.

School lasted until 4:00 or 4:30 p.m., depending on the season of the year. The pupils were generally seven to eleven years old, and there were usually as many as 60 to 100 in a class, though 60 was the desired maximum of *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*. School was ordinarily held five days a week, with Thursday a free day. It was part of the schedule for the Brothers to go on a long walk Thursday afternoons, weather permitting. This must have been a welcome respite from the usual day of work. Sundays were almost as arduous as weekdays, for the Brothers brought their pupils to the parish Mass in the morning and to Vespers in the middle of the afternoon. An hour and a half of catechism was taught in school before Vespers.

After school on weekdays, the Brothers assembled in the community, which was often in the same building, for an hour of spiritual reading and prayer before supper. After the evening recreation, there was a period of study of religion (catechism) until night prayer at 8:30 and then retiring.

It is clear that the Brothers were trying to combine a strict monastic way of life with a demanding apostolic ministry. It is a fact that many were unable to survive such a regimen, as we will see in the story of their lives.

## Chapter Two

### The Earliest Brothers

In June 1681, John Baptist de La Salle brought six or seven teachers to live with him in his home on the rue Sainte Marguerite in the city of Reims. These men were conducting schools under the supervision of Adrien Nyel in three parishes. Two years earlier, in April 1679, with the help of De La Salle, Nyel had opened a free school for poor children for M. Dorigny, the pastor of the parish of Saint Maurice. Shortly afterward, similar schools were opened in the parishes of Saint Jacques and Saint Symphorien.

When De La Salle brought the teachers into his home, his relatives became quite disturbed, because they regarded teachers as uncouth and altogether improper company for De La Salle's three younger brothers. Rather quickly, though De La Salle was the legal guardian of his brothers, the two younger brothers—first, Pierre, almost fifteen years old, and then a short time later, Jean-Remy, not quite twelve—were taken away from De La Salle by his sister Marie and her husband Jean Maillefer. The older brother, Jean-Louis, seventeen years of age, chose to stay with De La Salle.

De La Salle himself describes what he thought of the people who were the early teachers in these schools, when he wrote a document about the origin of his work with them: he states that he considered these men beneath the social status of his valet. In a similar document written around 1690, he also has occasion to explain the character of the first teachers:

The members of this community [are] for the most part men of no culture [that is, of limited education] who usually act only through impulse, [and] they need something which will impress upon them that they form part of a society, both to encourage

them to enter as well as to retain them therein and lead them to observe the rules. . . . Several came in order to be trained so that they could set themselves up afterward [as teachers]. Many asked for a salary, and a number of others thought that we ought to be greatly indebted to them for conforming to our life and manner of dress.<sup>1</sup>

There is a record of the death of one of these early teachers—Christophe by name—in the De La Salle home on 15 May 1682. The certificate of his burial describes him as a “schoolteacher living with De La Salle in the parish of Saint Symphorien.”<sup>2</sup> This, of course, was before the teachers decided to assume the form of an association, or society, to conduct schools for the poor and to be called Brothers of the Christian Schools. Some writers have suggested that Christophe was the youngster, fourteen years old, whom Nyel brought with him from Rouen in 1679 to help in the school he hoped to establish. This is only an hypothesis based on the fact that Christophe’s burial certificate does not give him a family name, which might indicate that he was an orphan, a stranger in Reims, or both.<sup>3</sup>

De La Salle’s plan to help the teachers by having them live with him did not succeed. Some found the life boring, the spiritual exercises a burden, the food too simple, the lack of freedom unbearable.<sup>4</sup> Others had to be dismissed for one reason or another.<sup>5</sup> Before the end of the year 1681, all of the original teachers had gone except for two or three.

New teachers more willing to live an orderly life fortunately replaced them; they had a talent for teaching, a good level of piety, and an aptitude for community life.<sup>6</sup> It is interesting that these three characteristics listed by the biographer Bernard correspond to the three essential elements of the Brother’s vocation described in the Rule of the Institute today.<sup>7</sup> Some of these new teachers gave up advanced studies and came to join the project of the schools for the poor rather than continue on for some ecclesiastical position or other profession.<sup>8</sup> These later recruits were much better qualified than the original group for

1. Cahiers lasalliens 11, pp. 349–354.

2. Poutet, *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 1, p. 630, note 35.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Maillefer, Cahiers lasalliens 6, p. 51; *Two Early Biographies*, p. 47.

5. Blain, vol. 1, book 1, chap. 10, Cahiers lasalliens 7, p. 179.

6. Bernard, Cahiers lasalliens 4, p. 47; *Two Early Biographies*, p. 306.

7. *The Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*, 1987, art. 10.

8. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 1, Cahiers lasalliens 7, p. 224.

the work of teaching. In a short time, De La Salle had more teachers than before, and the work of the schools continued.

On 24 June 1682, De La Salle and the teachers moved out of the house on the rue Sainte Marguerite to the rue Neuve, a much poorer area of the city. De La Salle had begun to take greater responsibility for the school project. Four days earlier, he had written a letter in response to a request for teachers from the town of Château-Porcien:

Reims, 20 June 1682

Gentlemen,

Even were I to take but little interest in what concerns the glory of God, I would indeed be quite insensitive not to be moved by the urgent pleas of your Reverend Dean and by the courteous tone of the letter with which you have honored me.

It would be wrong of me, Gentlemen, not to send you school-teachers from our community, in view of the enthusiasm and zeal you show for the Christian education and instruction of your children.

So please be assured that nothing is dearer to my heart than to support your good intentions in this matter. By this Saturday I will send you two schoolteachers, with whom I trust you will be satisfied, to open classes the day following the feast of Saint Peter. I assure you that I am very much obliged to you for your courteous remarks.

I beg you, Gentlemen, to believe that with respect and in Our Lord, I am, your very humble and obedient servant,

De La Salle

Priest, Canon of Reims.<sup>9</sup>

It is significant that in his letter to these gentlemen of Château-Porcien, De La Salle speaks of sending teachers, not Brothers. It is not certain when De La Salle's community decided to adopt a uniform garb and be called Brothers. It was possibly in 1684, though the date is generally placed later.

It is estimated that De La Salle was involved with training at least thirty Brothers between the date he moved into the house on the rue Neuve in June 1682 and the time in February 1688 when he went to Paris with two Brothers to staff the school in the parish of Saint Sulpice. What follows is an attempt to describe who these Brothers were.

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9. *The Letters of John Baptist de La Salle*, 1.

It is probable that as many as seven Brothers died during these years. There are different opinions about their names. Blain, who says that more than six died,<sup>10</sup> claims that Jean-François was the first to die and gives the year 1684.<sup>11</sup> His description of the Brother's death corresponds to Bernard's account of the first Brother to die, though Bernard does not give the Brother's name.<sup>12</sup>

The only other name that Blain and Bernard give of a Brother to die is Bourlette, whom Bernard says died after the one whom he does not name.

Aroz claims that Jean-François was the Brother's name for Côme Boiserins, who died on 24 March 1684, basing his claim on the correspondence between the date Blain gives for the death of Jean-François (1684) and the date of the death of Boiserins on the burial certificate.<sup>13</sup> The name on the burial certificate is probably a civil name, which may have been a legal requirement. But it could be that Jean-François is also a civil name, since some early Brothers kept their baptismal names. In 1694, when the twelve Brothers made perpetual vows, they signed their civil names, but the list of those making perpetual vows from 1695 to 1705 includes the religious name as well as the civil name. The civil names may have been used in order to establish some legal status for their association.

There is really no clear information about when a Brother took or was given a new name in place of his civil name—when entering the novitiate, receiving the robe, or making vows.

No death certificate for a person named Jean-François has been discovered. The burial certificate of Côme Boiserins is signed by the pastor of Saint Symphorien and by De La Salle. Côme was nineteen years old and a native of Le Mans, a city about 115 miles east-southeast of Paris and therefore about 200 miles from Reims. Because Côme was not a native of Reims, Brother Maurice Hermans<sup>14</sup> does not agree with Aroz that he can be identified with Jean-François but claims that Côme was another Brother. Blain, however, does not say that Jean-François was a native of Reims, only that he had a good job in Reims.

Aroz gives the names of other Brothers among those who were the first to die:

10. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 4, Cahiers lasalliens 7, p. 250.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

12. Bernard, Cahiers lasalliens 4, p. 64; *Two Early Biographies*, p. 318.

13. Cahiers lasalliens 37, p. 41, note 2.

14. *Lasalliana*, 12-A-52.

- ◆ Jean Lozart, age twenty-five, died 26 June 1685.
- ◆ An anonymous Brother died on 30 September 1685<sup>15</sup> and is considered a Brother because the death certificate states that he lived with De La Salle, presumably in the house on the rue Neuve.
- ◆ Nicolas Bourlette died 6 September 1686, though Blain in his description of Bourlette's death does not use the first name Nicolas but simply his family name, and the date 1685 is written on the *Obituary* document in the Generalate Archives. The date of 1686 is verified by the copy of his burial certificate, also in the Generalate Archives.<sup>16</sup>
- ◆ Maurice (Morice) died 1 May 1687, though the identity of this Maurice is not perfectly clear.

Calcutt considers that Jean-François and Côme Boiserins are two different people.<sup>17</sup> Gallego identifies Jean-François with the anonymous Brother who died on 30 September 1685.<sup>18</sup> This does not agree with Blain's statement that Jean-François was the first Brother to die, in 1684. The *Obituary* in the Generalate Archives also lists Jean-François as the first Brother to die. Gallego lists Christophe as the first Brother to die, the young man who may have been the fourteen-year-old who accompanied Nyel from Rouen to Reims in 1679.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to these deaths in Reims, two other Brothers are listed in the *Obituary* as having died in Paris: Brother Louis in 1688 and another Brother Nicolas, listed on the following line of the *Obituary* but without date. There is no other record of these two Brothers, who may have come to Paris with De La Salle in 1688 or shortly thereafter, yet these Brothers would very probably have been part of the community in the rue Neuve prior to 1688.

Another two Brothers, about whom some details of their lives will be given, were among the first in the community: Joseph Paris, described by Blain as "the first,"<sup>20</sup> and Henri L'Heureux, whom Maillefer says is "the first."<sup>21</sup>

In addition, there are the twelve Brothers who made perpetual vows in 1694, whose names on the formula are believed to be in the

15. Cahiers lasalliens 37, p. 40, note 4.

16. Generalate Archives, Rome, 406/1, dos. 9.

17. Calcutt, *De La Salle, A City Saint*, p. 189.

18. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 178, note 107.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 203, note 84.

20. Blain, *Abrégé* (Summary), Cahiers lasalliens 8, p. 69.

21. Maillefer, Cahiers lasalliens 6, p. 99; *Two Early Biographies*, p. 80.

order of their entering the community. Blain says that six persevered until death,<sup>22</sup> and Gallego<sup>23</sup> suggests a possible seventh in the person of Brother Edme Leguillon, if he is the Brother Edme who died in Paris in 1711 (*Obituary*), though nothing else is known about him. A good deal can be told about some of the six: Gabriel Drolin, born in 1684; Antoine Partois, born in 1666; Jean-Henri, born in 1670; Jacques Compain, born in 1671 (presuming this is the Brother Jacques who died in Chartres in 1705); Jean Jacquot, born in 1672, and Michel A. Barthélemy Jacquinot, whose birthday is not known and who seems to have gone by the name Barthélemy.

Of the five who did not persevere, there is no sure record about them in the Institute after 1694, except for Nicolas Vuyart, whose story will be told; the other four are Gabriel-Charles Rasigade, Jean-Louis de Marcheville, Pierre Gilles, and Claude Roussel. Brother Gilles Beaudet, during his research in the Paris National Library, discovered the name of Gabriel-Charles Rasigade on the list of teachers approved for the parish schools of Paris for 1713.<sup>24</sup> It is probable that when Gabriel-Charles left the Institute, he continued in the work of Christian education, just as many former Brothers have done in modern times. Their training in the Institute has had a perduring value for the Church and for society.

Blain says that of the sixteen Brothers who were in the community when De La Salle went to Paris in 1688, eight left during that year because of the unrest created by the inexperienced Director.<sup>25</sup> Some of the eight who persevered could be among the twelve who took perpetual vows in 1694. Others among the twelve could be those not living in Reims but conducting the schools in Rethel, Laon, and Guise.

Counting, then, the seven who died during the period 1682 to 1688, the twelve who took vows in 1694, and adding Joseph Paris, Henri L'Heureux, and the eight who left the Institute while De La Salle was in Paris, the minimum number of Brothers who would have been a part of the community of the rue Neuve with De La Salle at one time or another during these six years was probably thirty. Of these we have considerable information about twelve. The lives of three of them—Gabriel Drolin, who died in 1733; Antoine Partois, who died in 1743, and Jean Jacquot, who died in 1759—because of their many years of service, stand out as the truly great men in the early years of the Institute. The stories of these three will be told in chapter three.

22. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 13, Cahiers lasalliens 7, p. 343.

23. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 537, note 46.

24. *Catalogue des maîtres, 1679–1721*, Rp 77.

25. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 10, Cahiers lasalliens 7, p. 312.

## About the Brothers Who Died at a Young Age

The background for the deaths of so many of the early Brothers is described by Blain in his detailed picture of the austerities which they practiced:

These men carried their mortifications almost to the same lengths as did those heroes of former times [the early saints of the desert and of the origins of religious orders]. In the seven or eight years from 1681 to 1688, when De La Salle left Reims to establish schools in Paris, he lost over six of the fifteen Brothers who composed the Institute at its beginning in the schools of Reims, Laon, Guise, and Rethel. All these men died a premature death before reaching the age of thirty. There were others whose health was ruined and who had to seek help outside the community. From 1688 up to De La Salle's own death in 1719, he had to deplore the death of at least forty-five more Brothers and experienced the joy of sending them on ahead of him into Paradise. Of these, only eight or nine were over thirty years old.<sup>26</sup>

### Brother Jean-François

Brother Jean-François was the first Brother to die, according to Blain. This Brother had a good job in Reims and was led to give it up to enter De La Salle's little community of teachers because he was impressed by the work and the spirit of De La Salle and his followers. He was so fervent in developing his spiritual life that he weakened his physical life and lasted only eighteen months. Bernard says that Jean-François died in the arms of De La Salle and that he was singing beautifully, yearning for heaven.<sup>27</sup>

Blain describes the death scene as if he were a witness; in fact, he undoubtedly had a description written for him or told to him by a witness; this would also be true of his account of the other early Brothers, because Blain was not in that close contact with the Brothers during these years, though he did witness De La Salle's early work in Paris.<sup>28</sup> Three of the early Brothers—Gabriel Drolin, Antoine Partois, and Jean Jacquot—were still living when Blain wrote his biography of

26. *Ibid.*, chap. 4, p. 250.

27. Bernard, *Cahiers lasalliens* 4, p. 64, *Two Early Biographies*, p. 318.

28. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 6, *Cahiers lasalliens* 7, p. 281.

De La Salle more than forty years after the events he describes. One or more could have given Blain his information about the early Brothers. Of the death of Jean-François, Blain writes:

His delirium was like a sort of ecstasy during which his heart was filled only with a longing for heaven and with transports of love for God. He exclaimed, "O beautiful eternity! How lovely is thy dwelling place, O Lord! O love, love, love! We shall go to see love, love, love!" These words were constantly on his lips. He repeated them often, in a pleasant voice, with all the strength he had left, and he kept saying them until he died. His death was as saintly as his life had been.<sup>29</sup>

### Brother Nicolas Bourlette

It is not clear when Nicolas was first used as Bourlette's first name; it was not used by Bernard or Blain in their biographies of De La Salle. According to Blain, Brother [Nicolas] Bourlette was the second of the young Brothers to die as a "martyr of penance." Actually, Nicolas died on 6 September 1686, more than two years after Jean-François. Evidently inspired by the heroic life of De La Salle, he had joined the community in 1684, probably at the age of twenty-one. He was a native of Reims whose parents were among the well-to-do of that city. He joined without telling his parents, because he knew that they would not approve.

The rest of his story reads like a modern account of a young man joining a religious commune, suspected of having been brain-washed, and resisting the efforts of concerned parents to rescue him and bring him home. If we are to believe Blain, Nicolas was an enthusiast, entering into the new community with great fervor to lead a life of prayer, penance, and mortification. On more than one occasion, De La Salle had to be firm with Nicolas in order to keep him within the limits of prudence. For example, one time Nicolas wanted to dress up in a ridiculous red jacket, put on a wool cap, and run around the streets of Reims so that he would be looked upon as insane and treated with contempt.<sup>30</sup>

Nicolas's parents were heartbroken that their son had abandoned the family; they made repeated visits to the house on the rue Neuve

29. *Ibid.*, chap. 4, p. 252

30. *Ibid.*, p. 254



The original habit of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, from P. Helyot, *Histoire des Ordres monastiques, religieux et militaires*, vol. 8, Paris, 1719. Photo E. Rousset (J. B. de La Salle; *Iconographie*, 1979, slide 94, plate 40).

to persuade their son to return home, but they were without success. When De La Salle moved Nicolas to Rethel, possibly to protect him from his parents' efforts, they pursued their son even there. Nicolas wrote to De La Salle, "My parents came to see me and asked if I was not at last ready to be converted [to come home]. I told them I had already been converted [to life with the Brothers]."<sup>31</sup>

Blain suggests that Nicolas's assignment to Laon in 1685 might have been a further effort to conceal his whereabouts from the parents. The father, undaunted, lost no time in discovering where his son was and continued his unsuccessful efforts to persuade him to come home.

The extreme of Nicolas's fervor was soon put to the test when the Brother who conducted the school with him—Gabriel Drolin—became ill, and Nicolas proceeded to take charge of both classes, each with possibly a large number of pupils. The pastor, M. Pierre Guyart, a friend of De La Salle, questioned Nicolas about all he was trying to do. "Sir," he replied, "I keep my right foot in one class, my left in the other, my mind on the sick Brother, and my heart in heaven."<sup>32</sup> The considerate pastor recommended that the school be called off for a week or more, but Nicolas explained that according to the guidelines agreed on for the conduct of the schools, he could not do that without a written approval from De La Salle, who was on retreat at the time.

In fact, Nicolas soon followed where he said his heart was set, because when Gabriel was well enough to resume work, Nicolas became sick—and fatally so. He died within a year of his going to Laon. Blain says that the people of Laon had come to revere the young man as a saint. The record of his death certificate was witnessed by Gabriel on 6 September 1686. We can imagine the feelings of Nicolas's parents as well as those of De La Salle.

## Brother Maurice

The third Brother to die, according to Blain, was a Brother Maurice:

Brother Maurice, another native of Reims, was the third of De La Salle's sons to enjoy his reward in heaven. His happy death occurred in Reims on 1 May 1687. He was born of a very honorable

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*, p. 255

family, and he paid greater honor to his family by his piety than he had received from the family by his birth. No sooner had he joined the Brothers than they all looked upon him as their model. . . . De La Salle had a particular love for this perfectly obedient Brother, and he preferred to have him to serve his Mass. He served with so much modesty and piety that those present might have thought they were looking at an angel serving a seraph at the altar.<sup>33</sup>

Maurice wore himself out, like the other two, with his austere and mortified life together with his work in the classroom. He developed tuberculosis and became weak. The doctor of the community, Dubois, recommended that Maurice and another Brother suffering from the same illness return home if they wished to recover. Maurice chose to remain and died six months later. The other Brother decided to return home, but within three months he also died, "filled with bitter remorse," wrote Blain, "for having abandoned the land of the saints."<sup>34</sup>

Aroz<sup>35</sup> identifies this Brother Maurice with a Jean Morice whose death certificate indicates that he died on 1 May 1687. The coincidence of the two dates of death is enough to overlook the different spelling of the name, a variance common at the time; about the difference in age (Blain says twenty-two; the certificate says "seventeen or about that age"). Hermans states, "At that time parish records did not try hard to be exact about the age of the deceased when the place of birth was different than that of death."<sup>36</sup> The death certificate states that Morice was a native of Chesne-Le-Pouileux, which is in the diocese of Reims. It is signed by Brother Henri L'Heureux, apparently in the absence of De La Salle, which indicates the position Henri held in the community at that time. Actually Henri signed it twice, once for the pastor, who was unable to be present, and once as witness.<sup>37</sup>

Hermans, in the same article, says that it cannot be certain that Jean Morice is the same person as Brother Jean-Maurice; he suggests that Jean Morice may have been a member of the group in the training program for teachers.

Bernard<sup>38</sup> says that a fourth Brother died "sometime" after the Brother who died on 1 May. Aroz identifies the "fourth Brother" as

33 *Ibid.*, p. 256.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 257.

35 *Cahiers lasalliens* 37, p. 41, note 4.

36 *Lasalliana*, 12-A-52.

37 *Cahiers lasalliens* 37, p. 40.

38 Bernard, *Cahiers lasalliens* 4, p. 64; *Two Early Biographies*, p. 318.

Brother Joseph, but there is a problem with that because this Brother Joseph died eleven years later, on 13 May 1698.<sup>39</sup>

Bernard gives the name Bourlette but not the names of the three others he mentions as having died early in the history of the community. It seems that the four who died within a period of about three years were Jean-François, 1684; Jean Lozart, 1685, a native of Paris<sup>40</sup> about whom no other details are known; Nicolas Bourlette, 1686, and Maurice, 1687—all under the age of thirty.

The early death of so many young Brothers raises a question about the prudence of De La Salle in his care for them. Later on, he did mitigate the practices of austerity among the Brothers, because of pressures from certain members of the clergy. They told De La Salle that he encouraged the practice of too much austerity for men who had quite an austere life as it was, working long hours in poorly ventilated and crowded classrooms.

Blain states that De La Salle took great care of the Brothers who were ill.<sup>41</sup> Judging from the history of the Founder's relationship with his followers, it is not hard to accept this. Lucard<sup>42</sup> tells how, when the Brothers became ill again in Laon, De La Salle followed the doctor's advice and closed the schools for two months, bringing the two Brothers back to Reims for recuperation.

There must have been a tension between De La Salle's practice of kindness and the rigor of his spirituality, a characteristic of the time and part of his Sulpician training. Consider this passage in his meditation for the Brothers on the topic of how we ought to love God:

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. . . ?

It is truly to sacrifice your life for God, to spend it only for him. This is what you can do in your profession and in your work, not being concerned whether you die in a few years, provided you save yourself and win souls for God.<sup>43</sup>

Also, in the meditations he wrote for the time of retreat, De La Salle twice tells the Brothers that they ought to be willing to lay down their lives for their pupils, so great is their love for them.<sup>44</sup>

39. Cahiers lasalliens 37, p. 41, note 4.

40. Ibid., p. 41.

41. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 4, Cahiers lasalliens 7, pp. 256, 258.

42. Lucard, *Vie du Vénérable Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, 1, p. 99.

43. *Meditations*, 70.2.

44. Ibid., 198.2 and 201.1.

## About the Brothers Who Survived the Early Years

Nine early Brothers already mentioned did not die early deaths, and there are some records of their lives: Joseph Paris, Henri L'Heureux, Nicolas Vuyart, Jacques Compain, Michel A. Barthélemy Jacquinet, and Jean-Henri (described in this present chapter) and Antoine Parrois, Jean Jacquot, and Gabriel Drolin (related in chapter three).

### Brother Joseph Paris

Canon Blain thought so much of this Brother that he wrote a summary biography (*Abrégé*) of him as part of a supplement to his life of De La Salle. He begins by saying that Jean Paris, later called Brother Joseph, was the first to join De La Salle in the new community, adding that it was about the time that De La Salle was giving up his canonry, which would be in August 1683. This was the community of the rue Neuve, and Joseph may have been the first to enter after De La Salle moved there in June 1682.

Blain speaks of Joseph as an elderly man when he joined, subject to asthma and general ill health. He was, however, able to do tailoring and to make wine for the community. De La Salle must also have given him some training as a teacher, for in 1686 he was sent to the school in Laon.

In 1691 De La Salle asked all the Brothers to come to Vaugirard in Paris for a retreat. The Founder actually directed the Brothers of Reims, Rethel, Laon, and Guise to meet at the Inn of the White Swan near Soissons and to proceed together from there to Paris.<sup>45</sup> For some, this was quite an ordeal of walking, probably averaging more than eighty miles. Joseph made the first part of the journey on foot from Laon to the gathering place for the Brothers outside Soissons, a distance of about twenty miles. This was so taxing on him because of his poor health and a painful growth on his knee that the other Brothers arranged for him to make the next leg of the journey by boat on the Aisne and Oise Rivers as far as Beaumont, a distance of another forty miles. There was still another twenty miles or so from Beaumont to Vaugirard in Paris. Such was Joseph's problem on the journey that when the month's retreat was over, De La Salle made sure he went back to Laon "by an easier method" of travel, probably by coach.

45. Blain, *Abrégé* (Summary), Cahiers lasalliens 8, p. 70.

Three years later, in 1694, Joseph met death in a bizarre fashion as a martyr of the classroom. One of his older pupils, whether out of sheer malice or anger for being punished, placed an open penknife on the teacher's chair. When Joseph sat down, the blade pierced him to the bone, and the wound proved fatal. He died in a few days.

Blain speaks at some length about Joseph's piety, his prayerfulness, and his courage in suffering because of his poor health and the growth on his knee. The people of Laon also honored him, and he was buried next to another Brother whom they revered, Nicolas Bourlette, who had died eight years earlier, in 1686.

### Brother Henri L Heureux

When Maillefer says that Henri was the first of the Brothers to commit himself to De La Salle,<sup>46</sup> this may indicate that Henri was a member of the community on the rue Sainte Marguerite and one of the two or three who remained faithful when others abandoned the Founder. If so, it would reconcile Maillefer's claim for Henri with the claim made by Blain for Brother Joseph Paris, the latter being the first to join the group in the house on the rue Neuve. Henri may well have entered the community in 1681 or early in 1682. Blain says he was only twenty-four in 1686, so he would have been only twenty or twenty-one when he joined De La Salle. The fact that he kept his baptismal and family name would also suggest that he joined before the practice of adopting a new name as a Brother.

Brother Henri was evidently gifted in many ways. Maillefer says that De La Salle saw in him an uncommon virtue, keenness of mind, affable manners, and a real talent for expressing himself.<sup>47</sup> He must have shown talent as a teacher in one or more of the three schools in Reims. He was surely part of the assembly in the Easter season of 1686, when De La Salle led the Brothers in drawing up tentative regulations for their life in community and work in the schools. It was probably on this occasion that the Brothers and De La Salle made a vow of obedience for the first time; it was a vow for one year.

It was probably that year, too, or the next, when De La Salle proposed that they elect one of their own as Superior. Although the Brothers were surprised by this proposal and at first resisted it, they eventually acceded to De La Salle and undertook an election. Brother

<sup>46</sup> Maillefer, *Cahiers lasalliens* 6, p. 99; *Two Early Biographies*, p. 80.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

Henri was their choice, a decision that pleased De La Salle. His satisfaction did not last long, however. When his ecclesiastical superiors heard that De La Salle was practicing obedience to one of the Brothers, they immediately ordered him to resume his role as Superior. None was more relieved than Henri.

When the Founder went on retreat a short time later, he put Henri in charge of the whole Reims community. It was during this time that Henri represented the community at the death of Jean Morice. It was probably also during this time that as acting Superior, he presided at whatever ceremony may have been held when one of the junior novices, Jean-Henri, received the Brothers' habit.

When De La Salle moved to Paris in 1688, he placed Henri in charge of the community, possibly also in charge of the program for training teachers, though this is not certain. More will be said about this when the story of Nicolas Vuyart is told. De La Salle had also assigned Henri to prepare for the priesthood so that he would be able to succeed him as Superior. He himself taught Henri some Latin in preparation for the courses he would follow in philosophy and theology in the school of the Canons Regular of Saint Denis in Reims.<sup>48</sup> As a student, Henri was prudent, wise, good hearted, adequately knowledgeable, zealous, and full of the spirit of his vocation.<sup>49</sup> Blain says:

He was admired in the schools of the Canons Regular of Saint Denis in Reims; when questioned or when someone discussed a subject with him, he seemed at first to be lost in thought. His words were slow coming, and he seemed to delay his answer, so that his companions became impatient and made some fun of him, sometimes calling him the big ox. But once he spoke, he did so with such ease and so correctly that they had to consider the one they called an ox to be, in fact, an eagle.<sup>50</sup>

De La Salle brought Henri to Paris sometime in 1690, in order to have him complete his studies at the Sorbonne and be ordained. Unfortunately, within a year Henri died quite suddenly while the Founder was in Reims. He had been alerted that Henri had fallen ill, but before he was able to return to Paris, Henri had been buried two days. This was one occasion when the Brothers saw their Founder break down and cry. It took him many moments of prayer to recover his composure.

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48. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

49. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 6, *Cahiers lasalliens* 7, p. 271.

50. *Ibid.*, chap. 9, p. 310.

The tragedy had a profound effect on De La Salle. He resolved not to have anyone else prepare for the priesthood with a view to becoming Superior of the Institute. Three years later, after the Brothers had refused to elect a Brother to take De La Salle's place as Superior, he insisted that they sign a pledge that "no one shall be received among us or chosen as Superior who is a priest or who has received Holy Orders."<sup>51</sup> Brother Henri L'Heureux, though a member of the Institute for no more than ten years, is remembered as a fine Brother who by the fate of his death contributed to the permanent lay character of the Brothers' Institute.

### Brother Nicolas Vuyart

Nicolas Vuyart was one of the first Brothers to join De La Salle. The fact that like Henri L'Heureux and Gabriel Drolin, he kept his baptismal and family name, not taking another religious name as later members did, gives some evidence of this early entry into De La Salle's community. Also the vow formula of 1694 seems to list the names of those making the vows in the order of their entry into the Institute; Nicolas is first on that list. He probably was one of the teachers who lived with De La Salle in the house on the rue Sainte Marguerite, one of the two or three (probably with Henri L'Heureux) who stayed with the Founder when all the others left.

There is evidence that Nicolas was especially skilled as a teacher. He was undoubtedly one of the principal Brothers to work with De La Salle on the development of *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, the teacher's classroom manual for the uniform operation of the schools.<sup>52</sup> As early as 1683, he was chosen by De La Salle to conduct the school in Reibel;<sup>53</sup> it was at that time that De La Salle made an agreement with Canon Remy Favart to have teachers prepared for rural parishes as part of the operation of the school Nicolas was conducting.<sup>54</sup> The school had two classes taught by a teacher in training and supervised by Brother Nicolas and the Brother who lived and worked with Nicolas in the Reibel community and school. During the school year of 1686–1687, this teacher-training program was moved to

51. Ibid.

52. Poutet, *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 2, p. 78, note 3.

53. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes*, 1, p. 10, Cahiers lasalliens 57, p. 26.

54. Poutet, *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 1, p. 688.

Reims, possibly under the direction of Vuyart, though this is not clear.<sup>55</sup> Hermans seems to cite other sources that indicate that Vuyart was in Reims until 1695.<sup>56</sup>

Nicolas, however, is cited in Paris with Brother Bernard (Legentil) in 1690 with the opening of the school on the rue du Bac.<sup>57</sup> This is learned from the litigation begun by the writing masters in which De La Salle, the two Brothers, and Jeanne Quesmont, the woman who owned the house, were defendants. It was on this occasion that De La Salle intervened to argue the case when the Brothers seemed to falter; the result was a decision in favor of De La Salle.<sup>58</sup>

The Founder's regard for Nicolas is revealed in the selection De La Salle made of him, along with Gabriel Drolin, to make a special vow of association on 21 November 1691, in which the three promised to work for the establishment of the Society of the Christian Schools, even if they were the only three left and they had to beg for alms and live on bread alone. It was a most critical time for the Institute, when the Brothers were probably reduced to about a dozen and many of them were tired and discouraged. Nicolas was one on whom De La Salle felt he could count at such a time.

There is a record of his being the Director "of the gratuitous schools for boys" in Reims in 1693.<sup>59</sup> Nicolas was chosen again for the task of training teachers for rural parishes in 1699; De La Salle had been asked by the pastor of Saint Hippolyte to staff a school and a training program in the school which was located in the neighboring parish of Saint Martin in the Faubourg Saint Marcel in Paris. A Brother Gervais was assigned to work and live with Nicolas.

One instance of the success of this work by Nicolas was the request made of De La Salle by the Superior of the Sulpicians, Père François Leschassier, to have a teacher trained for one of the Sulpician schools in Canada. It was Nicolas who supervised this training of the candidate, Antoine Forget, during the school year 1700–1701, from October to April.<sup>60</sup> Forget was well trained and thoroughly committed to the Lasallian pedagogy, even to the point of resisting other directives from his Superior, Leschassier.<sup>61</sup>

55. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 209.

56. Cahiers lasalliens 11, p. 197, note 5.

57. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 93.

58. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 8, Cahiers lasalliens 7, p. 298; Maillefer, Cahiers lasalliens 6, p. 91; *Two Early Biographies*, p. 73.

59. Cahiers lasalliens 26, p. 297.

60. Poutet, *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 2, p. 342; Cahiers lasalliens 42, p. 314.

Another example of the good work done by Nicolas in this training school for teachers is mentioned in the letter written to Brother Barthélemy by the Superior of the Seminary of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet after the death of De La Salle:

For myself and all of my country, we are eternally indebted to [M. de La Salle]. He had the charity to educate in the Faubourg Saint Marcel four young men for the schools; they were graduated by him so well trained and so zealous that if they had found rural priests who cultivated the good qualities which had been given them, they would have built up a community most useful to the province. One became a priest, and he teaches the humanities to the young with edification, despite attacks which they have frequently suffered from the town officials, and even sometimes from pastors and other representatives of the Church.<sup>62</sup>

In 1704 Nicolas was condemned along with the other Brothers in Paris in the trial initiated by the "syndicate and community" of the writing masters. Despite efforts by the pastors of Saint Hippolyte and Saint Martin to make a separate case for the two Brothers, Nicolas and Gervais, claiming they were independent of De La Salle and the Brothers, the court affirmed the original condemnation of these Brothers as part of De La Salle's community.

Nicolas may have been influenced by this tack of the pastors of Saint Hippolyte and Saint Martin to consider becoming independent of De La Salle in order to continue the school and the training program. He had already been willed funds for the school by the original pastor, M. Michel Lebreton, who hoped this way to guarantee the survival of the teacher-training program. Nicolas decided, then, to leave the Institute so that he could continue the work. He has been accused of avarice, but actually the money he received in the will was restricted to the intention of M. Lebreton: the school and program in his parish. Unfortunately, Nicolas's leaving the Brothers led to the withdrawal by a friend of M. Lebreton of financial assistance for the upkeep of the teachers in training. Besides, Gervais decided not to stay with Nicolas; Blain says that Nicolas actually drove Gervais away.<sup>63</sup> Most writers say Gervais stayed in the Institute; Gallego<sup>64</sup> questions whether he did, arguing that this Gervais is confused with another who did persevere, whose story will be told later.

61. Poutet, *Ibid.*

62. Blain, vol. 2, book 3, chap. 18, *Cahiers lasalliens* 8, pp. 179–180.

63. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 15, *Cahiers lasalliens* 7, p. 366.

64. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 377, note 138.

So the teacher training program was discontinued, but Nicolas did continue the parish school for another fourteen years until his death in 1719.<sup>65</sup> Both Maillefer<sup>66</sup> and Blain<sup>67</sup> report that Nicolas at some point later asked De La Salle to be readmitted to the Institute and that De La Salle welcomed him with open arms and “would have received him back into the house with great joy, if the advice of wise and prudent persons [possibly Brothers], fearful of the effect this would have [on young Brothers?], had not dissuaded him from doing so.”<sup>68</sup>

How sad it must have been for the Founder to turn away this original member of his community, one with whom he and Gabriel Drolin had made that heroic vow in 1691. It is perhaps significant that in De La Salle’s letter to Gabriel in April 1705, he calls Nicolas a Brother, when he remarks that “I am quite sure that you have no intention of following the example of Brother Nicolas.”<sup>69</sup>

Blain says that Nicolas took sick the day after De La Salle died, and “the holy man, who died on Good Friday in the year 1719, seemed on the next day to ask heaven for revenge of a crime which he had from his good heart pardoned during his lifetime.”<sup>70</sup> Fortunately, this wild speculation by Blain was not regarded as relevant in the examination of the heroic virtues of the Founder.

## Brother Jacques Compain

Jacques Compain was one of the twelve Brothers who made perpetual vows with De La Salle on 6 June 1694. It is not known when he entered the Institute, but it can be presumed that since he was elected by De La Salle for this first group to make these vows, he was regarded as a solid member of the community and one who had experienced the close guidance of the Founder in the rue Neuve community. Little is known of his career as a Brother. He could have been the Director in one of the communities outside of Reims in 1688.<sup>71</sup>

There is clear evidence that he was in Paris in 1704, because he is on the list of the Brothers banned by the court in the trial brought

65. Poutet, *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 2, p. 105.

66. Maillefer, *Cahiers lasalliens* 6, p. 154; *Two Early Biographies*, p. 118.

67. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 15, *Cahiers lasalliens* 7, p. 367.

68. Poutet, *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 2, p. 37, note 77; Rigault, *Histoire générale de l’Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes*, 1, p. 237.

69. *Letters*, 17.12.

70. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 15, *Cahiers lasalliens* 7, p. 367.

71. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 272.

on by the writing masters. In that year also, on 5 July 1704, he was one of four Brothers (with Ponce Thiseux, Antoine Partois, and Joseph Le Roux) to sign a lease for the house on the rue Princesse. They probably signed because they were living in the house at the time, while De La Salle was living in the community on the rue de Charonne. The lease was for three years at a cost of 680 livres per year, payable quarterly; it was a renewal of a previous lease signed by De La Salle. In part it reads:

The first payment is due on Christmas; the tenants are responsible to keep the house in good condition, including all minor repairs, and to pay for major repairs if they are acceptable; to pay M. Guillemart [the landlord] the annual tax for street cleaning and lamps, for which he is charged; the tenants will not be charged for the boarding of soldiers, who will be at the expense of the landlord; without the landlord's consent the tenants will not be able to transfer their right to the present lease, and they will provide for him as free gifts whatever expenses they incur [in the upkeep of the building]; the tenants are responsible for the security of the house against wind and water, according to custom; both parties agree to give six months' notice of the intention to discontinue the lease, and [the tenants] agree not to remain for any time beyond the expiration of such notice or of the lease itself.<sup>72</sup>

Brother Jacques met his death in Chartres along with four other Brothers in the community as a result of the purple fever (typhus) epidemic. De La Salle mentions the names of two of these Brothers, Michel and Jacques, in his letter of 28 August 1705 to Gabriel Drolin, asking Gabriel to pray for them.<sup>73</sup> It is probable that De La Salle gives these names because they were known to Gabriel.

The Brother Michel who died at that time had been the Director of Novices in Paris from 1699 to 1702, and it was he who was responsible, because of his harsh treatment of the young Brothers, for the intervention of M. de La Chétardie, the pastor of Saint Sulpice, in whose parish schools the Brothers were teaching. This resulted in the appointment by the cardinal of an ecclesiastical superior to replace De La Salle. Gabriel would certainly have remembered that. More will be said about Brother Michel. Blain describes the four Brothers who died in this tragedy:

72. *Cahiers lasalliens* 40/1, p. 133; *Cahiers lasalliens* 42, pp. 290–295.

73. *Letters*, 18.3.

For the good of the public, [the Founder] sacrificed four of his principal disciples, who were cut down by the purple fever within six months. The first [Germain] was a novice of great virtue. The second was an older Brother [Lazare], an excellent penman, a very gifted teacher, and, what alone deserves praise, a true disciple of De La Salle, full of his spirit and the grace of his vocation. The third, who had been Director of Novices, was a man very hard on himself and a great lover of mortification [Brother Michel]. The fourth was the infirmarian in Paris, whom the kind Father had sent to his children to assist them in their illness. But his precious death, which was the proof of his obedience, was the reward of his charity.<sup>74</sup>

This fourth Brother has been identified as a Brother Jean-Chrysostome, but nothing else is known about him, and there is little or no basis for this identification.<sup>75</sup> Félix-Paul<sup>76</sup> identifies the four Brothers from the death certificates of Chartres and gives the dates of their deaths and their ages, all in 1705: Nicolas Falon (Germain), on 1 January, age twenty-one; Michel Loyson (Lazare), on 16 January, age thirty-four; Jacques Lequeasse, or Lucquet (Michel), on 27 May, age twenty-nine, and Jacques Compain, 2 July, age thirty-four. Again it is clear how young most of the Brothers were when they died.

Félix-Paul identifies another Brother who died during this epidemic, a Brother Quentin. He died on 11 February 1707 at the age of thirty-two.<sup>77</sup>

### Brother Michel A. Barthélemy Jacquinot

This Brother, also one of the twelve who made perpetual vows in 1694, was probably called Barthélemy, according to Gallego,<sup>78</sup> because another Brother Michel had preceded him in the Institute. Little is known of this Brother Barthélemy. The vow formula of 1694 has an incomplete note on the upper right hand corner, made incomplete by the trimming of the page by the binder's cutting off the edge of the paper.<sup>79</sup> The note consists of a mark in the form of a cross and the

74. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 15, Cahiers lasalliens 7, p. 379.

75. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 306, note 18.

76. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 88.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

78. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 321, note 112.

79. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 9, note 2.

two words, *est mo[rt]* [died]. Ordinarily the date of the death would follow. He probably died in 1702 or earlier, since on 10 February 1703 the name Barthélemy was given to Joseph Truffet, future Superior. It is clear that an effort was made to avoid giving the same name to two different Brothers.

There is no record of any assignments given to Barthélemy Jacquinot before his death. It is the judgment of Hermans and others<sup>80</sup> that the major portion of each of the thirteen vow formulas of 1694 is in the handwriting of this Brother.

### Brother Jean-Henri

This Brother is one of the six whose summary biography is printed as a supplement to the life of De La Salle written by Canon Blain. Jean-Henri was a native of the diocese of Reims and entered the community on the rue Neuve in 1686 at the age of fifteen, joining the boys who formed the junior novitiate under De La Salle's direction. Two years later, he was given the habit by Brother Henri L'Heureux.

Though quite young, Jean-Henri possessed a high degree of assiduity in the practice of the virtues cultivated in the community, especially obedience, prayer, and mortification. He was looked upon, according to Blain, as a model for the other new members to such a degree that when, in 1690, De La Salle called Henri L'Heureux to Paris for study at the Sorbonne and ordination, Jean-Henri was appointed the Director of the community on the rue Neuve.

He was only nineteen years old when he was given such a serious responsibility, although it is quite possible that the community had been considerably reduced by that time. The teacher-training program had probably been discontinued, or greatly reduced, since a sufficient number of teachers needed by the pastors in the rural parishes had already been trained. The junior novices would be taken to Paris by De La Salle very shortly, if not already. What remained were the Brothers teaching in the three schools in Reims, probably no more than a dozen. If Blain is correct, there were not many others in the community, for he speaks of eight Brothers leaving and only one new one entering during this period.<sup>81</sup>

Blain describes Jean-Henri as lacking confidence or being too humble to express his thoughts, so much so that at the time for giving

80. *Ibid.*, p. 7, note 2.

81. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 10, *Cahiers lasalliens* 7, p. 312.

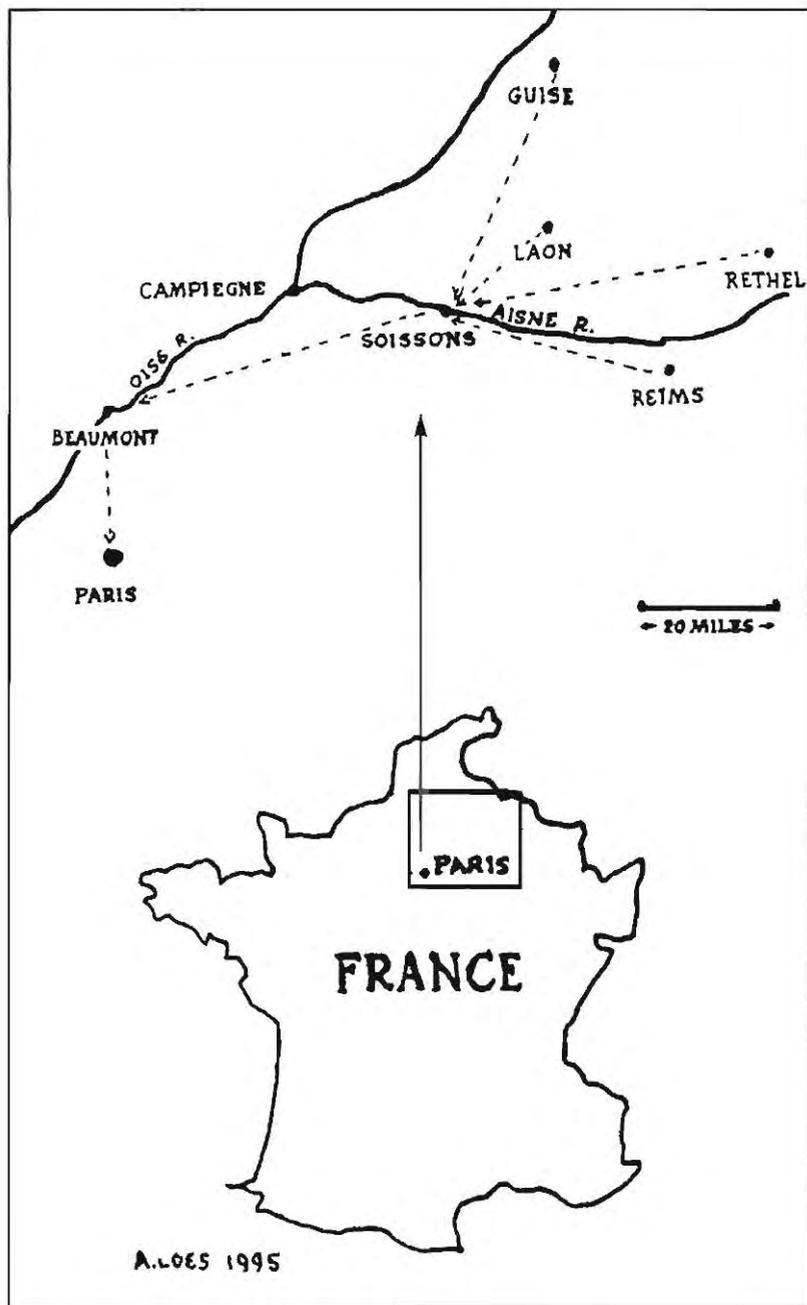
the customary discourse or exhortation to the community once or twice a week, he would read from a spiritual book. Still, Blain says that this practice was much appreciated by the Brothers, because of the fervor of Jean-Henri's few comments and the power of his example. He was also respected for his complete loyalty to the directives and the spirit of De La Salle.

In 1691, when De La Salle called all the Brothers to a retreat at Vaugirard, near Paris, Jean-Henri took to the road, on foot like all the others. Surprisingly, though only twenty-three years old, he suffered severely from sciatica, which made walking painful. He also had, like Brother Joseph Paris, a large growth on his knee which made walking very difficult. By the time he had covered the thirty miles from Reims to Soissons, where the Brothers from the other communities (Guise, Rethel, and Laon) were to meet, both he and the Brothers helping him were exhausted. They still had another fifty-five miles to go.

After the rest at the inn outside Soissons, Jean-Henri seemed so keen on completing the journey on foot that the Brothers did not insist on his taking the boat with Brother Joseph. They were rather quickly disillusioned after walking another eight or nine miles. It is difficult to imagine how the rest of the journey was completed, with Jean-Henri walking with such extreme difficulty that the Brothers had to take turns practically carrying him for almost another fifty miles! When they got to the edge of Paris, they were able to engage a man to carry Jean-Henri and two or three other exhausted Brothers the rest of the way to Vaugirard in a small cart. Blain says that at the sight of these poor men in their black robes—and probably tricorner hats—being pulled along in the cart, the bystanders gave vent to hoots and ridicule. For Blain it was a problem to decide which deserved more praise, the courage of the invalid or the charity of his companions.

After viewing the results of this experience, De La Salle had second thoughts about the rule of everyone's always traveling on foot. He made it clear that the Brothers should take a horse or a coach when their physical condition made it a hardship to travel on foot.

After the retreat, Jean-Henri returned to Reims as Director until he was called to Paris in 1698 to be the Director of Novices in the new novitiate house of the *Grande Maison*. Here he continued to be the model he had been in Reims. In particular, he had a special gift of prayer. Blain says that he became so absorbed in contemplation that De La Salle would give him a number of jobs to do in order to take him out of himself. All to no avail, because Jean-Henri had found the secret of being as completely recollected in the midst of all exterior activities as he was at the foot of the crucifix. An example of his high



The journey of the communities to Vaugirard in Paris for the retreat in 1691.

level of spirituality was a vision he must have disclosed to De La Salle of a nun, former resident in the *Grande Maison*, suffering in purgatory. This seems to be the only incident of such phenomena in the Founder's life.

Blain adds that Brother Jean-Henri was practically impeccable, and he had to bring up vague, general, or trifling faults against himself at the daily practice of accusation before De La Salle. The Founder, nevertheless, would impose rather severe penances on him in accord with the spirituality of the times, as he judged proper for this particular Brother. Often it would result in Jean-Henri's coming so late for his meals—though this did not seem to be the Founder's intention—that he would get little or nothing to eat.

De La Salle thought so much of this Brother that he would leave him in charge of the community when he had to be absent. It is possible that to represent the Founder, Jean-Henri went to Reims in 1698 to witness the burial of Brother Joseph on 13 May. It is also possible that Jean-Henri was still in Reims at this time and that he had not yet come to Paris.

In 1699, when Jean-Henri was dying, De La Salle had all the Brothers come to the infirmary before the period of morning prayer. Perhaps at the Founder's request, the dying Brother spoke to the community, and he did so with such fervor for almost half an hour that when the Brothers returned to the chapel, De La Salle told them there was no need to read a topic for their meditation. Later, he wrote to all the Brothers, "Pray for Brother Henri, who died with sentiments of extraordinary piety on the first of July 1699."<sup>82</sup>

Jean-Henri died at the age of twenty-eight. It is difficult not to think that his early death was related to the intensity with which he seems to have lived such a penitential life with little regard for his physical needs. Such was the spirituality of the times, however; such, too, was the enthusiasm inspired by De La Salle in his followers.

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82. Blain, *Abrégé* (Summary), Cahiers lasalliens 8, p. 76.



## Chapter Three

### Giants Among the Earliest Brothers

A separate chapter seems appropriate for three Brothers who began work with De La Salle in the community of the rue Neuve. They worked faithfully with the Founder all during his life and persevered decades after him as the elders of the growing Institute. These Brothers are Antoine Partois, Jean Jacquot, and Gabriel Drolin.

#### Brother Antoine Partois

Jean Partois was born on 20 October 1666 in Saint-Loup-en-Champagne, near Reims, in the district of Château-Porcien and the diocese of Reims. Jean joined the community on the rue Neuve in September 1686 and was given the name Antoine to distinguish him from Jean Jacquot, although Jacquot entered a month after Partois.<sup>1</sup>

There is no record of Antoine's early assignments, which could have included any of the three schools in Reims or the other schools in the outlying towns of Reims, Guise, Laon, and Château-Porcien. He was not one of the two Brothers that De La Salle took with him to Paris to staff the school on the rue Princesse in 1688, because both of these Brothers eventually left the Institute.

Antoine, however, would certainly have been in the house at Vaugirard in Paris for the retreat in October 1691. De La Salle had arranged to have some of the schoolteachers he had trained for the country parishes substitute for the Brothers, so they could make this retreat and obtain much needed physical rest and spiritual renewal.

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1. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 32

After the retreat, Antoine was in the community at Laon, for a receipt was signed there by him on 22 July 1692.<sup>2</sup> Brother Joseph Le Roux, whose story will be told later, was the Director.<sup>3</sup>

In 1694 Antoine was chosen by De La Salle to be one of the twelve on retreat at Vaugirard to make perpetual vows. His name is third on the list of the vow formulas, following Nicolas Vuyart and Gabriel Drolin. It is known that Gabriel entered the Institute in 1684 and Antoine in 1686; this lends itself to the supposition that the order of the names on this vow formula is according to the date of their entering the Institute.

In 1698, when De La Salle moved from Vaugirard to the *Grande Maison* in Paris, there were five communities and about twenty-four Brothers conducting nine schools: three in Reims, three in Paris, and one each in Rethel, Guise, and Laon.<sup>4</sup> Antoine seems at this time to be functioning as secretary for De La Salle. One work of writing attributed to him is a copy of the Rule dated 23 September 1705,<sup>5</sup> but Hermans questions this.<sup>6</sup>

There is a record that Antoine was again in Laon, as Director, in 1701 and 1702.<sup>7</sup> In 1704 Antoine was one of seventeen or eighteen Brothers (research differs on the number and the exact names) indicted by the court in Paris along with De La Salle in the suit brought by the "syndicate and community of the writing masters."<sup>8</sup> It is clear, then, that Antoine had been teaching in one of the four schools in Paris. In July 1704 Antoine was one of the Brothers who signed a three-year lease on the house in the rue Princesse with three other Brothers, Ponce, Jacques, and Joseph, which means that he was living there and teaching in that school.

When the Brothers were forbidden by the court to teach in Paris, De La Salle assigned them to other cities. Antoine and Barnabé were chosen by De La Salle in 1705 to open classes for the parishes of Saint Philibert and Saint Pierre in Dijon.<sup>9</sup> The certificate of approval from

2. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 246, note 2; Cahiers lasalliens 40/2, p. 79.

3. Cahiers lasalliens 11, p. 197, note 5.

4. Cahiers lasalliens 5, p. 245.

5. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 142, note 1.

6. Cahiers lasalliens 25, p. 8.

7. Cahiers lasalliens 11, p. 197, note 5.

8. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, p. 163; Cahiers lasalliens 40/2, p. 71; Poutet, *Le XVIIe Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 2, p. 102; Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 375.

9. Poutet, *Le XVIIe Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 2, p. 178.

the pastor of Saint Philibert reads as follows (M. Maigret, pastor of Saint Pierre, provided a similar certificate).

I, the undersigned, pastor of Saint Philibert of Dijon and vicar [*promoteur*] for the bishopric of Langres, certify that Brothers Antoine and Barnabé of the Christian Schools and Institute of M. de La Salle, established in the rue Princesse in Paris, are of worthy life and good behavior, and very holy doctrine. In faith of this, I have given them this present certificate for their qualification and to serve for any other purpose. Done in Dijon, 12 May 1705. Du Chailoux, Pastor of Saint Philibert.<sup>10</sup>

These classes were the admirable project of Claude Rigoley, Secretary for the States of Bourgogne, who provided 200 livres annual subsidy for each Brother and secured the patronage and protection of François-Louis de Clérmont-Tonnerre, bishop of Dijon, duke of Langres. Until a suitable house could be prepared for the Brothers, they were guests in the home of M. Rigoley. Antoine's zeal (he was the Director) for organizing the school and the community led him to secure books from De La Salle, which apparently were not needed and had to be stored in the Rigoley home at some inconvenience to the family. De La Salle wrote to M. Rigoley on 10 July 1705 to apologize for this trouble and to ask if the books could be kept in Dijon until they would be needed in some other school.<sup>11</sup>

Additional evidence of Antoine's organizing skills is seen in another document, which also reveals some interesting details about community life and the schools. It is a request for household goods for the new community and supplies for the schools in Dijon:

Memoir given by Brother Antoine [to the Council of the City of Dijon] to show what [the Brothers need]:

In the room for the exercises: a table, a bench, two brushes to clean the habits, two other brushes for the shoes, two combs, two candlesticks, a closet to store the linen and other needed items, a basin, two razors.

In the refectory: a table, a bench, a table mat, a metal pitcher for water, three medium-size glasses, four larger and four smaller ones, four plates, four bowls, four spoons, four forks, four knives, four cups, a small cupboard, a lamp.

10. *Ibid*

11. *Letters*, 35-6.

For other needs: a rope for the well, a clock, a bell for the door, a hammer [door-knocker?], a pruning knife, a spade, and some other necessary utensils for the house.

In the kitchen: a pot, a saucepan, two small food warmers, a cauldron, a seal, a frying pan, a fire-cover [stove?], bellows, a pothook, a grate, andirons, tongs, a bottle for oil, some chairs, a closet, a table, a cleaver, a cutting-block, a ladle, an iron pot, a basket.

In the dormitory: as many beds covered with green curtains as there are Brothers, a nightcap for each, one extra would be needed for some unforeseen resident.

In the closet: six drawers, some shelves to hold books, spiritual reading books, catechisms of the diocese and others, a small table, a small armoire, a candlestick.

Linen: at least six shirts for each Brother, six underpants, six handkerchiefs, six rabats, six nightcaps, two pair of sheets for each Brother, four tablecloths, a dozen napkins, four hand towels, four aprons, six dish cloths.

For the schools: two high chairs and one low chair, two signals, a bell, six benches twelve feet long, eight benches nine feet long, four tables at least sixteen inches in width and a dozen feet in length, able to be connected at both ends, arithmetic table for two panels (three feet high and five feet wide), four frames for hanging the alphabet, syllable, number, and punctuation charts, two small baskets for the pupils to put their bread for the poor, a small scoop, a basket or hamper to remove the dirt, two large crucifixes and other pictures for the classrooms, some paintings or pictures for the house, a closet or cupboard to store the books and paper of the school for the children.<sup>12</sup>

Antoine was sent to Mende as Director, probably sometime early in 1708, to replace Ponce, who was assigned to Avignon as Director and as the Brother responsible for the communities in the south.<sup>13</sup> At Mende Antoine had the task of helping the inimitable Brother Mathias, whose story will be told in the next chapter. In letters by De La Salle to Mathias in April 1708 (the year assigned in the critical edition

12. *Cahiers lasalliens* 40/2, p. 79; a copy of this document is in the Generalate Archives in Rome. BJ 506-1, 8.

13. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 241, note 1, and p. 246, note on no. 1.

of the letters), the Founder speaks of Antoine as a "good Brother" with whom Mathias should be happy to live.<sup>14</sup> De La Salle also wanted Mathias to let him know whether Antoine was doing things differently from the previous Director (Ponce), possibly to check on Ponce as much as on Antoine.<sup>15</sup>

On 27 August 1709, Antoine and his companion, Joachim, were given a safe-conduct by the bishop for their journey to the novitiate in Paris to make the annual retreat. The safe-conduct would guarantee their Catholicity in case they were challenged by any local authorities on the lookout for traveling Huguenots or other heretics:

Pierre Baglion de La Salle [no relation], by the grace of God and the Apostolic Holy See, the Bishop and Lord of Mende, Count of the Gévaudan, Councillor of the King in all his councils: to Brother Antoine, Regent of the Little Schools of this city, greetings. We authorize you to go to Paris for the coming vacation period, accompanied by Brother Joachim, and we attest to all to whom it may concern that you profess the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion and that you have carried out your work with good results and edification. We ask the governors of the royal offices, mayors, and town councillors to grant you free passage on your journey. Given at Mende, in our episcopal palace, 27 August 1709. Pierre, Bishop of Mende. Dangles, Secretary.<sup>16</sup>

It is possible that Antoine was secretary for Brother Barthélemy when De La Salle made his journey to the south in 1711 or, more probably, in 1712. Rigault suggests this;<sup>17</sup> he and Lucard<sup>18</sup> both describe De La Salle as arranging the administrative services of the Institute around that time or earlier. These are among the assignments listed: Joseph, to be responsible for the communities in the north with residence in Reims, an appointment made as early as 1708 but expanded in 1711;<sup>19</sup> Ambroise, Director of the detention center in Saint Yon; Dosithée, Director of the community for the schools in Rouen; Bruno, Director in Darnétal; Jean, in Paris; André, in Laon; Côme, in Bethel.

It is interesting to find Antoine's greeting to M. Martineau, pastor in Mende, as a postscript to Barthélemy's letter to the pastor on 14

14. *Letters*, 61.8.

15. *Ibid.*, 62.8.

16. Poutet, *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 2, p. 194, note 2.

17. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 21.

18. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, pp. 274–275.

19. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 233.

July 1714.<sup>20</sup> This letter was written after the Brothers summoned De La Salle back to Paris (1 April) but before he returned (10 August).

Gallego<sup>21</sup> suggests that Antoine may well have been the Brother who began the register of the Brothers, around the year 1714, while he was serving as Barthélemy's secretary,<sup>22</sup> but Hermans questions this.<sup>23</sup>

Antoine was back in Dijon, assisting the Director, Brother Barnabé, on 8 February 1717, when Barthélemy made his tour of the communities to receive their agreement for the General Assembly called by De La Salle.<sup>24</sup> Since he was not a Director, Antoine was not a delegate to the Assembly, though he might have attended as secretary.

In 1718 De La Salle wrote a letter which Blain has preserved.<sup>25</sup> The name of the Brother is not given, but De La Salle speaks of him in the letter as "the oldest of our Brothers," meaning in age or in length of membership in the Institute. Strictly speaking, this would have been Gabriel Drolin, who entered two years earlier than Antoine, in 1684, and who was also two years older, but Gabriel was in Rome, and this letter seems to have been written to someone in France at the time. Antoine was next in line of seniority, having entered in September 1686, a month before Jean Jacquot, so Antoine is probably the recipient; Antoine was also six years older than Jean:

Well then, my very dear Brother, so you still want me to be your spiritual guide. I will be glad to act in this capacity on one condition, however: that you tell me my faults without any flattery. It is fitting that you should do so, since you are the oldest of our Brothers.<sup>26</sup>

De La Salle is obviously no longer the Superior, so the letter was written after May 1717.

Antoine was among the thirty members of the Chapter of 1725, when the Brothers formally received the Bull of Approbation at Saint Yon, and he renewed his perpetual vows according to the Bull with the other Brothers at that time. As secretary to Brother Timothée, he was also one of seven Brothers who signed the official record of the reception of the Bull.

20. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, p. 315.

21. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 505.

22. *Cahiers lasalliens* 3.

23. *Cahiers lasalliens* 25, p. 8.

24. *Cahiers lasalliens* 40/1, p. 185, note 1.

25. Blain, *Abrégé* (Summary), *Cahiers lasalliens* 8, p. 410.

26. *Letters*, 97.

On 23 May 1728, again as secretary to the Superior, he was one of the Brothers who signed an unusual contract, along with Timothée, the Assistants Irénée and Joseph, former Assistant Jean Jacquot, and six other Brothers. The contract between the Brothers and the father of a mentally handicapped son was to guarantee the care of this young man at Saint Yon; this was perhaps one of the first of the mentally ill that the Brothers served at Saint Yon, among the several other groups living at this center.<sup>27</sup> One of the Brothers at Saint Yon who signed this contract was a Brother Martinien (Nicolas Dupont), designated as the Director of Junior Novices, indicating that this group resided at Saint Yon at that time.

There is a manuscript in the Generalate Archives in which, during the year 1732, Antoine gave testimony to a possible miracle performed through the intercession of De La Salle, a cure of some kind of an ulcer, probably on a student.<sup>28</sup>

The Bull of Approbation specified that a General Chapter be held every ten years but allowed for exceptions to be made for special circumstances. The Chapter of 1734 was called together by Timothée in anticipation of 1735, in order take advantage of the presence of the Directors of the communities who had come to Rouen for the solemn transfer of the remains of De La Salle from the church of Saint Sever in Rouen to the newly completed chapel at Saint Yon. It was an effort to avoid within a year the expense and the fatigue of another journey to Rouen by these principal Brothers. Antoine was undoubtedly present among the older Brothers for the ceremony of transferring the remains of De La Salle, and he is listed as a delegate to the General Chapter; he was also one of the senior Brothers on the committee appointed to count the ballots for the election of Brother Étienne as the Second Assistant.<sup>29</sup>

Sometime after 1734, Antoine, at the age of sixty-eight, went to live at Saint Yon and became Assistant Procurator to Brother Thomas. He may have celebrated his Golden Jubilee as a Brother in 1736, if the Brothers paid attention to such anniversaries; there is no record that they did.

In 1739 Antoine was one of those who signed for the purchase of a farm by Brother Généreux, Director of the community in Reims. Others who signed the document were Timothée, Superior, and Étienne, listed as First Assistant; Antoine is listed as the Second Assistant.

27. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 2, pp. 34-35.

28. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 587, note 177.

29. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 2, p. 67, note.

This listing of the Assistants is strange because Irénée was still the First Assistant; Étienne was the Second Assistant, and Antoine was presumably the Assistant Procurator to Brother Thomas. It may be that Irénée was absent at the time and that there was a kind of substitution made by the Superior.

Antoine died on 1 April 1743 at the age of seventy-six.<sup>30</sup> He had been an active and highly effective Brother for fifty-seven years, one who gave De La Salle consistent and enlightened support during all the struggles for the founding of the Institute. In the obituary comments by Brother Lucard,<sup>31</sup> Brother Antoine Partois is said to have lived an edifying life during his retirement at Saint Yon.

### Brother Jean Jacquot

Jean Jacquot (also spelled Jacot), a native of Château-Porcien, was born 18 October 1672. He entered the community of the rue Neuve at the age of fourteen as a junior novice in October 1686.<sup>32</sup> De La Salle had sent teachers to Château-Porcien in 1682, when Jean was not yet ten years old, so Jean could have been a pupil of the Brothers before joining De La Salle in Reims. By 1686, when Jean joined, the teachers in the school would most likely have been called Brothers and been wearing the distinctive garb of the new society. This experience could have motivated Jean.

It is not known in which school or schools Jean Jacquot taught in the early years; he may have stayed in one or other of the three schools in Reims; he probably was not assigned to his own town of Château-Porcien nor to Laon, where Gabriel was stationed from 1685 to 1688; he could possibly have been assigned to Rethel or to Guise. He was not one of the first Brothers brought to Paris by De La Salle in 1688. In any case, he was in Paris in 1691 for the retreat of all the Brothers at Vaugirard.

In 1694 he was one of the group of twelve whom De La Salle selected to make the first perpetual vows. If the names of these Brothers listed in the record of the vows are in the order of their seniority in the Institute, Jean ranked seventh in that group.

In 1699 Jean was probably in Paris. Rigault<sup>33</sup> says that De La Salle assigned him to the task of training the new Brothers in the art of

<sup>30</sup> Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 32.

<sup>31</sup> Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 2, p. 167.

<sup>32</sup> Cahier lasalliens 3, p. 32.

teaching and to the responsibility for supervising their classes. He was still less than thirty years old, but he had already been teaching for some ten years or more.

In 1704 Jean is on the list of the Brothers who were fined by the Paris court for infringing on the rights of the syndicate and community of the writing masters.

In 1713 he is listed on the community records as the Director in Grenoble from 1713 to 1715.<sup>33</sup> This means that he was the leader of the Brothers in the community which gave De La Salle a warm welcome during the period of the Founder's painful sojourn in the south of France. Some biographers have stated that Brother Jacques, whom De La Salle sent to Paris from Grenoble in 1713, was the Director of the community. Lett suggests that the name Jean on community documents at that time refers to a servant Brother with that name.<sup>34</sup> The documentary evidence presented by Brother Félix Paul in his critical edition of the Founder's letters indicates that Jacques was not the Director of the community in Grenoble until later.<sup>35</sup> It makes sense that De La Salle would not have sent the Director to Paris in 1713 but rather another competent member of the community.

In 1717 Jean is listed as the Director of the community in Paris when Barthélemy made his visit there in order to secure the approval of the Brothers for the coming General Assembly. At that Assembly Jean was one of the sixteen Directors present, and when Barthélemy requested that two Brothers be chosen to help him in the administration of the Institute, Jean was the first one elected as Assistant to the Superior.

While Assistant, Jean continued as Director of the community in Paris, and he was there in November 1717 when Barthélemy made his visit to receive the Brothers' acceptance of his election as Superior.<sup>36</sup> That document was also signed by Brother Fiacre, who was the Visitor of the communities of the north. Thus for that occasion the community had with it their Superior, their Assistant, and their Visitor.

Jean is listed among those whom Barthélemy chose on 3 June 1718 to be a kind of executive council to assist him in making decisions on any new matters. Others on this council were Thomas, Procurator; Joseph, the other elected Assistant and Director of the community in Reims; Fiacre, in charge of visiting the communities in the north:

33. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 214.

34. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 218, note 3.

35. Lett, *Les Premiers Biographes*, p. 55.

36. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 218, note 3.

37. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 413.

Michel, Director of Rouen; Irénée, Director of Novices; François, Prefect of the boarding school in Saint Yon, and Dosithée, Prefect of the detention center, also in Saint Yon.<sup>38</sup>

Jean attended the Chapter of 1720, and he presided as the senior member of the delegates; Antoine Partois, a month his senior, was not present, because he was not a Director of a community. Brother Timothée was elected Superior, and Jean and Joseph (Jean Le Roux) were reelected as First and Second Assistants.

Jean evidently helped Timothée in matters of publications. He may have been responsible for the first printing of the Rule in 1726.<sup>39</sup> It is clear that he worked with Brother Bernard, the one chosen to write the biography of De La Salle, as is evidenced by the letter Jean wrote about this work to De La Salle's brother, M. Louis de La Salle. The letter reveals the concern that the Brothers had about any references in the biography to the Founder's position regarding the conflict over the pope's condemnation of Jansenism and their awareness that M. Louis de La Salle did not agree with the position of the Founder. It indicates that Barthélemy and his advisers, most likely in consultation with Canon Blain, had debated how they would handle this delicate matter with De La Salle's brother:

To M. de La Salle, Canon of the Church of Notre Dame at Reims  
Monsieur:

With confidence I take the liberty of sending you these lines to offer you my most humble respects and at the same time to ask you to be kind enough to read the complete manuscript *Life of M. de La Salle*, our very dear Father and Founder, so that you may see whether everything therein is properly stated and whether there is anything incorrect or self-contradictory, as you do me the honor of stating in the letter you were kind enough to send me. We have, Sir, so much esteem and respect for you personally that it makes it an indispensable duty for us to submit to whatever you may decide on this point.

However, I take the liberty of declaring what follows: namely, that several persons earnestly hope that what is said in this manuscript about his true sentiments concerning our current difficulties and concerning various opinions should be left intact; this, they think, is in the best interests of the Institute. Others, a

38. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, pp. 371–372, also Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 417, who omits the name of Thomas

39. Cahiers lasalliens 25, p. 3, note 3.

much smaller number, say that it would be best to omit all references to these questions. Furthermore, Monsieur, if I may express an opinion on this point, I think that it is good and even necessary to say things as they are without, however, shocking anybody; this would be to our advantage.

I am convinced, Monsieur, that because you are, like your beloved brother, entirely desirous to be of service to us, you will not fail to do in this matter whatever is most conducive to the glory of God and to the salvation of our neighbor. We feel sure that we have found another father in your kind self to replace the one who has left us and enjoys heavenly glory. We shall not fail, Monsieur, to offer our prayers to God, asking him to reserve the same eternal happiness for you also.

This is the sincere wish of one who is glad to declare himself, with deep respect and full confidence, Monsieur, your most humble and perfectly obedient servant,

Brother Jean

Paris, 4 May 1723.<sup>40</sup>

Jean also helped both Barthélemy and Timothée to gather testimonies concerning the Founder that would be needed for the process of canonization. One such document is not dated, but Aroz<sup>41</sup>—who states that the handwriting is clearly Jean's—concludes it was probably in 1720. It is addressed to Père François Leschassier, Superior of the Sulpicians, and asks for his testimony concerning De La Salle as a seminarian:

How long did M. de La Salle stay in the seminary; how old was he when he entered, in what year; how did he conduct himself; what virtues did he practice; what special things did he do, and what did people notice about him when he began the schools in Paris?

Leschassier wrote that De La Salle was a seminarian from 18 October 1670 to 19 April 1672, and he added:

He was from the beginning a faithful observer of the rule, exact in the exercises of the community. Rather early on, he seemed more detached from the world than he was when he entered. His conversation was always gentle and sincere. He never seemed to me to cause any displeasure to anyone nor to have drawn any

40. *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies*, pp. 339–340.

41. *Cahiers lasalliens* 41/2, p. 267.

reproach from anyone. When he came to Paris, I saw in him a remarkable progress in all the virtues. All who knew him saw proofs of this in all his conduct, especially in the patience with which he suffered the contempt people showed for his person and his work.<sup>42</sup>

On 9 January 1722, Brothers Jean and Jean-François Bouqueton, Director of the community of Saint-Denis, signed a contract with Mme Marie Poignant for the ownership of the house of the community. Jean is identified in the contract as a “bourgeois living on the rue Barouillère” in the parish of Saint Sulpice, where he was Director of the community in Paris as well as Assistant to Brother Barthélemy.

Jean attended the General Chapter of 1725, assembled on the occasion of the solemn reception of the Bull of Approbation. At this Chapter Timothée offered his resignation, followed by the resignation of the two Assistants. Timothée was reelected. Brother Irénée (Claude-François du Lac de Montisambert), the Director of Novices, was elected as First Assistant to replace Jean, and Joseph was reelected as Second Assistant. Biographers have not attempted any explanation of the fact that Jean was not reelected, except to comment on the high regard that the Brothers had for Irénée, many of whom had him as their Director in the novitiate. Jean was at that time only fifty-three years old and would live until 1759 and the age of eighty-seven, so he must have been in good health. He is listed among the signatories of the record of the Chapter as the Director of the community in Rouen, evidently his assignment by Brother Timothée during the Chapter.

On 23 May 1726, Jean was one of the Brothers, as a “former Assistant,” who signed the unusual contract—along with Timothée, the Assistants Irénée and Joseph, Antoine Partois, who was Timothée’s secretary, and six other Brothers—to guarantee the care of a mentally handicapped young man at Saint Yon.

Jean Jacquot attended the gathering of the Brothers on the occasion in 1734 of the transfer of the body of De La Salle from the church of Saint Sever to the chapel at Saint Yon, and he was present, by virtue of his rank as former Assistant, at the Chapter which was held on that occasion.

The Second Assistant, Brother Joseph, had died in 1729. In accord with a decision of the General Chapter of 1720, his replacement had been elected by balloting through the mail. Brother Dosithée (Claude Longière) was chosen, and Jean, along with Timothée and

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

Antoine Paroïs, the secretary, made up the committee for counting the ballots. But now Dosithée's health was not good; because he was going blind, he offered his resignation. Brother Étienne (Jean Perotin) was chosen to be the Second Assistant. Brother Irénée had been re-elected as the First Assistant.

Brother Jean, as former Assistant, also attended the Chapters of 1745 and 1751, the latter convened by Timothée because he intended to resign as Superior on account of his failing health. Brother Claude (Jean-Pierre Nivet) was elected Superior to succeed Timothée. Jean, at the age of seventy-four, was the only one at this Chapter who had been a member of the original community on the rue Neuve.

After the Chapter, Brother Jean retired to Saint Yon, where he died on 10 March 1759.<sup>43</sup> Lucard<sup>44</sup> mentions in his obituary notice that Jean had contributed successively to the schools of Paris, Reims, Rouen, and Châteaudun. There seems to be no record of his work at Reims between his work in Paris and in Rouen; perhaps Lucard is considering Jean's original assignment while he was living in the community on the rue Neuve, or perhaps Jean did have an interim assignment in Reims after his work in Rouen. Most of his career was certainly as Director of the community in Paris. The community of Châteaudun had been opened in 1740; it may have been at that time that Jean was assigned there.

## Brother Gabriel Drolin

There is a register, entitled *Catalogue des Frères*, of all the Brothers who were living at that time and who entered subsequently; it was first assembled around the year 1714. The part which is reproduced in Cahiers lasalliens 3 includes the names of all the Brothers through August 1725.

The first name on the list of this *Catalogue* is Gabriel Drolin; the *Catalogue* states that he was a native of Reims, that he was born on 22 July 1664 in the parish of Saint Jacques, and that he entered the Institute around the year 1684, made perpetual vows on 6 June 1694, left France [to go to Rome in 1702], returned [to France in 1728], and died in Auxonne in 1733.<sup>45</sup> Obviously those responsible for the *Catalogue* made some effort to add information to the register after the original listing around the year 1714.

43. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 32.

44. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 2, p. 296.

45. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 32.

Gabriel was the fourth of twelve children born to Étienne Drolin (1633–1681) and Claire Salmon. Gabriel's father was listed as a maker of wine casks in 1678 and as a harness-maker in 1681.<sup>46</sup> Gabriel's younger brother, Gérard, also entered the Institute, probably in 1693; his story will be told in the next chapter. One of Gabriel's sisters was named Catherine; she had at least two sons, nephews of Gabriel, one of whom is mentioned in a letter of De La Salle to Gabriel.<sup>47</sup>

When Adrien Nyel, with De La Salle's help, was opening schools in Reims in 1679, one was in Gabriel's parish of Saint Jacques. Gabriel was fifteen years old, and he probably began preparing for the priesthood, like other young men who later became Brothers.<sup>48</sup> Around five years later, as the *Catalogue* states, Gabriel joined De La Salle, then in the community house on the rue Neuve. Was the young man influenced by the notoriety that De La Salle had attracted in giving up his canonry in August of 1683 or by his using all his wealth to buy bread for the poor during the famine of 1684–85? Was Gabriel a member when the community decided in 1684 or 1685 to adopt a distinctive habit and its first regulations? An affirmative answer to these questions is at least probable.

There is evidence that Gabriel was assigned to the school in Laon in 1685.<sup>49</sup> It was at that time, with the opening of classes in October, that Adrien Nyel, now sixty-four years old, decided to return to Rouen and to turn over the schools of Guise and Laon to the care of De La Salle. Gabriel was twenty-one years old when he was entrusted with responsibility for the school. There were two classes; Gabriel taught one; Brother Nicolas Bourlette was assigned to teach the other.

Gabriel may have left Laon in 1686 after the death of Nicolas Bourlette, for there is evidence that Brother Joseph became Director of Laon in that year.<sup>50</sup> Gabriel, however, was back in Laon again in 1696 until 1698,<sup>51</sup> for in the archives of the city are receipts signed by him in 1697 and 1698.<sup>52</sup>

Gallego says that Brother Gabriel was the Director of the community in Paris on the rue Princesse from 1698 to 1700.<sup>53</sup> In 1700 he was assigned to open the community and school in Calais.<sup>54</sup> Gabriel

46. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 134, note 1.

47. *Letters*, 32.13.

48. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 1, Cahiers lasalliens 7, p. 224.

49. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 44.

50. Cahiers lasalliens 11, p. 197, note 5.

51. *Ibid.*

52. Cahiers lasalliens 40/2, p. 77.

53. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 306.

de Roly (a reasonable variation for Droin at that time) is the signature on the document of the community of Calais in July of 1700 attesting to the opening of the Lasallian school in that city. It is also clear, from letters written to Gabriel by De La Salle, that Gabriel knew the governor of Calais and wrote to him from Rome.<sup>54</sup>

Meanwhile, Gabriel had taken part in two historic events in the history of the Institute. In 1691 he and Nicolas Vuyart were asked by De La Salle to join with him in what has been called the heroic vow “of association and union to bring about and maintain the said establishment [of the Society of the Christian Schools] without being able to withdraw from this obligation, even if we are obliged to beg for alms and live on bread alone.”<sup>55</sup> That was a time of crisis for De La Salle, when the number of Brothers may have been reduced to a mere dozen after nine years of effort to establish the Institute. De La Salle selected Gabriel to be one of the two men he could count on to persevere in commitment to the project of the Christian Schools, showing the respect De La Salle had for him.

In 1694 Gabriel was also one of the twelve Brothers selected by De La Salle to make with him the first perpetual vows, of association to conduct schools for the poor, of stability in the Institute, and of obedience to go wherever they would be sent and to do whatever they would be assigned.

This obedience was put into action when Gabriel was again selected by De La Salle for a special assignment: to go to Rome. Letters to Gabriel from De La Salle<sup>56</sup> seem to show that Gabriel went to Rome in 1702. It was the Founder’s plan to establish a free school for poor children in Rome “in order to ask God for the grace that their Society be always entirely submissive to [the Church of Rome].”<sup>57</sup> According to Lucard, who does not give his source, Gabriel’s brother, Brother Gérard—who had entered the Institute some time after Gabriel—was assigned to accompany him on this mission.<sup>58</sup>

How did Gabriel actually proceed with his mission in Rome? It would be a journey on foot over a period of two months during the vacation of the summer and early fall. To begin, he and his brother, Gérard, did not leave Paris empty handed. De La Salle gave them 100

54. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 45.

55. *Letters*, 224.

56. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 10, Cahiers lasalliens 7, p. 315.

57. *Letters*, 149, 28, 21.

58. Blain, vol. 2, book 3, chap. 18, Cahiers lasalliens 8, p. 173, De La Salle’s last will and testament.

59. Lucard, *Annales de l’Institut*, 1, p. 110.

livres, probably equivalent to \$1,000 or more in today's economy.<sup>60</sup> In addition, and more importantly, he gave them letters of introduction to Cardinal César d'Estrées, former bishop of Laon, whose nephew, Jean d'Estrées, succeeded him in 1681 and was therefore acquainted with Gabriel.<sup>61</sup>

The route of the journey to Rome was most likely the one taken by the Brothers in 1760, a description of which is given in the Avignon Archives.<sup>62</sup> They went from Paris to Lyon, crossed the Alps at Fréjus, about fifty miles due east of Grenoble, and from there journeyed through Torino, Piacenza, Modena, and the Papal States, along the Adriatic coast. It was the safest route, the one with the least passport problems, usually taken by pilgrims on their way to Loreto. From there they would cross the Apennines at Terni and then go on to Rome.

Gabriel became friendly with Cardinal d'Estrées's vicar-general, who later became Bishop Joseph-François Gualtieri of the diocese of Vaison. It was Bishop Gualtieri who introduced Gabriel to the Vincentian René Divers, Procurator for the Vincentians in Rome.



De La Salle blesses the Drolin brothers, Gabriel and Gérard, on their departure for Rome in 1702. Painting by Aurelio Mariani, 1906. Photo E. Roussel (*J. B. de La Salle; Iconographie*, 1979, slide 315, plate 22).

60. Maillefer, *Cahiers lasalliens* 6, p. 137; *Two Early Biographies*, p. 105.

61. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 54.

In all probability it was also Bishop Gualtieri who brought Brother Gérard back to France when the bishop left Rome in June 1703 to take possession of his see in Vaison, near Avignon.<sup>63</sup> Gérard had been able to last less than a year in Rome, but it was through him and his connection with Bishop Gualtieri<sup>64</sup> that M. Jean-Pierre Madon de Châteaublanc became familiar with the Brothers; inspired by his wife, he assisted significantly in establishing the Brothers in Avignon.

It was possibly M. Divers who arranged for Gabriel to reside with friends of the Vincentians who were living in Rome, first M. Jean-François,<sup>65</sup> or Jean-Baptiste, Théodon,<sup>66</sup> a sculptor with whom De La Salle was acquainted, and then with the family of M. Claude de La Bussière. Divers also gave Gabriel spiritual support, as revealed in an archival manuscript of the Vincentians written after the death of Divers:

A French teacher belonging to a Paris community established by M. de La Salle had gone to Rome some years earlier, in order to give children free religious instruction and to teach them at the same time how to read and write. But this good man was without any money shortly after coming to Rome and had decided to quit this good enterprise and return to France. When he made known his intention to M. Divers, the latter neglected nothing in order to dissuade him from his decision, because he saw the great good that he was doing. M. Divers provided for his support through friends, even obtaining a papal subsidy for his maintenance, which he enjoys to this day, while he conducts a school for a good number of young children, keeping them from a life of laziness, teaching them how to read and write, and placing them on the road to heaven, both by instructing them in Christian doctrine and by inspiring them with love and respect for God by his good example.<sup>67</sup>

Even with the help of M. Divers, it took some time for Gabriel to break into the Roman school system for children of the poor. Teachers in the regional schools had to demonstrate that a school was needed in the region, that they were competent to conduct the school, and that they had references to assure their good character and the probity of their way of life.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 54, note 9.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

64. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 17, *Cahiers lasalliens* 7, p. 396.

65. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 61.

66. Poutet, *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 2, p. 347.

67. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 56.

In the beginning, Gabriel taught reading and writing to De La Bussière's young daughters as a way of compensating for his room and board with the family. De La Salle did not approve of this.<sup>68</sup> Around the same time, Gabriel was also teaching catechism to poor children, as a volunteer, in the church of San Lorenzo in Lucina.<sup>69</sup> A short time later, probably early in 1705, he was accepted by the supervisor of that region to open a school in the same parish.<sup>70</sup> By 1709 Gabriel had managed to receive a position as teacher in a papal school, first on a temporary basis and then permanently.<sup>71</sup> This was achieved, as stated in the obituary note on M. Divers, with that priest's help but especially with the help of Bishop Joseph Guyon de Crochans, whom Gabriel came to know through the Vincentians.<sup>72</sup> This school was located on the Via della Purificazione, near Piazza Barberini, in the parish of Santa Susanna. Gabriel continued to conduct this school until he left Rome in 1728.

For the first sixteen of these years, De La Salle, until his death, carried on a correspondence with Gabriel. The witness of a special relationship between De La Salle and Gabriel has been preserved in twenty of these letters. It is, of course, significant that Gabriel kept the letters and made them part of the heritage of the beginning of the Institute. From these letters much can be learned about De La Salle, about the development of the Institute during those years, and especially about Gabriel himself, not only what he was able to accomplish in Rome but also about himself personally.

Obviously Gabriel was a loyal and steadfast person. He was alone as a Brother without community support, away from his own country for twenty-four years. Brother Gérard, his brother, unable to last a year, returned to France in 1703. Gabriel was on his own to start a school in a foreign language and in a city with a well-organized bureaucracy for scholastic as well as ecclesiastical affairs. He received help from the Vincentians and their acquaintances to find a place to live and insinuate himself into the system of free schools for the poor.

In the beginning the Founder was impatient with Gabriel's slow start and need for money. In the earliest letter that has been preserved, which is dated Paris, 13 August 1704, De La Salle wrote:

68. *Letters*, 13.2.

69. *Ibid.*, 14.9.

70. *Ibid.*, 17.2, 24.9.

71. *Ibid.*, 27.4.

72. *Ibid.*, pp. 100–101.

On reading your letter. I could not understand how you could have put yourself into the position you say you are in, just teaching reading and writing to little girls, and assuming a worldly spirit.

You must not try to cut down on expenses by doing what is contrary to your Institute practices.<sup>73</sup>

In another letter, probably written in October of the same year, 1701, De La Salle wrote:

I am sending you a note asking [M. Théodon] to advance you 50 livres to get yourself settled and to provide for your needs when you do.

Therefore, I beg you to do so at once, for the longer you delay the older you get, and after all this there will be nothing to show.

Although you have been living in a house for a year or two years, as you are now, what progress have you made when all is said and done?

You will have to make up your mind to come back or to get something under way where you are.

.....

It is about two years since you went to Rome, so you must get something done and live in accordance with your vocation.

.....

The sooner you can get out of your present situation and be employed according to your vocation the better it will be.

For the love of God, work toward this.<sup>74</sup>

The school system for the poor in Rome was so organized that it was very difficult to get into it: to start a school on one's own was simply impossible. A person had to be accepted by the Supervisor of one of the fourteen school regions into which Rome was divided: these Regional Supervisors were, in turn, under the authority of the Rector of the University of Rome, *La Sapienza*. Furthermore, in presenting himself publicly, Brother Gabriel could not be recognized as a religious person, because the Institute was not in any way approved. Further, Rome required all religious to be living in an official religious community.

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73. *Ibid.*, 13.2–3.

74. *Ibid.*, 14.7–10, 14, 20–21.

Other difficulties existed: vernacular bibles were prohibited in Rome, and De La Salle did not want Gabriel to be using one in Latin. De La Salle also wanted Gabriel to continue to wear the Brothers' robe, which was quite different from anything like it in Rome and bound to raise questions about its significance. De La Salle also wanted Gabriel to be appointed in charge of a papal school, which was another system altogether.

De La Salle's letters written within the next few months carry a tone of impatience with Gabriel's inability to establish himself in a Roman school. On 11 February 1705, De La Salle wrote, "I do not know if you will ever get anything done in your present place."<sup>75</sup> Later, when Gabriel was able to secure a position in a regional school, De La Salle's letters have a change of tone. On 27 April 1705 he wrote:

[Your letter] brought me a great deal of joy, for not only has it been a long time since I received any news from you, but also because you tell me that at last you are carrying out the work proper to your vocation.

I am far from taking you to task. All that I have been impatiently waiting for is that you should carry out the work that is yours.

I am surprised that you say that you have never got much support from me, because there is nothing I haven't tried to do and am not ready to do to support you.

I am quite sure that you have no intention of following the example of Brother Nicolas, and that is the reason I have placed so much confidence in you.<sup>76</sup>

The reference is to Brother Nicolas Vuyart, who left the Institute in 1704.

De La Salle's letters give a clue to what Gabriel had written to him. They show that Gabriel could talk quite frankly and even forcefully to the Founder. By 1705 Gabriel had been a Brother for twenty years and had been closer to De La Salle than any other Brother. Though he was thirteen years younger than De La Salle—and not a priest, like the Founder—they had developed a friendship during those twenty years that enabled both of them to level with each other when the occasion arose. In fact, it is in a subsequent letter of the same year, 1705, that De La Salle speaks in a personal way that is not found in any other letters or in any of his other writings, not even in

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.6.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.2, 10–12.

the excerpts from a memoir on the beginnings of the Institute, a document reported by his early biographers.<sup>77</sup> On 28 August 1705, De La Salle reveals to Gabriel one of his basic principles of action:

As for myself, I do not like to make the first move in any endeavor, and I will not do it in Rome any more than elsewhere. I leave it to Divine Providence to make the first move, and then I am satisfied.

When it is clear that I am acting only under the direction of Providence, I have nothing to reproach myself with. When I make the first move, it is only I myself who am active, so I don't expect to see much good result; neither does God usually give the action his special blessing.<sup>78</sup>

In a letter of the same year, De La Salle speaks quite frankly about another aspect of his personality, namely, his attitude concerning debts. After telling Gabriel that he will send him some money but that it will be difficult to do this, because he expects to be in debt for the next three months, the Founder adds:

Please do not go into debt without my approval, for I am not at all happy about debts. I do not want any and have never wanted or allowed any in our communities. There is nothing I detest so much. That is why you will never be able to count on me again when it comes to debts, for I will not listen to the least suggestion.

As far as expenditure goes, I want to look ahead not behind me. Take no steps, make no decisions, without asking my advice beforehand. I will answer you at once.

I know it is better to live in difficult circumstances, withdrawn from worldly concerns, and I am glad that you are in such dispositions. Still, when you decide to do this, you must put yourself entirely in the hands of Divine Providence, or if you have not enough virtue for that nor enough faith, then you must take the necessary means before you carry out your plan. If you do neither, you are not acting as a Christian nor as an intelligent man.<sup>79</sup>

In a letter written in 1710,<sup>80</sup> there is indication that in his turn, Gabriel did not hesitate to speak his mind to De La Salle. None of

77. See *Cahiers lasalliens* 10, pp. 105ff.

78. *Letters*, 18, 17–18.

79. *Ibid.*, 19:10–11, 14.

80. *Ibid.*, 28.

Gabriel's letters has been preserved, but from the Founder's letters to him some idea of what Gabriel wrote can be guessed. He must have given several reasons why De La Salle should send another Brother to help him, telling De La Salle that he is no longer a young man and that a younger Brother will need to be trained in the customs and language of Italy. He explains that the extra expense would last for a year only. He also tells De La Salle that he has not heard from him in several months and that this has caused him to falter in his love for piety and fidelity to the Rule. He invites De La Salle to come to Rome to visit him. He also says that De La Salle has not been completely honest in what he writes to him.

Despite this element of tension between De La Salle and Gabriel, it is clear that De La Salle had confidence in his friend and Brother. The tension is above board and honest, as between close friends. It does not interfere with De La Salle's regularly telling Gabriel the news about the Institute in France, in some cases giving data found nowhere else. He tells Gabriel of a legacy of 2,000 livres that he expects to receive from M. Brocard of Rethel as soon as the man's sister dies, which he says will apparently not be long to wait for, because she is eighty-five or eighty-six.<sup>81</sup> In the same letter he mentions that M. de La Chétardie is holding back payment of the Brothers' stipends.

In another letter De La Salle reports the death of two Brothers in Chartres, Michel and Jacques, who died of typhoid fever.<sup>82</sup> In a letter dated 4 September 1705, De La Salle informs Gabriel that he has "established our novitiate in a suburb of Rouen in a fine house which used to be occupied by some nuns."<sup>83</sup> He explains that this is why he is short of money, since he is paying 100 livres rent on the house every three months.<sup>84</sup> In the same letter he tells Gabriel that Brother Albert, the Director in Avignon, wrote to tell him that the Diocesan Censor in that papal city had returned "all our books with his approval." In different letters he also tells Gabriel about the Brothers beginning to work in schools in Avignon,<sup>85</sup> Marseille,<sup>86</sup> Dijon, Brest,<sup>87</sup> Grenoble, Alès, Mende, Mâcon,<sup>88</sup> Versailles, Boulogne, and Moulins.<sup>89</sup>

81. *Ibid.*, 14.16.

82. *Ibid.*, 18.2.

83. *Ibid.*, 19.4.

84. *Ibid.*, 4 and p. 80.

85. *Ibid.*, 16.2.

86. *Ibid.*, 19.20.

87. *Ibid.*, 23.

88. *Ibid.*, 27.14.

89. *Ibid.*, 29.10.

In all this exchange of information, De La Salle is treating Gabriel as one who is equally responsible for the Institute, reminiscent of the special vow they made in the crisis of 1691 and the perpetual vows they made together in 1694.

Another significant aspect of De La Salle's relationship with Gabriel, as well as De La Salle's own relationships with various members of the hierarchy, is the number of times that the Founder writes about various bishops. In twelve of the twenty letters, he shares news or asks questions about them. The archbishop of Avignon, Laurent Fieschi, who was well disposed toward the Brothers, is mentioned in seven letters; it is interesting to see how much De La Salle involved himself in news about this archbishop's becoming a cardinal and shared this with Gabriel.

De La Salle's concern for maintaining good relationships with the bishops is also noted in his desire to thank Bishop Joseph Guyon de Crochans for the help the bishop gave to Gabriel in Rome; De La Salle tells Gabriel in one letter that he had asked Brother Ponce to visit the bishop to thank him, and in another letter he writes that he himself had dinner with the bishop to thank him personally, an example of De La Salle's care about social decorum. It was for this bishop of the diocese of Cavaillon that De La Salle sent Brothers in 1707 to teach in a school in the town of Valréas.

At least five other bishops are mentioned in the letters to Gabriel. In one letter De La Salle even comments in a negative way about Cardinal de Noailles of Paris, saying that "the vacillations [*affaires*] of the archbishop of Paris are causing concern among the bishops. I don't know what is thought of this in Rome."<sup>90</sup>

Although there is all this friendly exchange of news and a frank expression of a certain tension in the letters that De La Salle wrote, it is also clear that De La Salle took responsibility for Gabriel's spiritual life.

There is not the detailed, point-by-point response to the account of conduct that characterizes most of the letters De La Salle wrote to the other Brothers, but the Founder does give many specific directives to his disciple. In these directives can be seen the frank way in which Gabriel in his letters to the Founder speaks of what he is doing and of his shortcomings, the same way that the Brothers were trained to write their monthly letters to the Superior. The following examples are typical of this kind of spiritual direction for Gabriel:

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90. *Ibid.*, 32.6.

... I beg you, do nothing that is not in accord with your Institute, whatever the cost; otherwise, God will not bless you.

Investigate thoroughly this canon who spoke to you, to see if he is a man to be relied on and if what he told you is not just idle talk. . . .

Ask God in prayer to do with you as he wishes.

You must abandon yourself completely to his guidance, and you must do nothing without advice. . . .

Above all else, do not do anything that is not in accord with your Institute.<sup>91</sup>

Try, I beseech you, to overcome the worldly spirit to which you have quite a tendency, by devoting yourself to prayer and to the spiritual exercises and by restricting the number of visits you make. In trying to have the spirit of your Institute as deeply as possible, you will draw down on yourself God's graces in abundance.<sup>92</sup>

Please go often to Saint Peter's as a sign of your complete submission to the Church.<sup>93</sup>

See if God shows his approval of your work, and notice if Divine Providence is assisting you or if it seems that Providence wishes to help you.<sup>94</sup>

Don't let slip the opportunities that come your way, but don't be overeager.<sup>95</sup>

Often pray that God will bless this work of his.<sup>96</sup>

It is good to know that you have been on retreat in order to try to regain fully the spirit of your vocation and that of prayer. I pray that God will grant you this grace.

I know that it is a great misfortune to have to be in contact with the world, and it is much to your advantage that you have, to a great extent, broken that contact. Make every effort, also, to dissociate yourself from those candidates for ordination.

91. *Ibid.*, 13.4–5, 13–14, 16.

92. *Ibid.*, 17.18.

93. *Ibid.*, 19.24.

94. *Ibid.*, 20.17.

95. *Ibid.*, 24.8.

96. *Ibid.*, 26.9.

You may be assured that I will not fail to pray to God for you. . . .

I know, too, that there is a great deal of corruption where you are and that you have to be very careful and watchful over yourself not to get caught up in it. Blessed be God that he has given you the grace to keep free from it up till now.<sup>97</sup>

I do not fail to pray for you and for the success of your work.

I am upset that you must have so much contact with the world. It is easy for me to see that because of this your piety has diminished. Take up the practice of prayer once and for all, I beg you.

I am told that you intend to take the tonsure. Tell me how the matter stands. You know, of course, that this is contrary to Institute practice. . . .

I am delighted that you have broken contact with those priesthood candidate friends of yours. Try to do the same with the others as soon as possible.<sup>98</sup>

It is revealing of De La Salle's style of direction with Gabriel that he deals so gently with the prospect of Gabriel's taking the tonsure, which someone had reported to the Founder, since this would be a serious breach of Institute rule. Gabriel's name is actually listed in the *Liber Ordinationum* of the Vicariate in Rome among those tonsured on 5 May 1709.<sup>99</sup> One reason Gabriel may not have hesitated to be tonsured may have been the fact that he had been tonsured before he entered the Institute, if Blain is correct in what he says.<sup>100</sup>

Gabriel was also listed as a subdeacon in one of the annual reports of the parish of Santa Susanna,<sup>101</sup> but this was quite probably a misunderstanding of the person making up the register, based on the fact that Gabriel was wearing what seemed to be a soutane yet was never seen offering Mass. He is not listed in this way on the registers of subsequent years.

The fact that Gabriel decided to take the tonsure, despite the prohibition which he must have known, may indicate that he was capable of taking some steps on his own initiative, possibly with guidance from M. Divers. Gabriel may have hoped for some benefice to give

97. *Ibid.*, 278–10, 13.

98. *Ibid.*, 28.17–18, 24, 29.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

100. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 10, *Cahiers lasalliens* 7, p. 314.

101. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 121, note 5.

him financial support. Among other things, he wrote to his sister for money,<sup>102</sup> something he also must have known was contrary to regulations. He also wrote to the bishop of Calais, for which De La Salle reproached him.<sup>103</sup> De La Salle probably picked Gabriel for the Roman project because he knew Gabriel had this quality of initiative as well as loyalty to the Institute. This may be seen in some of the words De La Salle wrote to Gabriel, possibly as early as 1704:

You should be encouraging me, and if you yourself have no great enthusiasm for this work, which seems to be the case, then you will not succeed. . . .

I will help you in every way I can, but I do think that for the undertaking to succeed, the initiative must come from you and not from me. What I have to do is back you up.<sup>104</sup>

Notable, too, as illustrative of De La Salle's way of relating to Gabriel, is the restrained and matter-of-fact way with which the Founder addresses the disagreements he has with Gabriel in the instances already cited and also in several other instances.<sup>105</sup>

In the last letter De La Salle wrote to Gabriel, on 5 December 1716, the underlying affection they had for one another is clearly seen. De La Salle wrote this letter the day after he had gathered the principal Brothers of Saint Yon to draw up a document commissioning Brother Barthélemy to visit all the communities in France in order to secure their agreement for the General Assembly that would elect a Brother as Superior. He wrote this letter, probably at the request of the Brothers, to ask Gabriel to accept in advance the decisions of this Assembly. He also wrote:

It has been against my wishes that I haven't written to you for so long, my very dear Brother. I wrote to you several times without receiving a reply. I think that my letters were intercepted, as I know some of yours have been.

I have had many disappointments during this time. At present I am living in a house in a suburb of Rouen. It is called Saint Yon, and we have our novitiate here.

I assure you that I have a great tenderness and affection for you and often pray to God for you.

102. *Letters*, 23.11.

103. *Ibid.*, 22.4.

104. *Ibid.*, 15.2, 7.

105. *Ibid.*, 23, 24, 28, 31.

You can write to me as often as you wish. I have confidence that the Brother who is now in charge at Avignon will faithfully forward your letters to me. He is a very discreet man. I will answer them.

For nearly ten months now, I have been ill in this house, where I have been living for a year.

The vacillations [*affaires*] of the archbishop of Paris are causing concern among the bishops. I don't know what is thought of this in Rome.

I have been greatly encouraged by your last letter, and the assurance of your wholehearted affection gives me much joy.

Please let me know how you are getting along.

I was hoping to send you, during the holidays, a Brother who has been in Rome, knows a little of the Italian language, and is a prudent man and a good teacher. But we have employed him elsewhere in the belief that his usefulness in that position would be a matter of great importance.

The Brothers are preparing for an assembly from Ascension Day to Pentecost Sunday to settle many matters that concern our rules and the government of the Institute.

I pray you to give your consent to the decisions that shall be made at this assembly by the principal Brothers of our Society.

I believe that you are still teaching your classes. Please let me know how many students you have.

Your nephew came to see me, saying that he wished to be a Brother and that he had been to see you. He said that you were going to become a priest. As he is of changeable temperament, I sent him away to think it over. I haven't heard from him since.

I am, my very dear Brother,

Devotedly yours in Our Lord,

De La Salle<sup>106</sup>

There is no record that Gabriel answered this letter, but a letter which Brother Barthélemy wrote to Gabriel on 18 February 1718 seems to indicate that Gabriel did answer and that the letter was never delivered. Barthélemy's letter was a response to a letter Gabriel had written to his family in Reims, which was delivered to Brother

106. *Ibid.*, 32.

Joseph, Director of the community there.<sup>107</sup> Gabriel had written to his family because he had no sure knowledge of what had happened at the General Assembly of 1717 or who had taken De La Salle's place as Superior; he did not know Barthélemy, who had entered the Institute after Gabriel had gone to Rome.

In his letter Gabriel had expressed concern about not having heard from De La Salle for over a year. Barthélemy explains to Gabriel that the Founder, in turn, was worried that he had not received an answer to his letter of December 1716; he mentions the Founder's desire to give up his role as Superior, the General Assembly, and his own election as Superior. Gabriel again receives a promise to send another Brother to Rome. Barthélemy then adds details about the plan to send Brothers to Canada and asks Gabriel to visit Saint Peter's to pray for the Institute. In a thoughtful postscript, he sends greetings from Brother Jean Jacquot, one of the few Brothers whom Gabriel would remember, because they made perpetual vows together in 1694.

In a second letter to Gabriel, on 13 April 1719, Barthélemy announces the death of De La Salle, giving brief details of the Founder's last days and the burial. He adds in a postscript the first part of De La Salle's last will and testament, along with a comment about the Founder's defense of the Constitution *Unigenitus* of Pope Clement XI.

Early in 1726, Brothers were finally sent to relieve Gabriel in Rome.<sup>108</sup> For this purpose, Brother Timothée, Superior since 1720, selected two Brothers, Fiacre Nonnez, Director of the community in Avignon and probably the Visitor for the communities in the south, and Thomas Frappet, Director of the community in Marseille and Procurator of the Institute. Fiacre was sent to replace Gabriel; Thomas, to help in the transition. The two Brothers also came to Rome in order to express the gratitude of the Institute to Pope Benedict XIII for the Bull of Approbation granted the previous year.

Regarding the Bull, one wonders if Brother Gabriel had an influence on one of its details, namely, the statement about the length of the robe. The Rule originally stated that the robe extends to the calf of the leg, whereas the Bull states that it extends to the ankle. This change could have been a result of Gabriel's using his own judgment to adjust to circumstances in Rome, probably with the advice of his clerical friends, an early example of acculturation in the history of the Institute. Blain says that De La Salle authorized Gabriel to make this

107. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 174.

108. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 2, p. 3.

adjustment,<sup>109</sup> but in two letters<sup>110</sup> De La Salle seems to show concern that Gabriel may have changed the robe, so Blain must be in error.<sup>111</sup>

Cardinal Melchior de Polignac, one of the cardinals who worked for the Bull of Approbation, presented the three Brothers—Gabriel, Fiacre, and Thomas—to the pope, who received them very graciously and granted extraordinary and perpetual favors to the Institute in a special Bull of 4 March 1727. These favors included a plenary indulgence to the Brothers on the occasion of their perpetual vows and another at the hour of death. The same indulgence is granted to anyone making a visit to any of the Brothers' chapels on the feasts of the Epiphany, Saint Joseph, and four other feasts of their choice approved by their bishop. The pope also gave to Brother Gabriel, for the Superior, several relics, including one of the true cross.<sup>112</sup>

These three Brothers formed the first community outside France. Thomas returned to France after a brief stay.<sup>113</sup> Gabriel remained for at least a year to help Fiacre learn Italian, adjust to the program of the papal school, and become familiar with Roman customs. At this time, two classes were formed, each of sixty pupils, the maximum number allowed in a class by the regulations of the rector of the university.

Gabriel probably returned to France in August 1728. Fiacre seems to have been alone until 1730, when Brother Sylvestre, a teacher with experience in the schools of Marseille and Avignon, was sent to assist him. Timothée had requested the pope's approval of this assignment, and Sylvestre was granted an annual pay of 36 écus, or 108 livres.<sup>114</sup>

This papal school moved several times between 1733 and 1743, always in the parish of Santa Susanna, until it finally settled on Via della Purificazione. The new house was paid for by the community in Marseille, assisted by M. Digne, the Consul of France in Rome, and also by the Vincentians and the Carthusians in Rome.

In 1736 Sylvestre proposed to open a third class for another sixty pupils, but on 2 May, in an audience with Pope Clement XII, he was informed that there was no need to increase the number of classes, because the Fathers of the Pious Schools were able to take care of whatever classes were needed. Still, the Brothers of the Christian Schools remained in the Holy City, and the work begun by Brother Gabriel Drolin has continued there ever since. Meanwhile, in Avignon

109. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 17, Cahiers lasalliens 7, p. 393.

110. *Letters*, 28.9 and 31.5.

111. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 144.

112. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 2, p. 3.

113. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 192, note 1.

114. Alban, *Histoire de l'Institut*, pp. 32–33.

on 21 September 1728, Brother Gabriel, in the presence of Brother Timothée, Superior, made his vows according to the Bull of Approbation.<sup>115</sup> This document is preserved in the Generalate Archives.

Gabriel's last years were lived in the community of Auxonne, near Dijon. On one occasion, in a gesture of respect for Gabriel, Brother Timothée designated him to receive the triennial vows of four Brothers during the annual retreat in Avignon.<sup>116</sup> This is all we hear of the great veteran until his death on 11 January 1733; he was buried the next day in the mausoleum of the church of Auxonne. He was surely a man of great fidelity and zeal for the mission of the Institute.

### Brother Paul Narra

Another Brother who began association with the Institute during its very early period deserves to be a kind of footnote to this chapter on those who served for many decades. He is Brother Paul Narra. He was born on 6 October 1677 in Charenton, a suburb of Paris, and according to the *Catalogue of the Brothers*,<sup>117</sup> lived with the Brothers in Paris at the age of ten. He seems to have been an exception to those junior novices who either received the habit or went home in 1691 when De La Salle discontinued the program. It does not seem that he had been with the junior novices in Reims.

He may have been the young man mentioned by Blain who was teaching in the school of Saint Sulpice when De La Salle came to Paris and who joined the Brothers when they began to live in that parish.<sup>118</sup> It is also possible that he went home in 1691 and returned later. In any case, he received the habit on 8 December 1695 and made vows for all his life on 5 September 1699. The only other record of his life as a Brother is his signature with the community of Reims on the occasion of Brother Barthélemy's visit, 28 February 1717.<sup>119</sup>

Like the others considered in this chapter, Paul gave many years of service, but like so many of the early Brothers, he did it without leaving any documentary evidence; he died in 1751 at the age of seventy-four.<sup>120</sup>

115. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 183.

116. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 2, p. 185; Lucard, *Annales*, 2, p. 107.

117. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 33.

118. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 16, Cahiers lasalliens 7, pp. 285, 287.

119. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 186.

120. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 33.

## Chapter Four

### The Second Generation

Rigault speaks of a second generation, twenty-three Brothers who made vows "for all their lives," beginning in 1695 and extending to June 1705.<sup>1</sup> Their formulas of vows—of association to keep gratuitous schools, of stability, and of obedience—are in *Livret des Premiers Vœux*.<sup>2</sup>

For Rigault, the first generation included the twelve Brothers in *Livret des Premiers Vœux*<sup>3</sup> who made perpetual vows with De La Salle in 1694 and the other Brothers in the Institute before that year; these Brothers have been described in chapters one through three.

Rigault seems to limit his second generation to the twenty-three Brothers in *Livret des Premiers Vœux*, some of whom entered as early as 1691 (Jean-François) or as late as 1703 (Barthélemy). In addition to these twenty-three Brothers, however, thirty-six others are listed in the *Catalogue* who entered from 1690 up to and including 1705, the last year in which the twenty-three Brothers took vows.<sup>4</sup>

These dates (1690–1705) have been arbitrarily selected as cut-off points for the second generation that is discussed in this present chapter. The two groups within these dates give a total of fifty-nine Brothers who were not described in the previous chapter. Brother Paul Narra has been made an exception; he was considered in the preceding chapter as part of the first generation, because he was living with the Brothers in Paris as early as 1688.

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1. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 205.

2. *Cahiers lasalliens* 3, pp. 12–19.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–10.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 32–42.

In addition to the fifty-eight Brothers (leaving out Paul Narra) in *Livret des Premiers Vœux* and the *Catalogue*, there are at least fifteen other Brothers not in these records who are part of this period. They are known through references made in the early biographies and through the letters written by De La Salle, but their family names, their places of origin, and the dates of their birth, entry into the Institute, and death are often missing. Most of the stories of these Brothers will be inserted in the stories of other Brothers in this chapter.

These fifteen Brothers are:

- ♦ Germain and Lazare, whose stories were told in the last chapter with that of Jacques Compain;
- ♦ Remi, whose story will be told with that of Brother Joseph among those who entered before 1700;
- ♦ Nicolas, whose story will be told with that of Henri in the group of 1700;
- ♦ Dominique, Hilarion, Étienne, Médard, Albert, Mathias, Paulin, Séverin, and Louis, who will be included in the group of 1700;
- ♦ Claude (2nd), known only from his name as Director from 1701 to 1708 on the community list of Rethel, and
- ♦ Macaire, known only from the document of Brother Barthélemy's visit to the Versailles community in April 1717.

This makes a total of seventy-three Brothers in the study of this second generation. It does not, however, include all the Brothers of this time period, because no accurate records were kept of others—some persevering, some leaving—who lived and died during those years. There are, for example, Brothers listed in the first part of the manuscript *Obituary* in the Generalate Archives, a record of the deaths of Brothers which begins with the names of thirty-six Brothers (found in a private note of an elderly Brother) who died between 1684 and 1713. Sixteen of these names have already been included in the chapter on the first generation; the other twenty, who probably belong to the second generation, are not included here, because there is no information about them available thus far.

Of the seventy-three Brothers reported in this present chapter, all that is known about four is their vow formulas, which have been preserved in *Livret des Premiers Vœux*:<sup>5</sup>

- ♦ Brother Simon (Jean Bernard), who may have died or left before 1701, because another Brother Simon entered in that year.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 13ff.

- ♦ Brother François (Claude Foucquet), who may have died or left before 1706; another Brother François entered in that year.
- ♦ Brother André (Joachim Mercier), who may have died or left before 1709; another Brother André entered in that year.
- ♦ Brother Laurent (Jean Chehez), who may have died or left before 1711; another Brother Laurent entered in that year.

This chapter on the second generation, then, will tell the story of sixty-nine Brothers who were the nucleus of the Institute under the direction of De La Salle in the late 1690s and early 1700s. For most of them, there is little information, only the simple data of the *Catalogue*, but from what can be learned about the others a good picture of the Brothers with whom De La Salle worked can be known. During this period the Founder provided new staffing for about thirty schools or other educational programs (one for Irish *émigrés*, another for young adult men in a Sunday Academy, two for training teachers, and one for reforming delinquents). In addition to these new works, there were at least sixteen other foundations, some of them temporary, that had to be maintained.<sup>6</sup>

All these Brothers of the second generation made their contribution to the origin of the Institute, though only part of the record of their individual careers has been preserved. This chapter gives an account of the information about them that is available. The Brothers who entered after 1705 also played a part; chapter five will be devoted to them.

It is noteworthy that thirty-eight of the Brothers of this second generation made up a good percentage of the ninety-eight Brothers who were present when Brother Barthélemy visited the communities in 1717 to secure agreement for the General Assembly that would review the life and work of the Institute and elect a Superior. This Assembly became known as the Second General Chapter, the first one being the meeting of the twelve Brothers with De La Salle in 1694.

In 1717, fifteen of these Brothers of the second generation were among the twenty-two Directors of communities, and twelve made up the great majority of the sixteen Directors who composed that Assembly in 1717. Two others of this generation became the first two Superiors to succeed De La Salle: Brothers Barthélemy and Timothée. Chapter six will tell their stories.

It is of interest that the average age of the Brothers who joined during the lifetime of the Founder was around twenty-four, based on

6. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, pp. 606–611.

a study of the 127 names in the *Catalogue* for whom the date of birth and the date of entry are given. This list, of course, is limited: it was begun in the year 1714 and does not include those who entered and who died or left before the list was started. More men (thirty-eight in number) entered before the age of twenty than those (twenty-three) who entered after the age of thirty. Those in their twenties numbered sixty-six.

The following accounts are based on the year of entry, beginning with fourteen Brothers who entered before 1700, followed by the stories of the twelve who entered in 1700 and, finally, by the accounts of the twenty-six who entered from 1701 through 1705.

## Brothers Who Entered Before 1700

Name	Diocese	Born	Entered	Died
Paul (2nd) (Pierre Raimbault)	?	?	?	1695
Thomas (Charles Frappet)	Reims	1670	1690	1742
Jean-François (Jean Bouqueton)	Reims	1673	1691	1740
Denis (Jean-Louis Guignard)	?	?	?	?
Philippe (Jean Police)	Soissons	1677	1692	1752
Ponce (Poncelet Thiseux)	Liège	?	?	?
Ambroise (François Blin)	Reims	1672	1693	1757
Michel (Jacques Lequeasse)	?	?	?	1705
Gérard (Gérard Drolin)	Reims	1676	?	?
Martin (Pierre Bernard)	Reims	1660	1696	1719
Athanase (Jean Richer)	?	?	?	?
Joseph (2nd) (Jean Le Roux)	Laon	1678	1697	1729
Grégoire (François Cortier)	?	?	?	1700
Gilles (Pierre Cluse)	?	?	?	1709

The question marks indicate that these Brothers are listed in *Livret des Premiers Vœux*, which gives only their vow formulas; other data are from the *Catalogue*. The inclusion of the date of death is a sign that the Brother persevered.

Three of these Brothers—Paul, Grégoire, and Gilles—died a relatively short time after their vows; no other information about them was available for this study.

Most of these Brothers undoubtedly made their novitiate in Vaugirard under the direction of De La Salle himself. Blain says that it was on 8 October 1691 that the novitiate opened there,<sup>7</sup> and it was moved to the *Grande Maison* in April 1698.<sup>8</sup>

## Brother Thomas

Brother Thomas (Charles Frappet) was born in the diocese of Reims on 18 December 1670 and entered the Institute on 5 August 1690; the *Catalogue* states, without giving the date, that he made vows forever as a serving Brother and perpetual cook, but these last two phrases are crossed out,<sup>7</sup> probably because later on Thomas made vows as a teaching Brother. A number of Brothers joined the Institute to be serving Brothers without this notation being made. In fact, there is only one entry among the Brothers who entered during De La Salle's lifetime which has such a notation on the vow formula; in that case it states that the Brother took the habit of a serving Brother.<sup>8</sup>

Aroz says that Thomas made the novitiate in 1692 in Vaugirard.<sup>9</sup> He reports that during the interval between Thomas's entry in 1690 and his enrollment in the novitiate, he was a person who collected alms for a charitable or pious cause (*quêteur*).

Blain says that De La Salle gave the habit to six novices on 1 November 1692 and that one of them was a serving Brother;<sup>10</sup> presumably this was Brother Thomas. If so, he was the first serving Brother in the Institute.

Maillefer says that in 1692 the Founder needed some Brothers who would be specially occupied in providing for the necessities of those who were teaching in the schools. This was a good way to take care of an onerous task that was incompatible with the ordinary work of the teachers.<sup>11</sup> The principal work of the serving Brother was to shop for the food and prepare the meals for the community. Sometimes the serving Brother would also be called to substitute, perhaps only as a monitor, for a Brother who had to be absent from school because of illness or for some other reason.

Chapter fifteen in the Rule of 1718 describes the way the serving Brothers are to behave; there is also a special vow formula for the serving Brother which omits the clause about conducting schools.<sup>12</sup> This chapter was printed in the Rule up to and including the edition

7. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 10, Cahiers lasalliens 7, p. 315.

8. *Ibid.*, chap. 14, p. 360.

9. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 33.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

11. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 192, note 1.

12. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 11, Cahiers lasalliens 7, p. 325.

13. Maillefer, Cahiers lasalliens 6, p. 94; *Two Early Biographies*, p. 76.

14. Cahiers lasalliens 25, pp. 59, 143.

in 1947, although in that edition the term "serving Brothers" was changed to "Brothers who are engaged in temporal affairs."

De La Salle mentions serving Brothers in two letters to Brother Hubert, one in 1706<sup>15</sup> and another in 1710.<sup>16</sup> In the first he tells Hubert, the Director, to make sure that Isidore, a serving Brother, does not let his work take precedence over his religious observance or his recreation. In the second De La Salle explains that the serving Brother should take over the management of the household concerns of the community, so that the Director may not become preoccupied with them, but that the Director should make sure that the serving Brother always speaks respectfully.

The 1718 Rule of the Brother Director, which is the earliest copy of that Rule which has been preserved, mentions that the color of the robe of the serving Brother is brown.<sup>17</sup> In one of his descriptions of Brother Thomas, probably referring to the period of 1706, Blain says that he wore the habit of a serving Brother, which must mean that it was brown or grayish brown at that time.<sup>18</sup> It was not until the Twelfth General Chapter, in 1810, that the serving Brothers began to wear the same color robe as the teaching Brothers. It is clear that a serving Brother could become a teaching Brother; when Brother Thomas made his vows according to the Bull of Approbation in 1725, he made them as a teaching Brother.<sup>19</sup>

In the beginning the principal work of Thomas was to provide for the meals of the community in Vaugirard. He himself gave four examples of his work to Blain for the biography of De La Salle. Once, when some of the Brothers living at Vaugirard were sick, the Founder took Thomas with him to beg for some broth from the Superior of the Seminary of Saint Sulpice.<sup>20</sup> On another occasion, during the famine of 1693, Thomas was sent out with the last bit of money to buy some cabbages. He joined a crowd of beggars at the door of a wealthy woman, a benefactor of the parish of Saint Sulpice, who was surprised to see him begging. When he explained the errand he was on, she called him aside and told him she would send food to the Brothers. She also spoke to the pastor, M. Baudrand, alerting him to the need of the Brothers.<sup>21</sup> Thomas also told Blain that he and the cook

15. *Letters*, 8.25, 32.

16. *Ibid.*, 12.1, 2, 6, 11.

17. *Cahiers lasalliens* 25, p. 160.

18. Blain, vol. 2, book 3, chap. 5, *Cahiers lasalliens* 8, p. 39.

19. *Cahiers lasalliens* 40/1, p. 192, note 1.

20. Blain, vol. 2, book 4, chap. 2, *Cahiers lasalliens* 8, p. 263.

21. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 12, *Cahiers lasalliens* 7, p. 336.

were often amazed during this period of famine to see how much food was left over after sixty people had eaten a meal at Vaugirard.<sup>22</sup>

On another occasion, Thomas recalled, De La Salle asked him to hire men to do some repairs on the house. When Thomas came to the Founder to get money to pay the workmen, apparently toward the end of several days of work, De La Salle had to confess that he had no money but that they should pray and trust God to provide. Thomas eventually, perhaps at the last moment, was amazed to find the exact amount he needed—40 écus, about \$1,200—in a place where he had no reason to expect to find it. Blain gives this account to illustrate a kind of miracle obtained by the Founder's reliance on Providence.<sup>23</sup>

In 1705 Thomas was one of the three or four Brothers sent to settle into the new house of Saint Yon. Thomas described to Blain how he wrote to De La Salle about the extreme poverty the community was suffering and received a reply from the Founder that by opening a boarding school at low cost, they could provide income to support the Brothers.<sup>24</sup>

Later on, when Thomas was preparing the grounds for planting vines, trees, and gardens, De La Salle stopped him and told him that such improvement of the property would attract other people to buy it, whereas if the property were left to look neglected, it would eventually be easier for the Brothers to buy it.<sup>25</sup> In these incidents the role of Thomas as a manager of temporal affairs is evident. De La Salle sometimes calls him the *économiste* of the community.<sup>26</sup> In later documents he is entitled *pourvoyeur de la maison*, which may be best translated as the provisioner or business manager of the community.<sup>27</sup>

When the pastor of Saint Sulpice, M. de La Chétardie, refused to pay De La Salle the money owed to the Brothers, which was urgently needed for their food, the Founder realized that he himself was the cause of the pastor's ill will. So he went into hiding, telling only two or three of the principal Brothers that he would be on retreat at the monastery of the Discalced Carmelites. At the same time, De La Salle instructed Thomas to go to De La Chétardie, mention that the Founder had disappeared, and ask for the payment due the Brothers. The

22. Blain, vol. 2, book 4, chap. 2, Cahiers lasalliens 8, pp. 263–264.

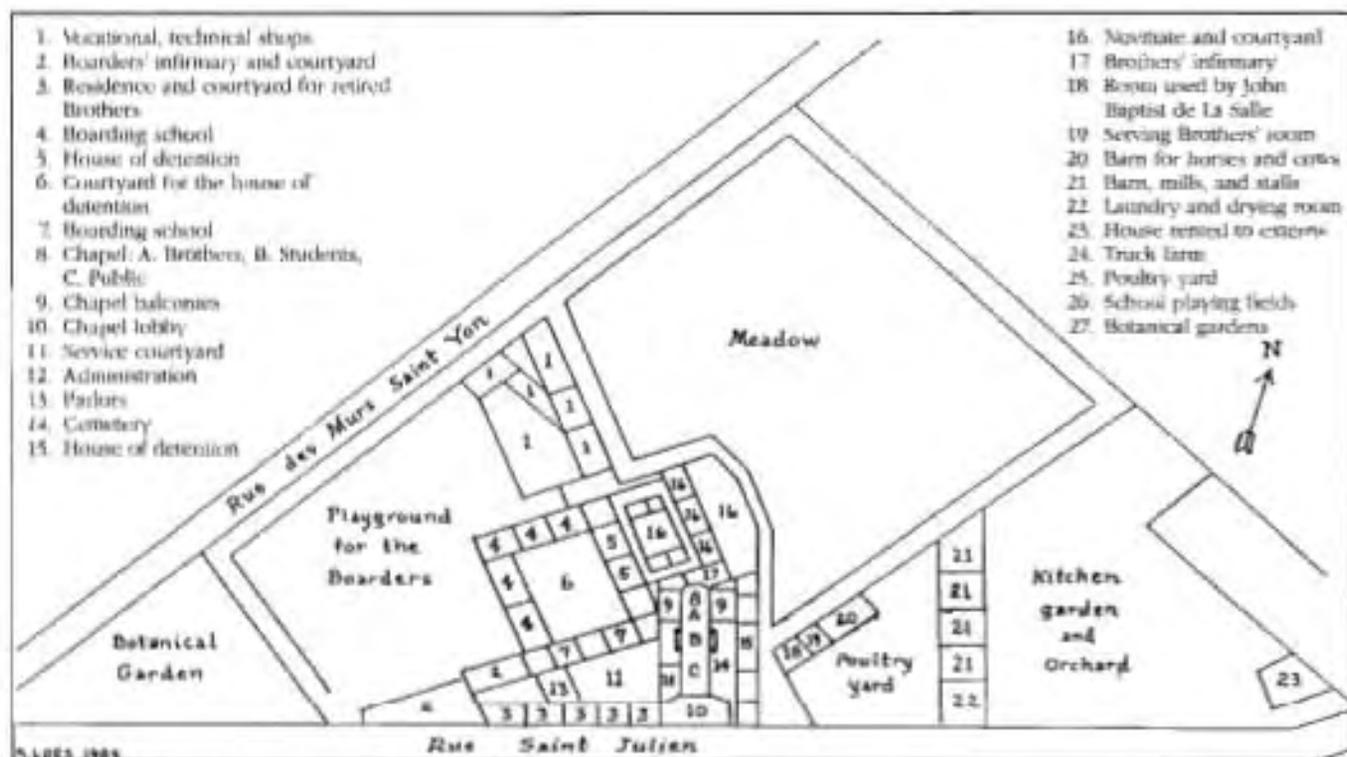
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 262–263.

24. *Letters*, pp. 133–135.

25. Blain, vol. 2, book 4, chap. 2, Cahiers lasalliens 8, p. 264.

26. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 20.

27. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, pp. 201–203.



Plan of Saint-Yvon, reconstructed from eighteenth-century sources of information. *From E. Roussel (Iconographie, 1970, plate 114).*



Founder knew that the pastor had a special liking for Thomas. De La Chétardie gave the Brother the money.<sup>28</sup>

It was probably on that occasion, as described by Thomas, that the pastor, thinking that De La Salle was far away, suggested to Thomas that he take over the role of Superior, indicating that he would give Thomas his full support. Thomas told Blain that De La Chétardie urged him several times to make this move. Thomas, however, was only embarrassed by the proposal, for he loved De La Salle and honored him as a saint. He also knew that the other Brothers felt the same way and would never accept him as Superior.<sup>29</sup> Blain adds that although Thomas made a good appearance, he was "a very simple person, of limited intelligence, and a poor speaker who was unable to express himself well." Despite this, it is clear from the service Thomas rendered in the Institute for many years that he was skillful in practical matters and in business negotiations.

In 1706 De La Salle withdrew the Brothers from Saint Sulpice for three months because of the harassment of the writing masters, which was being tolerated by M. de La Chétardie. When the pastor finally realized that the schools could not function without the Brothers and agreed to the conditions set by De La Salle, it was Thomas who was sent to get the payment for the twelve Brothers. He even secured the stipends for the three months during which the Brothers were absent and the traveling expenses for their return.<sup>30</sup>

Following this incident, De La Salle sent Brother Thomas back to Saint Yon. When the pastor found out, he became angry and demanded his return, which De La Salle arranged in order to keep peace.<sup>31</sup> Gallego wonders if this behavior does not suggest that De La Chétardie had developed some kind of senility.<sup>32</sup>

If the event was a kind of defeat for the Founder, he rebounded shortly afterward. To improve the living conditions of the Brothers who were working in the school of Saint Sulpice, he wanted to move the Brothers out of the building on the rue Princesse, which housed both the school and the community. Surrounded by over twenty families who could witness almost every move they made, the Brothers had little or no privacy. There was also no courtyard attached to the house, which De La Salle always desired for the recreation of the Brothers. The Founder was unsure whether or not the pastor would

28. Blain, vol. 2, book 3, chap. 5, Cahiers lasalliens 8, p. 39.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 415, note 153.

be willing to have the Brothers move outside the parish to an area of more open space. Again, using Thomas because of his abilities and his relationship with the pastor, the Founder turned the whole matter over to the Brother.

In a short time, Thomas located a suitable house which was available on the rue Barouillère and which accommodated all the needs of the Brothers. De La Salle went to see it and told Thomas to make all the arrangements with the pastor and for renting the house from the owner. Thomas was successful in all the details. The Brothers resided there for the next fifteen years (1707 to 1722).

Thomas's role as Procurator of the Institute is mentioned in three of De La Salle's letters. In one to Brother Denis, dated 8 July and assigned to 1708 on the basis of details in the letter, De La Salle writes:

I am annoyed with Brother Thomas for treating you as you say. I will see to it that he changes his manner of acting in this matter. It is not true that I wrote to Brother Thomas what you told me about your needs, since I complained to him that he was not supplying what the Brothers require.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, the Founder wrote to Brother Robert on 26 April, in a letter assigned to 1709 because of details in the letter:

Brother Thomas must give you what you need without so much fuss. It is not true that he has instructions to humble you, but you must act respectfully.<sup>34</sup>

Félix-Paul, commenting on this, suggests that Thomas may have been a bit stingy in his providing for the needs of the Brothers.<sup>35</sup> There is, in fact, a hint in both these letters of a limitation in the personality of Thomas which will be described later on.

In another letter, to Brother Joseph, dated 6 February and assigned to 1711, De La Salle writes:

Please see that Brother Remi is given what he needs. He mentioned to Brother Thomas that he required wool for a pair of stockings, for he had none, and for an undershirt.<sup>36</sup>

Brother Joseph, not Remi, should have written Brother Thomas for what Remi needed. The 1718 Rule of the Brother Director states

33. *Letters*, 4.4

34. *Ibid.*, 44.17

35. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 284

36. *Letters*, 54.9

clearly that for all the needs of the community, the Director will write to the Brother who is in charge of providing the Brothers' habits. This same Rule also mentions a form to be used in itemizing their needs.<sup>57</sup>

According to Aroz, Thomas was stationed at Saint Yon from 1705 to 1716 as the business manager for the Institute.<sup>58</sup> One official transaction was signed by him on 14 July 1712 for the lease of the new community house of the Brothers in the parish of Saint Nicaise in Rouen. This was the parish where Madame Mallefer was buried, the person who triggered the origin of the Institute by sending Adrien Nyel to Reims in 1679.<sup>59</sup>

On 2 November 1713, Thomas—at the request of De La Salle, who was in Grenoble at the time—began the investment of what eventually became 6,000 livres in the city of Rouen. This money would later be used for the purchase of Saint Yon.<sup>60</sup>

Thomas was in Calais for the visit of Barthélemy in March 1717, for on 18 March, Norbert, the Director, signed his name along with the other four members of the community in agreement for the General Assembly.<sup>61</sup> Blain says that Thomas was sent to Calais on the urging of the Brothers at Saint Yon because of his "haughty attitude and his insolent, imperious, brutal, and disrespectful behavior" toward De La Salle.<sup>62</sup> If it was true that Thomas did treat the Founder that way, he probably treated the Brothers similarly in his role as business manager for the community.

Blain cannot understand how Thomas could have acted this way because Thomas had a great esteem for the Founder, regarded him as a saint, and always remained unalterably loyal to him, even when De La Chétardie suggested that Thomas take over De La Salle's place as Superior. Blain attributes Thomas's behavior to the fact that he was poorly endowed by nature and lacking in virtue. Blain tells all this twice, once at the end of the biography of the Founder,<sup>63</sup> then again in book four on De La Salle's spirit and virtues.<sup>64</sup> In both cases the author is illustrating the heroic virtue of the Founder, showing his affection for Brother Thomas and his reluctance to send him away, despite the way he himself was being treated.

57 Cahiers lasalliens 25, pp. 158–159.

58 Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 192, note 1.

59 Cahiers lasalliens 42, p. 309.

60 Lucard, *Vie du Vénérable Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, 1, p. 371.

61 Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 408.

62 Blain, vol. 2, book 4, chap. 3, Cahiers lasalliens 8, p. 385.

63 *Ibid.*, book 3, chap. 16, pp. 155–156.

64 *Ibid.*, book 4, chap. 3, pp. 385–386.

Probably as early as 1717, Thomas is back at Saint Yon, recalled by the new Superior, Brother Barthélemy, to help in the administration of the Institute.<sup>45</sup> On 17 January 1718, De La Salle wrote a letter to Barthélemy from the Seminary of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet, where he was on retreat. The Brothers were at that time in negotiation with the heirs of Madame de Louvois for the purchase of Saint Yon, and in his letter De La Salle mentions that Thomas visited him to obtain his signature for the transfer of the money to be used in the purchase of Saint Yon.<sup>46</sup>

Since the Institute had not yet received letters patent, equivalent to articles of incorporation, the deed for the purchase of the property (about seventeen acres) was signed by Brothers Barthélemy and Thomas on 8 March 1718; as such they became the personal owners of Saint Yon.<sup>47</sup> For a while, then, after the death of Brother Barthélemy on 8 June 1720 and until 1724, when the Institute became a legal corporation, Brother Thomas was the sole legal owner of Saint Yon.

On 3 June 1718, Barthélemy and Thomas had the Brothers of Saint Yon sign a document declaring their moral tie to the purchase of the property in the name of all the Brothers of the Institute. This document gives the sources of the funds used to purchase Saint Yon, with the exception of 800 livres,<sup>48</sup> which probably came from the community of Saint Yon. The total cost of the purchase, equivalent to at least \$150,000, was divided as follows (in addition to the 800 livres):

- ♦ 5,200 livres from the legacy of Rogier, really owed to the Founder from the Clément affair.
- ♦ 6,660 livres from several investments made by Thomas in the city of Rouen at De La Salle's request, beginning in November 1713, when the Founder was staying with the Brothers in Grenoble; this included 660 livres interest on the investments.
- ♦ 2,340 livres collected by the Director of Paris from the communities of Paris, Reims, Versailles, Guise, Boulogne, and Calais.<sup>49</sup>

There is no doubt that Thomas helped to put this sum of money together. De La Salle had made it clear that he wanted to have no part

45. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, p. 366.

46. *Letters*, 125.2.

47. *Cahiers lasalliens* 40:1, p. 201.

48. Lucard, *Vie du Vénérable Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, 2, p. 222.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 221. This seems to presume that the sum of 15,000 livres was all paid at the same time. For another account of the payment in installments, see page 241 of this present volume.

in making the decision about the purchase of the property. It was undoubtedly for business like this, for which Barthélemy was not especially prepared, that the new Superior recalled Thomas from Calais.

Another occasion for the signature and probably the advice of Thomas was an agreement, 26 June 1718, which was signed but eventually canceled. This agreement with M. Charon, Founder of the General Hospice of Villemarie on the Isle of Montreal, Canada, was to establish Christian gratuitous schools in the said hospice and to form teachers for the country parishes of the diocese of Quebec, in accord with letters patent granted by the king in February 1718 for a union of Saint Yon with the General Hospice of Villemarie.<sup>50</sup>

Documents in the Generalate Archives in Rome record that Thomas was subsequently in Troyes, where he was involved in an extension of the Brothers' school in that city.<sup>51</sup> In 1720 he was not a capitulant to the General Chapter, but he received an obedience, dated 3 August, to attend as an observer because of his special status as the legal owner of Saint Yon.<sup>52</sup>

In 1722 Thomas negotiated the purchase of property on the rue Neuve-Notre-Dame-des-Champs in Paris for the community of the Holy Spirit. His signature on that document was accompanied by those of Brothers Timothée, Superior, and Onésime, a member of the community. These same signatures were on another document, 14 August 1725, transferring ownership of this property, as well as other property in Paris, to Saint Yon. On the following day, 15 August, Brother Thomas, as Director of the Marseille community, made his vows as a teaching Brother in conformity with the Bull of Approbation.<sup>53</sup> According to Lucard, it was the Chapter that authorized him to make the vows of a teaching Brother, after which he was assigned as Director of the Marseille community and Brother Dosithée replaced him as Procurator of the Institute. Several months later, Thomas was called to Paris to be Director of the community of Saint Sulpice.<sup>54</sup>

In 1724 Thomas was the one who obtained from Maillefer the manuscript of his biography of the Founder. The author accused Thomas of violating his request not to make the document available to anyone without his consent. In fact, the Superior gave it to Blain, whose biography of De La Salle Maillefer considered to be in poor taste and showing little discretion.<sup>55</sup>

50. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 203.

51. Ibid., p. 192, note 1.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 2, p. 166.

In February 1727, Brother Timothée, Superior, sent Thomas to Rome as a companion of Brother Fiacre, Visitor, to thank the pope for the Bull of Approbation and to relieve Gabriel Drolin. These were the two Brothers who finally came to end Gabriel's solitary stay in that city for the past twenty-six years. Thomas returned to France after only a few months.

Back home, Thomas seems to have functioned again as business manager for the Superior. His signature is on a document of agreement made in July 1727 with the pastor of Saint Sever in Rouen which exempted the Brothers from the usual contributions to the parish and granted them the right to have a cemetery to bury the Brothers. Again, on 7 March 1729, his signature is on another contract, this time with Cardinal de Bissy for the establishment of a Brothers' school in Meaux.

In 1734, now as Director in Paris, he assisted at the transfer of the relics of De La Salle from the church of Saint Sever to the chapel at Saint Yon.

In 1738 he was involved with the transfer of other relics, those of Saint Yon himself. Timothée negotiated the transfer of these relics through the good graces of the archbishop of Paris, longtime friend of the Brothers in Marseille, over the reluctance of the pastor of the church of Saint Clément to share these relics. In the document which verified the portions of the skull, other bones, the saint's chalice, and a piece of red silk, the pastor emphasizes that it was "Brother Thomas, general procurator," who several times presented the request of Brother Timothée. It was Thomas who brought the relics from the church of Saint Clément to the chapel at Saint Yon.<sup>55</sup>

This is the last documentary evidence of the illustrious career of Brother Thomas. He died at the age of seventy-two on 24 February 1742 in the community he helped establish, of the Holy Spirit in Paris. Perhaps the first serving Brother in the Institute, he was very close to the Founder for almost thirty years, involved in day-to-day operations as the chief business manager of the Institute for more than forty years, probably active in securing legal recognition for the Brothers, surely not a man without his faults but a loyal person nonetheless, who revered De La Salle and was unashamed of having the whole story of his own role become part of the Institute's written history.

55. Maillefer, *Cahiers lasalliens* 6, p. 17, *Two Early Biographies*, pp. 19–20.

56. Lucard, *Vie du Vénérable Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, 2, pp. 327–328.

## Brother Jean-François (2nd)

Jean Boucqueton entered the novitiate on 24 May 1691 and was given the name of Brother Jean-François. He is the second Brother of record with that name, the first Brother Jean-François being the first Brother to die, in 1684. Nothing is known about the family of this second Brother Jean-François, except that they lived in the town of Vendresse, which was in the diocese of Reims. He made vows for all his life on the feast of Saint Joseph, 19 March 1696.<sup>57</sup>

His first assignment on record is as Director of the community and school in Laon in 1699, which began a career of being Director most of his life.<sup>58</sup> He is next recorded among the eighteen Brothers in Paris who on 7 June 1704, along with De La Salle, were being sued by the writing masters for conducting schools illegally. He was not the Director of the community in Paris, but he may have been a teaching principal in one of the four schools in the parish of Saint Sulpice. The pastor of the parish, M. de La Chétardie, made no effort to defend the Brothers, so they lost the suit and were fined—De La Salle, 100 livres; each of the eighteen Brothers, 50 livres, a total equal to at least \$10,000, quite a bit for them, since they really had no money at all.<sup>59</sup>

His next assignment of record is back in Laon as Director from 1707 to 1710.<sup>60</sup>

When Barthélemy made his visit to the community of Saint-Denis in April of 1717, Jean-François was there as Director.<sup>61</sup> He attended the Chapter of 1717 and participated in the election of Brother Barthélemy as the first Superior; he also participated in the election of the first two Assistants, Brothers Jean and Joseph, and helped to draw up recommendations for the revision of the Rule.

It is Jean-François's copy of the Rule of the Brother Director that has been preserved among all those sent to the communities in 1718.<sup>62</sup>

He was Director of Saint-Denis for the next seventeen years.<sup>63</sup> After Brother Barthélemy died in 1720, Jean-François attended the General Chapter of that year, which elected Brother Timothée as the

57. Cahiers lasalliens 3, pp. 33, 13.

58. Cahiers lasalliens 11, p. 197, note 5.

59. Poutet, *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 2, p. 102.

60. Cahiers lasalliens 11, p. 197, note 5.

61. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, p. 352.

62. Cahiers lasalliens 25, p. 162.

63. Cahiers lasalliens 11, p. 197, note 5.

second Superior. Likewise, he attended the Chapter of the Brothers in 1725 for the solemn reception of the Bull of Approbation and the renewal of vows according to the Bull. Again, as Director of Saint-Denis, he would have been present in 1734 for the solemn transfer of the relics of the Founder from the church of Saint Sever to the new chapel at Saint Yon. He was also part of the Chapter that followed, when Timothée was reelected as Superior and two new Assistants were chosen, Brothers Irénée and Étienne. Jean-François was replaced as Director of Saint-Denis in 1734 and may have retired in that community, for he is listed as having died there in 1740.<sup>64</sup>

Here, then, was a good Director for a community. Just from the incomplete record available, he served in that capacity for twenty-four years in the two communities of Laon and Saint-Denis. Other Brothers also served many years as Director; perhaps this means that there were not many among the Brothers who were capable of exercising that role adequately. De La Salle made good use of what the Lord provided.

## Brother Denis

Brother Denis (Jean-Louis Guignard) is one of the Brothers whose vow formulas are in *Livret des Premiers Vœux*; he made vows for all his life on 9 December 1697. He is not listed in the *Catalogue*, which means that he either died or left the Institute before 1714. The only other sources of information about him are three letters written to him by De La Salle.<sup>65</sup> The research of Brother Félix-Paul given in the critical edition of the letters is the source of the following information.<sup>66</sup>

The first of the letters is dated 30 May 1701; based on the content of the letter and the fact that it seems to have been enclosed in another letter, Félix-Paul concludes that Denis was sent to the community in Rethel to replace the previous Director, Pierre Garnier, who died on 2 January 1701. Nothing further is known about that Brother Pierre.

Another view might be that Denis replaced Brother Pierre in the work of the school but not as Director and that his letter was enclosed with the one to Brother Claude, who was Director. Brother Claude was one of the twelve Brothers who took vows with De La

64. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, p. 458; Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 33.

65. *Letters*, 3, 4, and 5.

66. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, pp. 33–44.

Salle in 1694. It is of interest that Denis, not Claude, may have been the Director, since Brother Claude had been in the community from 1699 and is listed on the community register as Director in 1704. The register of the community of Rethel during the eighteenth century is, in fact, less than complete. Claude continued as Director in Rethel until 1708, after which there is no record of him; he is one of the twelve who took vows in 1694 who is presumed to have left the Institute.

Denis is on the register of the community of Rethel until 1704 and may have stayed there until 1705. He was put in charge of the school in Darnétal in 1706, with Brother Robert as his companion. He seems to have left Darnétal after the school year 1707–1708; there is no further record of him. It is uncertain whether he persevered in the Institute.

The other two letters to Denis, written in 1708, are rather long. De La Salle takes care to answer the numerous items in the letter Denis wrote to him. He assures Denis that he is concerned about him, his needs, his health, and his fidelity to the duties of his life as a Brother. It is evident that Denis has a need for patience in school and in community but that he is a person of good will.

The fact that Denis kept these letters might be taken as an argument in favor of his perseverance. It could be that Denis died as a Brother and that the letters were found among his personal effects after his death.

## Brother Philippe

Brother Philippe (Jean Police) is one of the many early Brothers about whom little is known, except for one assignment, even though he was one of the twenty-two Directors in 1716. He was a native of Soissons, born on 16 July 1677, and entered the Institute at the age of fifteen on 2 September 1692. He made vows for all his life on 14 June 1699.<sup>67</sup> There is no record of his work except as Director of the community and school in Moulins, first when Brother Barthélemy visited there on 16 December 1716<sup>68</sup> and again on records of the Moulins community for a continuous seventeen years until 1734.<sup>69</sup>

67. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 32.

68. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 185.

69. Cahiers lasalliens 11, D. 197, note 5.

The story illustrates not only De La Salle's patience but also the limited personalities of some of the Brothers on whom he had to rely, even for key positions. Ponce's was evidently a harsh personality, tough on himself and tough on others, but he was a good school man, someone who could take charge of the important schools in the parish of Saint Sulpice.

De La Salle may have relieved Ponce of his position on that occasion, but it was only temporarily, for there is sound evidence that he was the Director of the school in Laon for the school year 1702–1703.<sup>82</sup> This conflicts with Blain, who has Ponce in Paris at that time, responsible with Brother Michel, Director of Novices, for the brutal treatment of the young Brothers that led to the effort to replace De La Salle as Superior. This discrepancy may well be an example of the confusion Blain sometimes displays regarding the dating of events.<sup>83</sup>

In any case, Ponce was back in Paris in 1704, for his name is listed as one of the Brothers in the trial of the writing masters.<sup>84</sup> He also was among the Brothers who signed the lease for the house on the rue Princesse on 5 July 1704.<sup>85</sup> It is significant that Ponce's name is the first after De La Salle's on the document of the trial and also the first of the four Brothers on the lease. If the harshness of Ponce was one cause of the trouble with De La Chétardie and the cardinal in 1702, his respected ability as a school man had him back in a key position as early as 1704.

When the Brothers had to leave Paris a short time later as a result of the writing masters' trial, De La Salle again showed his respect for Ponce's ability by sending him to Darnétal, a suburb of Rouen, to size up the prospect of the Brothers' taking over a school there. The Founder did this apparently before agreeing to the request from M. Deshayes to send Brothers.<sup>86</sup> Ponce and a Brother Robert, whose story will be told, took over the school in February 1705.<sup>87</sup>

Ponce did not stay there very long, he was a point man, it seems, for De La Salle. The opportunity arose for De La Salle to move into Rouen itself, a move he seems to have desired in order to locate a center for the Institute in place of Paris. In a letter to Brother Gabriel in Rome dated 4 September 1705, De La Salle wrote that he had

82. Cahiers lasalliens 11, p. 197, note 5.

83. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 356.

84. Cahiers lasalliens 40, p. 173.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

86. Blain, vol. 2, book 3, chap. 2, Cahiers lasalliens 8, p. 16.

87. *Letters*, p. 136.

placed the novitiate in Rouen and that the Brothers were teaching in schools of that city: "where Brother Ponce is stationed."<sup>88</sup>

What De La Salle is saying so briefly is explained by Lucard, who was later Director of the schools in Rouen.<sup>89</sup> Around the time that Ponce and Robert were establishing the Lasallian school in Darnétal, the bishop of Rouen, Jacques-Nicolas Colbert, and the president of the Parliament of Normandy, Nicolas-Pierre Pontcarré, began to make plans to bring the Brothers to the city of Rouen itself. In May 1705, De La Salle brought two Brothers to make this move. One was Brother Dominique for the school in Darnétal,<sup>90</sup> so he could bring Ponce to Rouen as Director of the new community established there. The other was Brother Martinien to help out in Rouen.<sup>91</sup> Eventually there were ten Brothers in the Rouen community conducting four schools.

De La Salle evidently foresaw the prospects for the several schools in Rouen as well as a center for the novitiate. It is significant that he brought Ponce to Rouen to get the program of the schools off to a solid start. But, again, Ponce did not stay long in this assignment either. He was sent south, to the city of Avignon, possibly as early as January of 1706,<sup>92</sup> to replace Albert, who opened the school in Marseille that month.<sup>93</sup>

Lucard says that before going south, Ponce was also briefly in charge of the new school for the parish of Saint Roch in Paris, which opened providentially at about the same time that the Brothers were being driven out of the parish of Saint Sulpice as a result of the trial with the writing masters.<sup>94</sup>

Shortly after Ponce was in Avignon, De La Salle asked him to go to Mende to open a school for the bishop of the town, Francois de Piencourt, who had written to De La Salle for Brothers. De La Salle did not have the manpower at the time, but he told Ponce to go and get the school started. On 1 April 1707, De La Salle wrote to Gabriel<sup>95</sup> that Ponce had opened a school in Mende but had fallen ill. Evidently in a short space of time, by himself Ponce had demonstrated the success of his school, for the bishop wrote to De La Salle on 8 April 1707 in part:

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88. *Ibid.*, 19.4.

89. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, p. 175.

90. Blain, *Abrégé* (Summary), Cahiers lasalliens 8, p. 78.

91. Felix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 265.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 129, note 6.

93. *Letters*, 21.15.

94. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, p. 181.

95. *Letters*, 26.

I could not be more pleased than I am with the Brother you sent to me, who has begun while waiting for another to help him in the instruction of our youth.<sup>96</sup>

This was what De La Salle had no doubt desired when he had sent just one Brother to begin a school. Ordinarily, the Founder wanted to have more than two in a community, permitting that number only because he hoped that a school would grow or that another school would be needed, so that he could have as many as five Brothers living together for the sake of community life.

Again Ponce did not stay long in Mende. Brother Antoine Partois was sent to replace him, and Ponce went to Avignon as Director; it was there that he received a letter from Bishop Piencourt, dated 7 November and addressed to “The Very Venerable Brother Ponce, Superior, Visitor of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.”<sup>97</sup>

The bishop’s use of the term “Visitor” is significant. He may be borrowing from ecclesiastical terminology; it is not clear how soon the Brothers may have used it among themselves; it first appears in print in the Rule of 1718.<sup>98</sup> In De La Salle’s assignment to Brother Joseph for this role in the north of France, he does not use the term. He only states that Brother Joseph is responsible for visiting the communities that he lists, saying, “I enjoin the Directors of these communities to receive this Brother in this capacity and inform him of all that takes place in their community.”<sup>99</sup> Such a written assignment for Ponce has not been preserved, but it is certain that De La Salle would have given one to him.

Ponce remained as Director of the community in Avignon while he also functioned as the Visitor for the communities and schools in the south: Avignon, Marseille, Valréas, Mende, Alès, Grenoble, Mâcon, Moulins, and eventually Les Vans. This role is made clear in De La Salle’s letters to Brother Mathias, whose story will be told. Here are examples from these letters probably written in 1707 and 1708:

Instead of telling your problems to people outside the community, tell them to Brother Ponce or write to him if he is not at Mende. I have delegated him to attend to all that needs to be done for the welfare of the Brothers in that area. . . . You may be sure, my very dear Brother, that acting on what Brother Ponce tells me, I will do all that is best for you. So, let him know all

96. Blain, vol. 2, book 5, chap. 6, Cahiers lasalliens 8, p. 46.

97. Félix-Paul, *Les lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 241, note 1.

98. Cahiers lasalliens 25, p. 27, Cahiers lasalliens 11, pp. 74–75.

99. *Letters*, 52(a).

your difficulties and your thoughts. In doing so you will find that God will give you his blessing.<sup>100</sup>

In reply to your two letters, my very dear Brother, I have to tell you that I have written to Brother Ponce asking him to go to Mende and put things in order. I think that he will be able to transfer you and put you in his community.<sup>101</sup>

Another example of the role that De La Salle expected of Brother Ponce is mentioned in a letter to Brother Gabriel, dated 14 February 1710, in which he says that he asked Ponce to visit the bishop of Cavaillon, Joseph de Guyon de Crochans, in order to express the Founder's gratitude for his kindness to Brother Gabriel in helping him to get assigned to a papal school.<sup>102</sup>

The next and last mission of record for Ponce is in 1711. De La Salle had received a legacy from a priest who willed the money in order to support Brothers for a school in Les Vans. The priest died in September 1710, and De La Salle sent Brother Ponce to receive the money for the Brothers who would be assigned to the school. The municipal records of 3 January 1711 state that Brother Ponce Thiseux, Visitor of the Brothers, came to this city and offered to assign the Brothers; he requested the city council to take care of the house for the Brothers and the school.<sup>103</sup> Ponce assigned Brother René as Director and Brother Maximin to assist him in the school; they began the work at the beginning of the school year in October 1711.

Ponce must have left the Brothers before 1714, because his name is not on the list compiled in that year. Poutet suggests that Ponce may have been among those discouraged by the opposition to De La Salle from the Jansenist opponents of the Jesuits in Marseille.<sup>104</sup>

Blain gives a less charitable description of Ponce's departure from the Institute:

There was the notorious Brother Director of Paris, of whom we have spoken previously, harsh on himself and even more so on others, who, together with the Master of Novices, by inflicting such indiscreet and exaggerated penances [on the young Brothers] had given rise to the great persecution that was the start of all the others. He had been sent by De La Salle to open the

100. *Ibid.*, 573, 4, 6.

101. *Ibid.*, 64.1

102. *Ibid.*, 275.

103. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 369.

104. Poutet, *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines lasalliennes*, 2, p. 345.

school in Mende and had also been commissioned to visit the houses of the Institute in Provence. This Brother allowed himself to be influenced by all that was happening and left the Society. His desertion was neither sudden nor unforeseen. It took place with the deliberation of a man who had been planning it for a long time. Before leaving the house, he took care to set aside as much money as he could. When he had a considerable sum to line his pockets, he departed with the embezzled funds.<sup>105</sup>

Lucard gives yet another version of Ponce's departure.<sup>106</sup> He says that De La Salle ordered Ponce to go to Rouen in 1713 to live under the direction of Brother Dosithée, who was in charge of the school community. This may have been done as a penance. Félix-Paul suggests that Brother Timothée, whose story will be told, was assigned to Avignon in 1713 to replace Ponce as both Director of the community and Visitor of the region.<sup>107</sup> This adds credence to the departure date of 1713 but only as an hypothesis.

One letter written by Ponce has been preserved among the letters sent to Brother Mathias.<sup>108</sup> Dated 4 June 1708, it directs Mathias to go from Mende to Avignon, a change that had been suggested by De La Salle.<sup>109</sup> Ponce asks Mathias to bring with him a packet of all his letters, other documents of the Society, and some papers he had left with a local priest. He also asks Mathias not to tell anyone that he is leaving but to give his regards to two couples who were, Félix-Paul thinks, persons outside the community that De La Salle, in three letters, had warned Mathias not to visit.<sup>110</sup>

Certain remarks by De La Salle in letters to Gabriel<sup>111</sup> suggest that Ponce may have intercepted some of the letters that were sent through the community of Avignon. On 12 May 1710, De La Salle asks Gabriel to write to Ponce. This is unusual, since the Brothers were not supposed to write to one another. The Founder may have been worrying about Ponce and considering that correspondence with Gabriel would help him. He says that Ponce could send him some classroom prayer books and adds, "I would very much like you to write to him." Ponce was in Avignon at the time.

105. Blain, vol. 2, book 3, chap. 10, Cahiers lasalliens 8, p. 92.

106. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, p. 299.

107. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 171.

108. *Letters*, 64(a).

109. *Ibid.*, 64.1.

110. *Ibid.*, 62.5; 63.8; 64.12.

111. *Ibid.*, 28.19 and 32.1.

A fitting postscript to the story about Ponce may be the one letter which, according to Félix-Paul,<sup>112</sup> De La Salle may have written to him: it is tentatively dated January 1706, when Ponce was the Director in Rouen:

You should be most careful, my very dear Brother, not to speak so haughtily; as you tell me you sometimes do. The Spirit of God does not allow that sort of talk.

So let humility and gentleness be always evident in what you say. "A soft answer," says the Wise Man, "breaks down the hardest nature." Nothing will make you more pleasing to God and men than these two virtues.

But if you ought to speak to your Brothers with humility and gentleness, you ought to be no less careful to act in the same way toward people outside the community. Saint Paul requires this of all Christians.

So never rebuff anyone; that gives very bad example. On the contrary, speak politely, which is altogether in keeping with the Spirit of God

You must be on your guard against speaking too freely with your students, for this takes away all respect.

In class you must avoid levity, for it does a lot of harm.

It is against our rules to teach catechism in church.

Women are not to be admitted (in the school).

Students are not to be given anything to drink.

You are not just to ask for a Mass on the feast of Saint Nicolas, but offer a stipend for one to be said.

I am, my very dear Brother,

Devotedly yours in Our Lord,

De La Salle.<sup>113</sup>

This letter follows the usual style of the Founder's letters of counsel in response to the Brothers' monthly report to him of their conduct and their conscience. The content of De La Salle's letter follows the topics that are in the letter of the Brother. This letter to Ponce reveals both the effort Ponce was making to be honest with De La Salle

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112. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 314.

113. *Letters*, 49.

and the Founder's forthright response. Its brevity need not disappoint, since it must be put in context with the personal, intimate relationship that De La Salle had with each of the Brothers to whom he wrote, also the considerable number of letters that the Founder had to write to the Brothers each month, not to mention all his other official correspondence and business.

Brother Félix-Paul says that De La Salle must have been deeply hurt when this Brother left the Institute but that the Founder maintained his spirit of kindness and his insurmountable optimism based on his trust in God. De La Salle, he adds, "employed the men that God sent to him, as long as they could be good instruments of Divine Providence."<sup>114</sup>

### Brother Ambroise

Brother Ambroise (François Blin) was born on 20 January 1672 in the parish of Warcq, which is near the town of Mézières and in the diocese of Reims.<sup>115</sup> He belonged to a fairly well-to-do family; in 1733 he and his sister, Jeanne Blin, were able to endow the Brothers' community in Mézières with their inheritance, probably property in the Warcq area.<sup>116</sup> In the records of the community in Mézières, a note written by Brother Timothée, Superior, to Brother Barthélemy Legendre, Director of the community, asks Barthélemy to take care of the property and of Ambroise's sister during her lifetime.<sup>117</sup>

Brother Ambroise was evidently blessed with good health, because he lived to the age of eighty-five.<sup>118</sup> He must have had a fairly good education also, because before entering the Institute on 21 May 1693 at the age of twenty-one, he held an elected civic position (*prévôté*) for the village of Warcq,<sup>119</sup> probably representing Warcq in the town of Mézières. Lucard, who had access to the early records of the novitiate, says that Ambroise was the only one who entered in 1693.<sup>120</sup> How the religious names of the Brothers were chosen is not clear, but in his case a good guess might be the fact that the role he

114. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 259.

115. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 52.

116. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 2, p. 271.

117. Ibid.

118. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 32.

119. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 2, p. 271.

120. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, p. 89.

had in his native village of Warcq was similar to the role of Saint Ambrose in Milan before he became a bishop.

Brother Ambroise must have impressed De La Salle, for within two years of his entry, he was allowed to make vows for all his life on 29 May 1695,<sup>121</sup> which was the feast of the Most Holy Trinity. A few others did this, but it was not the general rule, most waiting for five or more years.

The earliest documentary evidence of any assignment for Ambroise is his name on the list of the eighteen Brothers on the indictment in the suit of the writing masters against De La Salle and the Brothers who were conducting five schools in Paris in 1704.<sup>122</sup> Then there is a lapse of information until 1716.

On 4 December 1716, Ambroise was one of five Brothers whom De La Salle called together to make a major decision for the good of the Institute. The other four were François, Director of the boarding school (*pension libre*), Dosithée, Director of the school community in Rouen, and Charles and Étienne, teachers at Saint Yon. The Founder explained to them the need to hold a General Assembly of the Directors of all the communities to review and update the Rule of the Brothers and to elect a new Superior. His proposal was reluctantly accepted, sad though it was for them to imagine De La Salle's retiring from his leadership role. It was decided to have Brother Barthélemy visit all the communities in order to obtain the Brothers' agreement to the proposal.

They drew up a document to this effect:

We, the undersigned, Brothers of the Christian Schools, assembled in the house of Saint Yon to take care of what is most urgent for the good our Institute, recognize that for almost a year M. de La Salle, our Founder, has been retired here because of illness during that time, and we judge it proper and even necessary to commission Brother Barthélemy, who has been assigned to guide our Institute for several years, to make a visit without delay to all the houses dependent on the Institute, in order to learn all that is transpiring there and the manner in which they are being conducted, so that later it can be decided, with the principal Brothers of our Society, what means should be taken to establish, preserve, and maintain union and uniformity in the Institute, to draw up and determine regulations, and to provide at the same time for the general government of the Institute in an assembly

121. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 12.

122. Poutet, *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 2, p. 375.

which he will state will be held in the house of Saint Yon from the feast of Ascension to the feast of Pentecost.

(signed) Brother François, Brother Dosithée, Brother Charles, Brother Ambroise, and Brother Étienne

I believe proper what the Brothers have resolved above, the days, the month, and the year, in the house of Saint Yon.

(signed) De La Salle

We the undersigned, Superior of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Rouen, appointed by the archbishop, approve of Brother Barthélemy's being absent during the months ahead in order to do what M. de La Salle and the Brothers have judged necessary. I believe it is as necessary as they do.

(signed) Blain<sup>123</sup>

The document was initialed by two lawyers, Luce and Sardon,<sup>124</sup> all of which leaves no doubt that De La Salle was the true son of a lawyer.

On this document Ambroise is listed as the Director of the detention center (*penitencier de force*) in which adults with some social status were placed by the king instead of being sent to the public prison.<sup>125</sup> This was no doubt a difficult assignment but one consonant with the role Ambroise had in his village before he entered the Brothers.

Ambroise was among those who signed the document, 7 May 1717, of Barthélemy's visit to Saint Yon at the end of his tour of the communities. He was relieved of the job at Saint Yon when Barthélemy became Superior; Brother Dosithée, whose story will be told later, was appointed Director of the detention center early in 1718.<sup>126</sup>

Ambroise's signature is on the document attesting to the burial of De La Salle in the church of Saint Sever on 8 April 1719, so he may have stayed in Rouen, if not at Saint Yon, in the community of the Brothers working in the schools of that city.<sup>127</sup>

There is no documentary evidence of the assignment of Ambroise between 1718 and 1723, but the records of the city of Marseille indicate that in 1723, at the age of fifty-one, he began residence there which was to last until the end of his life, some thirty-four years later.

123. Lucard, *Vie du Vénérable Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, 2, pp. 162–163.

124. *Cahiers lasalliens* 40/1, p. 182.

125. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, pp. 348–350.

126. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 417.

127. Lucard, *Vie du Vénérable Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, 2, p. 278.

He was to fulfill what De La Salle had hoped for in his letter to Gabriel Drolin on 16 April 1706: that the Brothers would soon be conducting all four parish schools of the city.<sup>128</sup> All the schools in Marseille had been closed by an epidemic in 1720. Bishop Belsunce, who was unable to oblige De La Salle in 1706, set about to fulfill his hope in 1723 by writing to Brother Timothée, Superior, for Brothers to take charge of the schools for the poor in each of the four quarters of the city. Timothée selected Ambroise to be the Director of this project.

Rigault says that Ambroise was chosen as "one of the Brothers most imbued with Lasallian traditions and most capable in the role of Director."<sup>129</sup> He took residence in the parish of Saint Laurent, where the Brothers had first begun work in the city in 1706. Within two years he had Brothers in each of the four schools: in Saint Laurent early in 1723, on 29 May 1723 at the Cathedral, on 10 October 1723 in Saint Martin, on 1 January 1724 in Notre-Dame-des-Accoules, and on 2 October 1724 in the parish of Saint Ferréol. He also had arranged with the Confraternity of Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours for a suitable residence for the Brothers working in all four schools.<sup>130</sup> Three other Brothers, in a separate community, were working in the shelter for the poor in the city.<sup>131</sup>

In June 1726, Ambroise returned to Saint Yon for retreat and renewal of his vows according to the Bull of Approbation, along with other Brothers who had not been able to attend the solemn reception of and renewal of vows according to the Bull in August 1725.<sup>132</sup>

Early in 1727, he and the eleven Brothers of the community prepared and signed a petition to the city council of Marseille for official recognition of the Brothers as a religious congregation. The fact that the Institute had received letters patent from the king and approbation by the pope made this possible. City council approval, registered in the municipal records of 6 March 1727, enabled the Brothers to share in the rights and privileges granted by the city, including some financial assistance which other recognized religious groups enjoyed.<sup>133</sup>

Brother Ambroise probably retired in the Marseille community, for it was there that he died. The date in the *Catalogue* is 23 November 1757;<sup>134</sup> Rigault gives the date of 23 November 1756,<sup>135</sup> which he took from the parish records.

128. *Letters*, 229.

129. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 2, p. 175.

130. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, pp. 428–429.

131. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 2, p. 176.

132. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, p. 461.

133. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 2, p. 176.

## Brother Michel

The earliest document about Brother Michel (Jacques Lequeasse) is the record of his perpetual vows at Vaugirard on 2 June 1697.<sup>136</sup> It is probable, therefore, that he had entered the Institute at least two or three years earlier at Vaugirard. The earliest assignment on record for Brother Michel, then only twenty-three years old, is Director of Novices at the *Grande Maison* in the summer of 1699, following the death of Brother Jean-Heuri.<sup>137</sup>

Gallego wonders why De La Salle did not assign one of the twelve who made perpetual vows in 1694 to this important responsibility.<sup>138</sup> Blain says that De La Salle made mistakes in selecting some of the Brothers for leadership.<sup>139</sup> Blain, interested in getting the Founder canonized, compares De La Salle's experience to the similar experience of Saint Francis of Assisi in his selection of Elias to be the leader of the Franciscans.

It is quite possible that De La Salle assigned the most reliable Brothers to the responsibility of Director in the communities located away from Paris, where he himself generally resided, counting on his best men to maintain the Rule without his own presence. He relied on himself to support observance of the Rule in Paris, especially in the house of the novitiate, where he could assist in the direction of the novices. It also must be kept in mind that the Founder was often short of qualified men for the work of leadership.

Blain describes Brother Michel as an austere person who was extremely hard on himself and given to the practice of continual mortification. Unfortunately, he was also inclined to be hard on others, and he lacked prudence. These traits led Michel, as Director, to treat the novices too severely. When present, De La Salle was able to counsel the Director to exercise more restraint, and he could encourage the novices who might feel they were abused. Michel, however, was a hard personality, and he did not seem able to respond to the Founder's guidance.

On one occasion when De La Salle was absent for several days visiting other communities, the Director's severity in administering

134. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 32.

135. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 2, p. 175.

136. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 14.

137. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 18, Cahiers lasalliens 7, pp. 399ff.

138. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 306, note 23.

139. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 14, Cahiers lasalliens 7, pp. 356–357.

corporal penance to two of the novices led them to bring their complaints to the pastor, M. de La Chétardie.

Blain says that this was just what the pastor was looking for, a cause to seek the replacement of De La Salle as Superior of the Brothers, so that he could take charge of the Brothers himself.<sup>140</sup> The pastor was shown the welts that the penance had given the young men, and he had them prepare a written statement of their grievances.

Blain follows this incident with another similar event in his account, though Gallego<sup>141</sup> maintains that the two incidents probably occurred the other way around. In either case, Brother Ponce, principal of the parish school, who was also a harsh personality, inflicted severe corporal penance on another novice, who was assigned to do practice teaching in the school. This young man also went to the pastor, showed the marks that Brother Ponce had made on him, and prepared his statement of grievances.

What followed is the well-known story of the cardinal's becoming involved, sending his vicar-general to an assembly of the Brothers in Paris, and announcing that De La Salle was replaced as Superior. The first meeting took place in November 1702. The Brothers, of course, revolted, not just the older ones, though most of them may have been in school, but the novices themselves, who were angry not at the Founder but at his two appointees.

Blain says that one of the "principal Brothers" came forward and spoke to the vicar-general on behalf of the assembly, pointing out that the Brothers elected De La Salle and were quite pleased with his leadership. This Brother could have been Nicolas Vuyart, Jean Jacquot, or Antoine Partois, who were stationed in Paris at the time. Gabriel Drolin was in Rome. Jean, as Supervisor of classes, may well have been present because of his position, whereas the other two may have been in school. Blain says that this Brother approached the vicar-general and spoke calmly to him, but then when his words did not seem to impress the vicar-general, he raised his voice so that all the Brothers would know that he was objecting to what this official had announced. This Brother may have also been the one who spoke up at a later meeting to make sure that the special arbitrator, M. Madot, put the final compromise in writing before they all set off for the conciliatory meeting with the cardinal.

At one point Michel stood up to speak, perhaps in his own defense as well as for De La Salle. This enraged the vicar-general, who

140. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 19, *Cahiers lasalliens* 7, pp. 401ff.

141. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 356.

angrily told him, “What! You dare to speak? You unworthy one, undeserving of the responsibility you have?”

Eventually, over several weeks of maneuvers and in spite of the desires of De La Chétardie and the efforts of at least one other ecclesiastic, a certain compromise and calm ensued but not without creating a degree of turmoil in the community.

Meanwhile, stimulated by the course of these events, Michel induced another Brother, probably Brother Gabriel Drolin’s brother, Gérard,<sup>142</sup> to abscond with him from the community at night through a window, go to the Trappist monastery, and seek admission. The abbot, who knew De La Salle, wrote to the Founder to find out if he approved of the two men’s transferring to him. De La Salle asked the abbot to send them back.<sup>143</sup> Michel’s companion soon left the Institute, but De La Salle continued to take care of him, as will be told in the story about Gérard.

Michel obviously had to be relieved of his job as Director of Novices, but he persevered in spite of his troubling behavior, and De La Salle stayed with him. The Founder, obviously not inclined to have him in charge of others, sent him as a serving Brother to be in charge of the temporal affairs, probably including the work of cook, for the community in Chartres. There he died at the age of twenty-nine in the epidemic of purple fever (typhus) on 27 May 1705.<sup>144</sup> He is a sad example of the less-than-perfect young men whom De La Salle accepted into his care and whom he tried his best to help as they served the purpose of the Institute. Michel, nonetheless, persevered to the end of his life.

## Brother Gérard

Mention has already been made of Brother Gérard (Gérard Drolin) in the story of his brother, Gabriel Drolin. Gérard was born on 18 December 1676, about twelve years after Gabriel.<sup>145</sup> He followed his older brother into the Institute, probably in 1693, and made his perpetual vows on 9 December 1697, just twelve days short of his twenty-first birthday.<sup>146</sup>

142. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 380, note 156.

143. Cahiers lasalliens 11, p. 70, note 4.

144. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 88.

145. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

146. Cahiers lasalliens 5, p. 15.

There is no record of his assignments before 1702. It was during the vacation period of that year that De La Salle sent Gabriel and Gérard to Rome to start a school for poor boys. It seemed like a good move to send the two brothers together for their mutual support, but it did not work out that way. Gérard, described later by De La Salle in a letter to Gabriel as "one of the most fickle people I know,"<sup>147</sup> left his brother alone in Rome and returned to France, probably within a year.

Gérard returned by way of Avignon, most likely in the company of Bishop Joseph-François Gualtieri, who had befriended the Drolin brothers when they arrived in Rome.<sup>148</sup> Lucard says that Gérard traveled in his religious habit, and because he was with the bishop, he was introduced to the papal treasurer in Avignon, Jean-Pierre Madon de Châteaublanc.<sup>149</sup> This distinguished person, through the wishes of his wife, had already made contact with De La Salle for teachers to open a school for poor boys in Avignon. Blain says that he and others who met with Gérard were impressed with the Brother.<sup>150</sup> The school was opened in 1703.

Gérard returned to Paris, and he is possibly the one who became involved in the bizarre escape from the community with the unhappy Director of Novices, which has already been described in the previous story about Brother Michel. The two of them had applied for admission at the local Trappist monastery. The abbot, Jacques de La Cour, sent the two Brothers back.<sup>151</sup> Subsequently Gérard left the Institute.

It is probable that this incident of the aborted attempt to enter the Trappists is what the Founder is referring to in his letter of 23 December to Gabriel Drolin. The year of the letter is not indicated; Félix-Paul assigned it to 1704. "I do not think that you should involve yourself in Brother Gérard's dispensation from his vows," the Founder wrote. "He is one of the most fickle people I know. He is not suited for the world and would have been well suited for the Trappists. I am very sorry that I dissuaded him from joining them. He never knows what he wants to do."<sup>152</sup>

De La Salle makes two other references to Gérard in his letters to Gabriel. On 26 November 1706,<sup>153</sup> he mentions that the Brothers have

147. *Letters*, 15.4.

148. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 55.

149. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, p. 110.

150. Blain, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 17, *Cahiers lasalliens* 7, p. 396.

151. *Cahiers lasalliens* 11, p. 70, note 4.

152. *Letters*, 15.4 and 5.

153. *Ibid.*, 25.

a house not far from where Gérard is living and that he, the Founder, has arranged for Gérard to be the sacristan there. He adds that this will help Gabriel's brother work out his salvation, that Gérard is now behaving very well, and that he comes regularly for confession.

The other reference is in a letter to Gabriel of 14 February 1710,<sup>154</sup> which only says that Gabriel's letter to De La Salle came through Gérard, probably because of postal problems existing at the time. There is no further record of Gérard Drolin that has come to light so far.

### Brother Martin

Brother Martin (Pierre Bernard) entered the Institute on 3 November 1696, just ten days before his thirty-sixth birthday. Gallego points out that he was probably among the oldest Brothers during De La Salle's lifetime; he was only nine years younger than the Founder.<sup>155</sup>

It is probable that Gallego considered Brother Hilarion Sceillier, whose story will be told later on, an exceptional case, because Blain states that he entered around the age of seventy.<sup>156</sup>

There are three documents with Brother Martin's signature, one recording Brother Barthélemy's visit to Saint Yon on 7 May 1717, on which Martin's is one of nine signatures, and a second document, dated 3 June 1718. This is the document with the fourteen names of the residents of Saint Yon attesting to the fact that they participated in the purchase of the property from the heirs of Madame de Louvois.<sup>157</sup> On this document eleven names are followed by the assignment they had in the community. Brother Martin is listed as the shoemaker, which suggests that he was a serving Brother, though not definitively, because only three had no special job, and some with assignments may also have been teachers in the classes for the boarders.

The third document, dated 26 June 1718, contains eighteen signatures authorizing Brothers Barthélemy and Jean Jacquot to enter into an agreement with M. Charon, founder of the General Hospice of Villemarie in Montreal, to establish a teacher-training program for the rural parishes of the diocese of Quebec.<sup>158</sup> This project was never carried out and will be described in the story of Brother Barthélemy.

154. *Ibid.*, 27.

155. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 242.

156. Blain, *Abrégé* (Summary), Cahiers lasaliens 8, p. 79.

157. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 417.

There is no certitude about the date of Martin's death, though the *Catalogue* does state that he died at Saint Yon. Gallego suggests that he died at the age of fifty-eight or fifty-nine, that is, in the year 1719 or 1720, probably because his name does not appear on any available documents after those years.<sup>159</sup>

### Brother Athanase

Brother Athanase (Jean Richer) is one of the Brothers whose vow formulas are in *Livret des Premiers Vœux* but not in the *Catalogue*, which means that he died or left the Institute before 1714, the year the *Catalogue* was begun. He made vows for all his life on 8 September 1699. He was Director of the community of Chartres in 1705, as evidenced by his signature on the death certificates of two Brothers who died that year in the epidemic of typhoid fever: Brother Nicolas Falon and Brother Michel Loyson.<sup>160</sup> This incident has been described in the story about Jacques Compain.

Athanase could have been the procurator in the community of Saint Yon in 1709, when Brother Hubert sent a request to him for holy pictures to give as rewards to students.<sup>161</sup> This is all the information available about Brother Athanase.

### Brother Joseph (2nd)

Brother Joseph (Jean Le Roux) was born on 18 February 1678 in the small town of Lerzy, about twelve miles north of Laon in the diocese of Laon. He entered the Institute in 1697 and made his novitiate at Vaugirard.<sup>162</sup> He made vows "for all my life" on 10 May 1700.<sup>163</sup> The earliest record of his assignment is on the list of the eighteen Brothers teaching in Paris when the writing masters sued De La Salle and the Brothers in 1704.<sup>164</sup> He is also one of the four Brothers who signed the lease for the house on the rue Princesse on 5 July 1704.<sup>165</sup>

158. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 203.

159. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 539.

160. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 205.

161. Ibid.

162. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 34.

163. Ibid., p. 16.

164. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 375.

165. Cahiers lasalliens 42/1, pp. 290-294.

When the Brothers dispersed from Paris in 1706, Joseph was assigned to replace Brother Ponce as Director of the community in Rouen in the parish of Saint Nicolas, which was for the Brothers teaching in the schools of that city.<sup>166</sup> He continued in Rouen until 1710.<sup>167</sup> As the Director in Rouen, he also had jurisdiction over the Brothers in Darnétal, as De La Salle indicates in letters to Brother Robert.<sup>168</sup>

Blain tells an interesting story involving Joseph when he was probably living with De La Salle in Saint Yon, before the Founder brought the novices to Paris during the famine of 1709.<sup>169</sup> The Founder was without food and money, so he asked Joseph and another Brother to go to the Carthusian monastery nearby to ask for help. They were turned down and told that the Brothers should never have come to Rouen if they did not have the wherewithal to live without begging. They then went to several other houses in Rouen (Blain says about a dozen) but were not successful; they returned with only seven or eight livres (about seventy or eighty dollars). They did, however, find a packet of documents on the street, which they turned over to De La Salle. The Founder, seeing that these documents belonged to the Carthusians, remarked, "Blessed be God! Evidently he wants them to give us some help." And so they did, generously, when the Brothers brought the packet to the monastery.

In 1708 De La Salle had assigned Brother Joseph the task of Visitor to visit the communities of Rethel, Guise, Laon, and Reims while continuing to be Director of the community in Rouen.<sup>170</sup>

De La Salle had already given Brother Ponce such authority for the communities in the south,<sup>171</sup> though we do not have the document assigning him to that work. Evidently the Founder knew that the supervision of all the communities was too much for himself alone; he also was moving in the direction he always had in mind, of giving the Brothers full responsibility for their own lives.

On 28 March 1709, Brother Joseph, in his role as Director of the Rouen community, signed the certificate of burial for Brother Louis.<sup>172</sup>

166. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 221.

167. *Ibid.*

168. *Letters*, 40.1 and 9; 42.2. see also Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 39.

169. Blain, vol. 2, book 4, chap. 2, Cahiers lasalliens 8, pp. 265–266.

170. *Letters*, 52(a).

171. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 241, note 1.

172. *Ibid.*, p. 39, note 5.

In that year also, he received a renewal of his assignment to visit the same four communities plus the community in Troyes.<sup>173</sup>

It is not completely clear, but it seems that Joseph resided for a brief period in Paris and then went to Reims in 1711.<sup>174</sup>

In 1710 Joseph was in Troyes as Visitor to cope with a problem concerning the residence of the Brothers and their school because of the death of the pastor, M. Le Bé, on 15 July. This priest had also been rector of the seminary and had been living there, giving his parish house to the Brothers and the school. The new pastor, M. Le Jeune, needed the parish house for his own residence. When Joseph informed De La Salle of the problem, the Founder responded on 23 December:

I received your letter at midday today, my very dear Brother. On Saturday I will set out for Troyes. Don't leave; wait for me there. I will be there on Monday, and we will discuss all the business concerning that town and your proposals about those properties at Reims. Don't tell anyone, not even Brother Albert, that I have to go there. I will do my best to bring things to a successful conclusion and to everyone's satisfaction.<sup>175</sup>

De La Salle was able to solve the problem by appealing to the bishop, Denis-François Bouthillier Chavigny, on the basis of an agreement in the original contract made in 1703.<sup>176</sup>

Underneath the Founder's signature on this letter is a prayer, written in Joseph's handwriting, which reveals the quality of his piety:

My God, I promise you that I will keep my resolutions with the help of your grace. I wish to do always all that I can to be obedient in all my actions in order to please you. I will try to speak in a low voice, not to allow myself to follow the first movement of nature, to have much kindness toward our dear Brothers on the occasions that will occur, to keep a close watch over my tongue when I will be obliged to speak outside the house, and to abandon myself to the guidance of God under all circumstances. O my God, my loving Saviour, I place all these resolutions under the care of the Most Blessed Virgin, of the glorious Saint Joseph, and of my holy guardian angel.<sup>177</sup>

173. *Letters*, 52(b).

174. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, pp. 221–222.

175. *Letters*, 55.

176. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 278.

177. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 223.

Early in February 1711, Joseph received a letter from De La Salle which reveals the type of business the Founder entrusted to him and the supervision that Joseph received while in his role as Visitor:

I received your three letters all at the same time, my very dear Brother, and am answering the most urgent of them. It seems advisable that Brother Placide go to Guise. I am having Brother Fabien set out with the young Brother from Mende who is to take Brother Placide's place. In two or three years he will be better able to profit from the novitiate than he is at present, and he will become a capable teacher.

Let Brother Fabien have the horse to come back here; he will be at Reims on Tuesday evening.

Brother Dosithée would not have written you if you had not first written to him, nor would the Brothers from Guise. I don't know why you write like this to the Brothers just according to whim. It is not a wise thing to do. There should be no correspondence like that from one community to another; it is unbecoming among Brothers like us. If you wish to prevent it, you must not do it yourself.

It is to be hoped that M. Bourgeois has learned how to sew and how to cut hair well. This is important.

I don't know if a young man, a stonemason, has called to see you since I left. If he still seeks admission, you must put him off until after Easter. But they must not both enter at the same time.

Please see that Brother Remi is given what he needs. He mentioned to Brother Thomas that he required wool for a pair of stockings, for he had none, and for an undershirt.<sup>178</sup>

The "young Brother" mentioned in the letter is Benoît (Robert Esbrayat), whose story will be told with those Brothers who entered in 1711. The Brother Remi in the letter is listed in the records of the community of Rehel in 1706; his family name was Frapant, but he is otherwise unknown.<sup>179</sup> He either died or left the Institute before 1714, for his name is not in the *Catalogue*, which was started that year.

In November 1711, De La Salle renewed Joseph's assignment as Visitor with much greater authority, not only by adding several more communities but by giving him responsibility to represent the Institute with anyone concerned:

178. *Letters*, 54.

179. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 232.

Nous François Pierre Duchat en Théologie Supérieur des frères des  
 Ecoles Chrétiennes déclarons à tous qu'il appartiendra que nous envoyons visiter  
 par frère Joseph de La Salle le tout pour visiter les Maisons de Moulins, de Dijon  
 de Troyes, de Reims, de Reims, de Reims, de Laon, de Guise, de Calais, de Boulogne,  
 de Rouen, de Saint-Yon, de Darnétal, de Chartres, de Versailles et de Saint-Denis  
 dépendantes de La Société des Ecoles Chrétiennes en France nous avons signé  
 ces présentes fait à Paris ce dix sixième Novembre mil sept cent onze

De La Salle

Obedience, dated 16 November 1711, appointing Brother Joseph as Visitor of certain houses of the Institute. Photo E. Peinet (J. B. de La Salle: iconographie, 1978; slide 238; plate 53).

I, the undersigned, Priest, Doctor of Theology, Superior of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, declare to all to whom it may concern that I send our very dear Brother Joseph of the aforesaid Society to carry out the visitation of the communities of Moulins, Dijon, Troyes, Reims, Reims, Reims, Laon, Guise, Calais, Boulogne, Rouen, Saint Yon, Darnétal, Chartres, Versailles, and Saint-Denis which are dependent on the Society of the Christian Schools.

In testimony of this, I have signed this document.

Given at Paris, this sixteenth day of November 1711.

De La Salle<sup>sm</sup>

The Founder was probably preparing for his own journey to Marseille and the other communities in Provence. He was giving rather complete authority to Brother Joseph for the communities in the north, except for Paris, where Brother Barthélemy was stationed with the novices. He certainly showed great confidence in Brother Joseph.

While De La Salle was in the south from 1712 to 1714, Joseph seems to have initiated a move to have the community in Reims receive letters patent.<sup>181</sup> It is possible that in the beginning his intention was not limited to Reims but was to include other houses of the Institute. The need for considerable funds as a condition for legal recognition prevented this extension. In the meantime, probably for the

180. Letters, 52c1.

181. Peinet, *Le XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lascalliennes*, 2, pp. 144, 150–152.

broader purpose, in 1712 he secured testimonials of approval from the bishops of Chartres, Troyes, and Laon.<sup>182</sup> Though Brother Joseph most likely had the support of M. Louis de La Salle in Reims, the plan for Reims never did materialize, though it is not clear why it did not.

There is no question about the loyalty of Joseph in making this move. It is conceivable that he did it against the background of what was happening in Paris: the effort of M. de Brou to take over the Institute in Paris and separate it from the rest of the Brothers. In obtaining letters patent for the community in Reims, he was preparing to give the Institute a solid base there if things in Paris got worse. He was exercising the extended authority De La Salle had given him in the assignment of 1711.

No doubt Joseph was in regular contact with Brother Barthélemy, and he probably was one of those who urged Barthélemy to call De La Salle back to Paris.<sup>183</sup> He most likely was the initiator and one of the signers of that letter.<sup>184</sup>

Brother Joseph was probably also in contact with M. François Vivant, the vicar for Cardinal de Noailles, concerning the effort by De Brou to revise the Rules of the Institute.<sup>185</sup> It may not be a coincidence that the Brothers of Paris, Versailles, and Saint-Denis (the last two communities being under the jurisdiction of Brother Joseph) wrote their letter to De La Salle on 1 April and that on 4 April M. Vivant told the Brothers that the cardinal did not want to make any of the changes in their Rule which were being urged by De Brou.<sup>186</sup>

Lucard says that when De La Salle returned to Paris in 1714, Barthélemy urged him to go to Reims to visit with Brother Joseph, because Joseph had helped Barthélemy on many serious matters while the Founder was away. Lucard also notes that the Founder spent a week in Reims, which must have been quite an experience of renewing old memories for him.<sup>187</sup>

Certainly the Brothers appreciated the sterling qualities of Joseph, for they elected him as one of the two Assistants who were requested by Barthélemy, the new Superior, at the General Chapter of 1717.<sup>188</sup> The Chapter renewed his assignment as Assistant in 1720 and in

182. Cahiers lasalliens 11, pp. 375–376; also pp. 84–89; a photocopy of the testimonial from the bishop of Troyes is in Cahiers lasalliens 40/2, p. 179.

183. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 502.

184. Cf. Poutet, *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 150.

185. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, pp. 510–511.

186. Blain, vol. 2, book 3, chap. 15, Cahiers lasalliens 8, p. 149.

187. Lucard, *Vie du Vénérable Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, 2, pp. 134–135.

188. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 2, p. 11.

1725.<sup>189</sup> Joseph was also greatly esteemed and loved by the principal benefactor of the Brothers of Rouen, the President of the Parliament of Normandy, Nicolas-Pierre de Pontcarré, who said to him, "When you are at Saint Yon, it is for me a reason to come there often."<sup>190</sup>

Brother Joseph was active as Assistant in the business of the Institute until his death in 1729,<sup>191</sup> despite the fact that he was never in the best of health. Blain says that he was subject to serious illnesses. For fifteen years he had some kind of a respiratory problem which made him cough almost continually, sometimes violently.<sup>192</sup> It was while he was on business for the Brothers that this problem caused his death. In the cold season of the year, he had traveled from Rouen to Paris to negotiate with Cardinal de Bissy for the Brothers to teach in Meaux. On 20 February he became seriously ill, and he died the next day,<sup>193</sup> though the *Catalogue* lists the date of his death as 18 February.<sup>194</sup>

Lucard, in the second book of *Annales*, gives an appropriate conclusion to this short biography of a great Brother:

This religious possessed in a special way a strong character which manifested itself in a perfect balance of personality: he was outgoing, and his words almost always expressed goodness and kindness. To him can be applied with accuracy the words of the Gospel, "Blessed are the gentle, for they will possess the world."<sup>195</sup>

189. *Ibid.*, pp. 43, 111.

190. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 2, p. 37.

191. Blain, vol. 2, book 3, chap. 16, Cahiers lasalliens 8, pp. 153-154; Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 2, pp. 108-109, 115, 125.

192. Blain, *Abrégé* (Summary), Cahiers lasalliens 8, p. 28.

193. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 2, pp. 148-149.

194. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 34.

195. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 2, p. 38.

## Brothers Who Entered in 1700

This section includes the stories of the Brothers who are listed in the *Catalogue* as having entered in 1700, though there is some question whether all of them entered in that year; they are presented here in the order in which their names are listed in the *Catalogue*. Brother Timothée also entered in 1700, but his story will be told in a separate chapter.

Name	Diocese	Born	Entered	Died
Siméon (F. Pajot)	Amiens	1672	1700	?
Charles (Michel Crest)	Grenoble	1679	1700	1758
Vincent (Louis Thiseux)	Liège	1674	1700	?
Théodore (Simon Scefflier)	Paris	1680	1700	1755
Barnabé (Jean Jannin)	Reims	1683	1700	1740
Norbert (André Desbouvés)	Soissons	1676	1700	after 1720
Clément (Jacques Gatelet)	Reims	1684	1700	1753
Hubert (Gilles Gérard)	Reims	1683	1700	1759
Robert (Denis Maubert)	Rouen	1673	1700	1734
Alphonse (Pierre Marie)	Chartres	1677	1700	1727
Jude (Jean-Nicolas Noulet)	Laon	1683	1700	?
Henri (2nd) (Joachim Pelard)	Guise	1683	1700	1721

The stories of five other Brothers—Albert, Mathias, Paulin, Séverin, and Louis (2nd)—will be added to these. Their names are not listed in the *Catalogue*, but their stories can be garnered mostly from the letters of De La Salle.

Nothing is known about Siméon and Jude, except that Siméon made vows for three years; Jude, for all his life, but both are listed in the *Catalogue* as having left the Institute.

### Brother Charles

Brother Charles (Michel Crest) was born on 5 April 1679 in the town of Livet, in the diocese of Grenoble, and entered the Institute “around the year 1700.”<sup>196</sup> It is of interest that Charles came from the diocese of Grenoble, though the Brothers did not open their school there until October 1708<sup>197</sup> nor in nearby Avignon until 1703.<sup>198</sup> The *Catalogue* states that he made vows for all his life but does not give the date.

196. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 34.

Charles began his teaching career in Laon, as the history of that community seems to indicate.<sup>199</sup> It was while he was at Laon that an incident occurred in which he was the principal actor and became the topic of talk among the Brothers. The event is recorded in the history of the community:

On the Monday before Ash Wednesday, [Brother Charles] happened to meet one of his pupils who was truant. He tried to take him in hand, encouraging him gently to come to school for the catechism lesson. The poor youngster, trying to escape, fell under the wheel of a cart loaded with grain, which ran over him across his stomach. He passed out and was for a long time speechless, but to everyone's amazement he was not injured, and he came back to school the next day, Mardi Gras, for his lessons.

To encourage the Brothers and the people to thank God for this miracle, Brother Charles insisted that several people present at the accident tell M. Guyart, the pastor of the parish of old Saint Pierre, that they saw two angels hold up the wheel of the cart. Perhaps it was instead Charles who had this vision, for he was a virtuous and holy religious with the zeal of a seraph. He was so filled with love for God that he was known to give pious exhortations two or three times a day to Brothers and boarders at Saint Yon without ever feeling that he had said enough.

The other Brother at the school in Laon, who was with Charles when the incident occurred, said that several people who were present ran after him, yelling, "Stop the Brother; hit the Brother!" and that he answered in all simplicity as he went on his way, "He certainly deserves it!"<sup>200</sup>

Another incident attributed to Charles is described by Blain in a chapter about the special care Divine Providence takes of the Christian Schools.<sup>201</sup> This also happened in Laon, where Charles began his teaching, although Gallego points out that the source of this story places it about 1697, that is, before Charles is listed as entering the Institute.<sup>202</sup>

197. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 364.

198. *Ibid.*, p. 345.

199. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 191.

200. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

201. Blain, *Abrégé* (Summary), Cahiers lasalliens 8, p. 97.

202. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 440, note 123.

One day he noticed that the floor of his classroom, on the second story, was shifting a little and seemed likely to collapse. He asked the Brother in charge what he should do and was told to continue class without fear. He did as he was told with childlike obedience. Eventually the school day ended, Charles led his class down the stairs, and as the last two pupils left the building, the floor collapsed. (The record does not mention any angels on this occasion.)

Charles was assigned to Rethel in 1706 and became the Director of the community and school in 1708, where he remained until 1711.<sup>203</sup> He is quite probably the anonymous Director who received a confidential letter on the topic of silence from the Founder, which merited to be kept anonymous; it is included in an anthology of letters published by the Brothers during the eighteenth century for the edification of all:

I am at a loss to know why there is so little order in your community, my very dear Brother.

Is it not because you do not keep silence? Examine yourself on this point. Complaints are made that you speak too loudly.

Be careful, then, to keep silence strictly. You know very well that silence and recollection are two means of becoming interior.

Take care not to talk in the streets.

See that you walk in a dignified manner. Say the rosary devoutly. This is the way to guard your eyes and control your thoughts and particularly to win from God the grace to carry out your school work well.

As you know, there have always been complaints that you walk much too fast.

It would have been much wiser not to have replied further to the priest who spoke to you in the street after you had told him that Brother Joseph was back in Paris again.

Take care never to get into arguments with anybody, for in doing so you can offend against charity, which should be outstanding among you.

I am, my very dear Brother,

Devotedly yours in Our Lord,

De La Salle<sup>204</sup>

203. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, pp. 191–192.

204. *Letters*, 71.

This letter, it must be remembered, is in answer to a monthly letter which all the Brothers wrote to De La Salle in confidence. It was a type of spiritual direction, and its succinct style must be seen in the context of De La Salle's overall relationship with the Brothers. As with the other letters in the anthology, the selection is probably only an excerpt from the whole letter, made to illustrate a particular topic—in this case, silence.

In 1716 Charles was one of the Brothers at Saint Yon whom De La Salle called together on 4 December to formulate and sign the document commissioning Brother Barthélemy to visit all the communities in France in preparation for a General Assembly.<sup>205</sup> He is listed as a teacher among the six Brothers called for this meeting. Three months later, he was Director of the community and school in Guise when Barthélemy made his visit there on 7 March 1717.<sup>206</sup>

As Director of Guise, he attended the General Chapters of 1717,<sup>207</sup> 1720,<sup>208</sup> 1725,<sup>209</sup> and 1734,<sup>210</sup> holding the role of Director of Guise, therefore, for at least seventeen years. In 1747 he signed the report of a meeting at Saint Yon as Director of that community.<sup>211</sup>

The last note on record is in the *Catalogue*, where his death is recorded as occurring in Reims on 20 December 1758.<sup>212</sup> He lived to be seventy-nine years old, and he must have been a colorful personality, from the little evidence available, but a good administrator withal, one of those whom God sent to De La Salle and who labored loyally with the Founder for the foundation of the Institute.

## Brother Vincent

Brother Vincent was born on 1 November 1674 in the town of Chevigny, diocese of Liège (Belgium); he entered the Institute around the year 1700 and made vows for all his life, though no date is given.<sup>213</sup> There is confusion over his family name, which is difficult to read in the *Catalogue*; it could be Louis, or Thiss, or Titeux. Félix-Paul settles

205. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 406.

206. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 186.

207. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 409.

208. *Ibid.*, 2, p. 41.

209. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

210. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

211. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 132.

212. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 34.

213. *Ibid.*

for the possibility that it is Thiseux and that he is a younger brother of Brother Ponce,<sup>214</sup> whose story has been told in the previous section.

If what Félix-Paul surmises is true, Vincent was in Laon in 1702 or 1703. When Brother Barthélemy made his visit to the school community in Rouen in March 1717, Vincent was a member of that community. The *Catalogue* has an entry that he left the Institute that year.<sup>215</sup> He is an example of a Brother who gave several years of service at the origin of the Institute but did not persevere.

### Brother Théodore

Brother Théodore (Simon Sceillier) was born on 22 November 1680 in the town of Villiers-le-Bel, in the diocese of Paris, and entered the Institute in 1700.<sup>216</sup>

Théodore's younger brother, Jean, entered the Institute a year after his brother and was given the name Dominique. There is no record of him in the *Catalogue*, because he died before 1714, but he was such an unusual Brother that Canon Blain included a summary biography of him in the supplement to his life of De La Salle.<sup>217</sup>

Actually, five members of this family eventually became Brothers, so it is fitting that the story of all of them be told together. Théodore's father, whose baptismal name is not given in any of the documents, was the third member of the family to join, in 1705, and was given the name Hilarion. He was a farmer of great piety. To illustrate this piety, Blain tells the story of a certain Calvinist landlord who threatened to increase the rent on the family farm if the father did not remove the image of Our Lady from above the door of his house. The father preferred to pay the higher rent rather than to take down the image.

The circumstances of the father's entering are quite unique. When he came to ask De La Salle for admission to the Institute, the Founder told him that he could join the Brothers but only on condition that he bring with him his other two sons who were still at home. The father explained that these two were as eager as he was to enter the Institute but that they had to remain home to take care of their sister. She had wanted to enter a convent, but the family was unable to provide the necessary dowry. It was no problem for De La Salle to

214. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 256.

215. *Cahiers lasalliens* 3, p. 34.

216. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

217. Blain, *Abrégé* (Summary), *Cahiers lasalliens* 8, pp. 76–80.

arrange for the sister to enter one of the convents in Paris, where "she persevered until death, giving great edification to everyone."

So, in 1705, the father and his two sons entered the novitiate at Saint Yon. André, age thirty, became Brother Pacôme; Louis, age twenty-six, became Brother Gervais.<sup>218</sup> The father was probably around seventy years of age.

By the time these three entered the novitiate, Brother Dominique, the youngest son, age twenty-four, had been appointed Sub-Director to Brother Barthélemy, Director of Novices. Quite a situation: the youngest son in charge of his father and two of his older brothers!

Blain describes Dominique as "the most devout and virtuous" of the four brothers. In fact, when the young Brother entered the novitiate, probably in the *Grande Maison* in the year 1698, his thirst for prayer and penance was so great that it exhausted his strength and undermined his health, despite the fact that he was "a strong and robust young man."

For fear that "his absorbing concentration on God" would completely ruin his health, he was taken out of the novitiate and assigned to teach the youngest class in one of the schools under the direction of the Brother in charge of training the new teachers. This was most likely in Paris under the direction of Brother Jean Jacquot. The idea was to distract him from concentration on God by the demands of teaching a class of fifty or sixty squirming seven-year-olds. It did not work out as planned. By that time Dominique had acquired such a degree of contemplation that he could take care of the class without interrupting his prayer, but his health continued to deteriorate.

He was given another job, not mentioned in the story, and it seemed that his health improved, so he was assigned the job of Director of Novices in Paris to succeed Brother Jean-Henri, who died in 1699. This early assignment, after only a few months of novitiate himself and at most at the age of nineteen, is unusual to say the least, but De La Salle was living in the novitiate at the time, so Dominique was probably more of an assistant to De La Salle, even if, in fact, he had the title of Director.

Nevertheless, this assignment was not really what a doctor might have ordered, for Dominique's health began to decline. So he was sent to help out in the opening of the school in Darnétal early in 1705. Blain says that the idea was to distract Dominique with all the details of beginning a new school, but again this failed to interrupt Dominique's concentration on God and the deterioration of his health.

218. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 42.

It was decided that the fresh air of Saint Yon would be good for him, so he was assigned as Sub-Director to assist Brother Barthélemy in the novitiate, which had been moved there in July of 1705. It could be that by this time people in charge began to realize that Dominique had tuberculosis, from which Blain says he eventually died.

The biographer, ever attentive to the dramatic, calls on the reader to imagine the surprise when Dominique finds his father and two brothers in the novitiate and their astonishment at finding him, the youngest, in charge of them as their Sub-Director.

Blain goes on to tell how Dominique showed no partiality in handing out reprimands and punishment for every least infraction of the Rule by his father, following the standard practice for all novices.

There is even the detail that his elderly father, concerned about keeping his head warm, asked the barber to go easy on cutting his hair. Dominique noticed and ordered the barber to cut his father's hair closer still, which the old man "accepted with a submission and docile heart that impressed all who were there."

Dominique died on 15 June 1707, "with the death that a seraph would desire if seraphim were subject to death." Lucard says he was only twenty-three,<sup>219</sup> but that would put his birth in 1684 and his age in 1699 at fifteen, too young even in those days to be Director of Novices in the *Grande Maison*. It is more reasonable to put Brother Dominique's birth around 1681 and his age at death as twenty-six.

Blain tells the story of Dominique's father, Brother Hilarion, in his life of Dominique. After Hilarion completed the novitiate, he became the doorkeeper at Saint Yon, an assignment he kept until 1713. Blain tells a story about himself to illustrate the great modesty of eyes practiced by the doorkeeper. Over the years, Blain came to Saint Yon quite often as the ecclesiastical superior appointed by the bishop of Rouen. Blain says that Hilarion kept such control of his eyes that he never got to recognize him.

One day, when Blain was in the garden, Hilarion came up to him and requested that he leave, because De La Salle had arranged that no one be there at that hour which was reserved for the President of the Parliament, M. Pontcarré. Blain explained that M. Pontcarré would have no objection to his presence and asked Hilarion to look at him so that he would recognize who he was. When Hilarion did look up, he said he still did not know who he was.<sup>220</sup> Blain himself may not

219. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, p. 126.

220. Blain, vol. 2, book 4, chap. 3, *Cahiers lasalliens* 8, p. 315; Lucard, *Vie du Vénérable Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, 2, p. 108.

have known Hilarion that well either, for in his account of the incident he says that Hilarion came to the Institute after many years in the army, whereas it seems he was actually a farmer, though it is possible that Hilarion was both a farmer and a drafted soldier.

Apparently Hilarion served as both doorkeeper and cook, for in 1713, while De La Salle was in the south of France, the community of Guise was in need of a cook, so Barthélemy assigned Hilarion to go to Guise. There being no money to provide any kind of transportation, this elderly Brother had to make the journey on foot. Since there was no feasible direct route from Rouen to Guise at the time, Hilarion had to go first to Paris, about eighty miles, then from Paris to Guise, about another one hundred and twenty miles. It was during Lent, and he most likely felt obliged to take the journey fasting. Also, in that season of the year the roads were in very poor condition from snow and rain. Hilarion made the jaunt from Rouen to Paris in fairly good shape. There he rested for a day before starting out for Guise.

That was his last heroic act of obedience. He was not able to complete the last part of the journey but had to stop in the town of Crecy, about fifteen miles from Guise. There he died. When De La Salle heard of this, he reprimanded Barthélemy for having sent such an elderly man on such a long journey on foot in such a bad season of the year. Some twenty years earlier, in 1691 at the retreat in Vaugirard, a similar situation had occurred, though not fatal, and De La Salle made it clear that some kind of transportation should be used under such circumstances. That was, however, more than ten years before Barthélemy entered. Poor Barthélemy could offer no excuse for what he had done, and it was a costly lesson in prudence for the future Superior.

The lives of the other Sceilliers, Pacôme and Gervais, were much less dramatic than those of their father and their young brother. Pacôme lived as a Brother for only twelve years, dying in January 1717 at the age of forty-two. There is no record of any assignment, except a document found in the Generalate Archives in Rome which indicates that in 1708 he was the manager (*économé*) in charge of kitchen supplies at Saint Yon.<sup>221</sup>

Gervais is listed as one of the gardeners at Saint Yon in the document of 3 June 1718 which has the names and duties of the fourteen Brothers in the community when the property was purchased from the heirs of Madame de Louvois.<sup>222</sup> There is documentary evidence

221. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 437, note 109

222. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 417.

that he was in Reims in 1717, when Brother Barthélemy made his visit there on 28 February.<sup>223</sup> Gervais died in Reims on 17 January 1741 at the age of sixty-two.

To return now to Brother Théodore—he was the first of the Sceilliers to join the Institute. He made his formula of vows “for all my life” on 7 June 1705,<sup>224</sup> the same year his father and other two brothers entered the novitiate at Saint Yon. Théodore’s vow formula omits the vow of association, the only such formula of the early vows which has been preserved.<sup>225</sup> This omission was the practice for serving Brothers, so probably it was true for all the Sceilliers except Dominique, who in fact did very little teaching.<sup>226</sup>

There is a record that Théodore was in the Saint Yon community when Barthélemy visited there on 7 May 1717<sup>227</sup> and also that Théodore was the procurator for the community of Reims the following September, when he signed legal documents with Joseph Le Roux, Director of the community and Visitor for the north of France.<sup>228</sup>

Théodore may have stayed in Reims for the rest of his life, for that is where he died in 1755 at the age of seventy-four. There is no other available record of his assignments. He was the first of his family to enter the Institute and must have somehow inspired his three brothers and his father with the Brother’s vocation. And he survived them all, a family of five men who all persevered in the Institute, probably something quite unique in the history of the Brothers, at least at the origins of the Institute.

## Brother Barnabé

Brother Barnabé (Jean Jannin) was born in the town of Romagne, in the diocese of Reims, on 30 November 1683 and entered the Institute in July 1700.<sup>229</sup> The same document states that he made vows for all his life but gives no date.

Félix-Paul offers a rather complete history of the life of Brother Barnabé in his critical edition of the letters of the Founder.<sup>230</sup> Barnabé

223. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 186.

224. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 18.

225. Cahiers lasalliens 11, p. 190, note 1.

226. Cf. Cahiers lasalliens 25, pp. 59, 143.

227. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 187.

228. Cahiers lasalliens 37/1, pp. 140ff.

229. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 35.

was sent to Dijon to help Brother Antoine Partois open the Brothers' school in 1705. There with Antoine he received an attestation of his good life and morals from the pastor of Saint Philibert on behalf of the bishop of the diocese, which was necessary in order to receive approval as teachers from the city council. According to Félix-Paul, his name appears on the interdiction in the writing masters' suit against the Brothers of Paris in March 1706, though he is not on the list of the Brothers in the same suit in June 1704. He was in Dijon in January 1707, for in that month he received another certificate of approval from the bishop of the diocese.

Barnabé's next assignment may have been to Mâcon, for he is one of two Brothers named in the town council documents of that city in 1711.<sup>230</sup> The other was Brother Simon, whose story will be told later. The two Brothers were probably sent there in 1710 to help open the school in that city. De La Salle mentions the presence of the Brothers there in his letter of 14 February 1710 to Gabriel Drolin.<sup>231</sup>

The school was initiated by Canon Georges of Mâcon at his own expense, apparently without the concurrence of the bishop or of the authorities of the town. Blain says that the bishop of Mâcon was not well disposed toward the Brothers but that he does not know why.<sup>232</sup> Perhaps the bishop was not friendly with Canon Georges, or perhaps he had to agree with the town authorities, who did not appreciate the Brothers being dressed like religious; they apparently wanted priests or laymen to do the teaching. In any case, the Brothers were told to leave town, which they did around Christmas in 1711.<sup>233</sup>

Barnabé was back in Dijon, as Director, when Barthélemy visited that city in 1717, but he was unable to attend the General Chapter of 1717. He was the first Director of the school in Auxonne in 1723 and made vows according to the Bull of Approbation on 22 September 1727 at Saint Yon. He was also present for the transfer of the body of De La Salle from Saint Sever to Saint Yon in 1734 and for the Chapter which followed. He died in Auxonne on 18 September 1740.

230. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, pp. 265–266, 374.

231. Poutet, *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, p. 249.

232. *Letters*, 27, 14.

233. Blain, *Abrégé (Summary)*, *Calviers lasalliens* 8, p. 41.

234. Poutet, *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 2, pp. 248ff; Calcutt, *De La Salle, A City Saint*, p. 512.

## Brother Norbert

Brother Norbert (André Desbouves) was born in Aisne, in the diocese of Soissons, on 6 December 1676 and entered the Institute in 1700.<sup>235</sup> He was probably in one of the Paris schools in 1704, though his name on the list of the Brothers indicted in the writing masters' suit is in some question; it could be Robert, not Norbert.<sup>236</sup>

He was in Chartres in 1705, for he signed the death certificates of three of the Brothers who died there during the purple fever epidemic,<sup>237</sup> though he was not the Director. At that time Brother Athanase was Director, and he signed the death certificates of the other two who died in the same tragic situation.<sup>238</sup>

Norbert was definitely in Chartres in 1710 as Sub-Director to Brother Hubert.<sup>239</sup> It seems from De La Salle's letter to Hubert in that year that Norbert was somewhat of a problem in community because of his lack of docility. The Founder reminds Hubert that it is his responsibility to supervise Norbert during recreation, to prevent Norbert from speaking against the rules (perhaps the rules regarding the conduct of the school), to see that Norbert does his duty, and not to allow him to do as he pleases.<sup>240</sup>

Norbert may have had a problem with authority, but he was the Director of Calais in 1717 when Brother Barthélemy made his visit there on 16 to 18 March, and he signed the names of the other five Brothers with him in the community on the document of agreement for a General Assembly.<sup>241</sup> In all the other communities, the document regarding Barthélemy's visits was signed by each individual Brother. Perhaps Norbert was an authoritarian Director, just as he was anti-authority as a Brother in community. As Director of Calais, he was one of the sixteen Directors who participated in the Chapter of 1717.<sup>242</sup>

When M. Pierre Caron, dean of the diocese in Calais and canon of the cathedral there, circulated the false notion that De La Salle was an appellant against the pope's decision regarding Jansenism (confusing the Founder with his brother, Louis de La Salle), De La Salle wrote

235. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 35.

236. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 375.

237. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 298.

238. *Ibid.*, p. 206.

239. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

240. *Letters*, 12.14, 18, 22, 28.

241. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 186.

242. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, I, pp. 408–409.

a letter to Norbert on 28 January 1719, making it clear that he was irrevocably united with the pope and with the decisions of the Holy See.<sup>245</sup>

There is the possibility that the letter was written as much for Norbert's benefit as for any public purpose, because there is some suspicion that Norbert had been taken in by the ideas of the bishop of the diocese of Boulogne, Pierre de Langle, who was a strong leader among the appellants.<sup>244</sup> Calais was part of his diocese.

Félix-Paul suggests that De La Salle had Norbert called back to Rouen to be under his closer supervision. In any case, Norbert was at Saint Yon in April when the Founder died, and he signed the certificate of burial.<sup>245</sup> Evidently, once De La Salle was no longer present, Brother Norbert created a problem, for the *Catalogue* indicates that he was dismissed from the Institute in 1720.<sup>246</sup> Rigault says that the reason for his dismissal is not known.<sup>247</sup> Félix-Paul surmises, and Gallego is inclined to agree with him, that theological quarreling may have been the reason.<sup>248</sup> Norbert may have never lost his tendency to resist authority.

Both Félix-Paul and Gallego make allusion to an account in the fourth book of Blain's biography of De La Salle which tells about the only Brother who succumbed to the Jansenist doctrines in the forty years that De La Salle lived with the Brothers.<sup>249</sup> The Brother, whose name is not given by Blain, after leaving the Institute, made a voyage to Marseille and lost his life when the ship went down. The possibility is that the Brother in this account is Norbert. As Blain put it, he lost his life as he shipwrecked his faith, but there is the hope that he repented and died a good death.

In the history of the origins of the Institute, Norbert is one Brother, among many others, who did a lot of good work for many years but yet did not persevere. He had entered at the age of twenty-four, and he served in responsible positions for twenty years. He did his share in the founding of the Institute.

245. *Letters*, 132; *Cahiers lasalliens* 40/1, p. 210, note 2.

244. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

245. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 299, note 5.

246. *Cahiers lasalliens* 3, p. 35.

247. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 2, p. 28.

248. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 298; Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 579.

249. Blain, vol. 2, book 4, chap. 1, *Cahiers lasalliens* 8, pp. 227-228.

## Brother Clément

Brother Clément (Jacques Gatelet) was born in the town of Romagne, in the diocese of Reims, on 28 September 1684 and entered the Institute on 20 June 1700.<sup>250</sup> His first known assignment was in Laon.

A confidential letter which De La Salle wrote to him on 25 June 1706 tells a good deal about this Brother at the age of twenty-two:

I am greatly consoled, my very dear Brother, that your rheumatism is cured. Take care, I beg you, to be very prudent and also to conform yourself in all things to God's will, with a submission that is not only external but from the heart too.

Take care not to slap your students; you know that is forbidden by the rules.

I am very glad that you have a good confessor and that he gives you such good advice. Try to take advantage of this as long as you have him.

If you wish to become interior, it is a matter of great importance for you to control your mind and your eyes. Without this kind of mortification, it is almost impossible to make much progress in virtue.

Make sure that you are indifferent as to what you are ordered under obedience. This is one of the things which most of all will draw upon you the grace of God.

It is a good practice to read the rules often, in order to be quite faithful to them. As you know, it will be their observance that will ensure your sanctification.

Having God in view in all your spiritual exercises will contribute most to your making them well. God not only requires the outward appearance of your actions; he wishes them to be carried out with interior dispositions.

Take only one defect at a time in your daily examination of conscience, and keep at it for several days consecutively.

If you know what I should do to save the Brothers' schools from ruin, please let me know, for we must take the means to keep them going.

<sup>250</sup> Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 35.

I think we must dismiss the students who are not regular in their attendance or who come late, for to tolerate either the one or the other brings about disorder in the school.

During the holidays we shall see what can be done regarding a Director for you. In matters of conscience do the best you can until then.

You don't have to conform to the other Brothers in matters of food unless you feel completely well.

I am, my very dear Brother,

Devotedly yours in Our Lord.

De La Salle<sup>251</sup>

This letter, as Félix-Paul points out,<sup>252</sup> reveals that Clément is probably in charge of a second school in Laon, opened in 1698, that is served from the one community, for De La Salle is giving Clément a number of administrative directives he ordinarily did not give to the Brothers who were not in administration.

Some of Clément's personality is seen in the advice that De La Salle was giving him. His health is not all that good; he has to have special food, yet he is serious about his life as a Brother, especially in his request for a Director to guide his conscience and also in other comments about mortification, keeping the rules, and examination of conscience.

Other information available about Clément includes his signature on the document of Brother Barthélemy's visit to the community of Reims on 28 February 1717,<sup>253</sup> his presence at the opening of the school in Saint-Omer on 16 October 1720<sup>254</sup> and at the General Chapter of 1725 as Sub-Director of Saint-Omer,<sup>255</sup> and the fact that he made vows according to the Bull of Approbation in August of that year. He was also at the Chapter of 1745 as Director of Meaux.<sup>256</sup> He died in Reims in October 1753 at the age of sixty-nine,<sup>257</sup> an advanced age in those days, especially for one whose health was not all that good at the age of twenty-two.

251. *Letters*, 50.

252. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 32.

253. *Cahiers lasalliens* 40/1, p. 186.

254. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 2, p. 15.

255. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

256. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 30.

257. *Cahiers lasalliens* 3, p. 35.

## Brother Hubert

Brother Hubert (Gilles Gérard) was born on 7 December 1683 in the town of Romagne, in the diocese of Reims, and entered the Institute on 20 April 1700, the same date and from the same town as Brother Clément, whose story has just been told. Hubert made vows for all his life, but the date is not given.<sup>258</sup> At least six letters written by De La Salle to Hubert were preserved by Hubert.

The first of these letters to Hubert is dated 5 May 1702. Hubert was nineteen years old and in his first year of community life after his novitiate. It is not clear which community this was. De La Salle's principal message to Hubert in this letter is about the importance of obedience:

My very dear Brother, you must allow yourself to be led as a child of obedience who has no other aim than to obey and in doing so carry out God's will.

Take great care never to use such terms as "I want" or "I won't" or "I must." These are expressions and ways of speaking that are to be held in abhorrence. They cannot but keep back the graces that God offers to those who have no other will but his, for as Saint Bernard says, it is self-will alone that leads to hell.

When you have worries, make them known to your Director, and you will find that God will bless you and either give you the grace to bear them for his love or relieve you of them.

Be on your guard against allowing yourself to act according to your whims, for God detests such actions.

The principal virtue you must strive for is obedience.<sup>259</sup>

Aside from the fact that Hubert is only nineteen years old and in need of the training of obedience, this emphasis on obedience is typical of the spirituality of the religious life, not just in seventeenth-century France but up until quite modern times.

The next letter, four years later, is dated 1 June 1706, at which time Hubert is Director of the community in Laon, whose members were responsible for the two schools in that city. He was just twenty-three years old, and Brother Clément, his companion in the novitiate, was the only one in the community who was younger than himself.

258. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

259. *Letters*, 7.2–6.

Brother Robert, age thirty, was another member; his story will follow Hubert's. These three Brothers—Hubert, Clément, and Robert—persevered in their vocation.

The other three, from existing evidence, did not: another Brother Cassien entered the Institute in 1713; Isidore and Étienne left the Institute before the *Catalogue des Frères* was written in 1714. What little is known about these two is inserted here.

Brother Isidore (Théodore Lambert) made vows for all his life on 7 June 1705.<sup>260</sup> Judging from references in the letter to Hubert, Isidore seems to have been both a serving Brother and one who also did some teaching. He was evidently in Paris in 1706, for his name is on the list of the Brothers who were forbidden to teach in the parish of Saint Sulpice as a result of the lawsuit by the writing masters. He was back in the community of Laon in 1707 but transferred to Guise in 1708, then to Rethel from 1708 to 1711—quite a series of rapid changes!

The next and last reference to him is in a letter of 17 July 1714, written by Brother Barthélemy to the pastor of the parish in Mende where the Brothers were teaching. Isidore had been a member of that community but had left it and had come to Paris, telling Barthélemy that the Director, Brother Henri, was treating the Brothers poorly and was planning to get married and that the community was neglecting its religious duties.<sup>261</sup> There is confusion over this account by Isidore which Barthélemy gives in his letter. It is possible that Barthélemy did not have time to make his own investigation. Gallego thinks that much of what Isidore says is intended to justify his leaving the Institute.<sup>262</sup> More will be told about this event in the story of Brother Henri. In any case, it seems clear that Isidore did not persevere with the Brothers, for his name is not in the *Catalogue*.

Étienne was a rather bizarre character whose story is told in a manuscript of the eighteenth century which was intended to provide historical facts not found in Blain. Étienne's family name was Le Loure. There is no evidence of the date of his birth or the date of his entry into the Institute. The manuscript says that he was sent back to the novitiate around 1708 to correct the loss of his religious spirit. He found this second novitiate too restrictive; he asked to be released and to make vows for all his life; otherwise he would quit the Institute. De La Salle is said to have reasoned with him a hundred times but without success. Finally, the Founder, out of consideration for his

260. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 19.

261. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, pp. 313–315.

262. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 492.

other good qualities, allowed him to make the vows he wanted. But he did not persevere, and the manuscript says that the loss of his vocation was the result of his obstinacy. Étienne must have left his community sometime before 17 July 1712, because someone else (Jean Pérotin) entered the Institute on that date and took the name of Brother Étienne.<sup>263</sup> The manuscript story of the original Étienne says that when he left, he went to Paris, his native town, where he led a wandering life. If the manuscript is true, this was the Étienne who was in Hubert's community on 1 June 1706.<sup>264</sup>

Perhaps the story of these two Brothers, Isidore and Étienne, throws some light on one line of De La Salle's letter to Hubert: "I am told that the classes of Brother Étienne and Brother Isidore are falling completely into disorder. Please take steps to remedy this."<sup>265</sup>

The other four letters to Hubert are all rather longer than most of the others in the complete collection of the letters written by the Founder. They are filled with specific advice in response to a wide range of comments and questions in the letters that De La Salle received from Hubert. It can be deduced from this that in his letters Hubert was giving detailed reports about himself and his performance as the Director of the community, and that being a Director in a community at that time was not an easy job.

One example of the challenges given to Hubert is the person of Brother Quentin, the second Brother to have that name. De La Salle, in a letter dated 2 October 1710, has much advice to give Hubert about Quentin. He says that Quentin is a complainer, if Hubert wants to listen to him; he adds that Hubert cannot expect Quentin to get along with Norbert and that he should not tolerate any of Quentin's negligence of duty; nor allow him to learn writing, but keep him with the first class [of readers]; also, Hubert may allow Quentin to make his first vows, if he desires this, but Hubert should give some thought to testing him a bit more.

Félix-Paul adds that it is probable that Quentin's stay in Chartres was brief, as also his remaining a Brother. There is no other record of this second Brother Quentin presently available.<sup>266</sup>

Hubert was fundamentally an honest, conscientious, and docile person. Seemingly, he took quite seriously the advice of the Founder about obedience which was in the first letter he received and which

263. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 194.

264. *Letters*, 8:29.

265. *Ibid.*

266. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, pp. 209–216.

he preserved the rest of his life. De La Salle's long letters to him are answers to confessions and questions that Hubert had written to him. Some of the information about the community, of course, could come from the letters of the other Brothers.

Lucard tells of an incident about Hubert that took place while Hubert was Director in Chartres, after the death of the great benefactor of the community, Bishop Godet des Marais, and probably during the famine of 1709:

The community was in a state of complete destitution. Brother Hubert, the Director, went to see De La Salle and told him of their miserable condition. "Do you believe in the Gospel?" the holy Founder asked him. "I will give my life," replied the Brother, "to prove my faith in this revealed word." "Very well," added the man of God, "does it not say in the Gospel, 'Do not worry about tomorrow. Seek the kingdom of God, and the rest will be given you besides?'"

Brother Hubert knew from experience that similar words on the holy lips of his Superior were a sign of approaching help from Providence. He went back to Chartres full of confidence. He said that since that time there was never anything lacking. Charitable persons were moved, without being asked, to provide for the needs of the community.<sup>267</sup>

Hubert was a man of faith. It was this faith that gave him the loyalty he had for the rules of the Institute. It was another way of understanding obedience. This kind of obedience was probably one of the first characteristics that De La Salle looked for in the Brothers whom he appointed as Directors. The Founder put stress on strict adherence to the rules and regulations that had been agreed upon, and he saw the Directors as the ones to see that all these directives were observed.

The facts are that from being Director in Laon in 1706, Hubert became Director of the community in Guise in 1708; then in 1709, partly at his own request, he was transferred from Guise and sent to Chartres, again as Director. He was still there in 1716, as Director, when Barthélemy made his visit as he began his round of the communities in preparation for the General Assembly in 1717. It is probable that Hubert had been there since 1709. In 1717 he was one of the sixteen Directors who attended the General Chapter at which Brother Barthélemy was elected Superior.

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267. Lucard, *Vie du Vénérable Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, 2, p. 23.

Hubert also attended the General Chapter of 1720 for the election of Brother Timothée to succeed Barthélemy, and he was again present at the Chapter of 1725 for the reception of the Bull of Approbation, renewing his vows according to the Bull in August of that year. At that time he was the Director of the community in Paris. In 1734, as Director of the community in Meaux, he was present for the transfer of the remains of the Founder from Saint Sever to Saint Yon in Rouen and also participated in the Chapter of that year.

He was at the Chapter of 1745 as Director of the community of Noyon, which he had opened in 1739. In 1751 he participated in a sixth Chapter, which elected Brother Claude as the third Superior, to replace Brother Timothée, who had resigned for reasons of poor health. The minutes of that Chapter state, "Brother Hubert, former Director of Angers, was unable to sign because he has lost his sight."<sup>268</sup>

Hubert died in Maréville on 29 June 1759 at the age of seventy-six.<sup>269</sup> He had been a Brother for fifty-nine years and Director of at least seven communities over a period of fifty years. Certainly he was one of the strong pillars of the founding of the Institute during and long after the life of De La Salle.

## Brother Robert

Brother Robert (Denis Maubert) was born on 2 January 1673<sup>270</sup> or 1676<sup>271</sup> in the town of Compainville, which is in the diocese of Rouen, and entered the Institute on 15 May 1700; he took vows for all his life, but no date is given.<sup>272</sup>

The first documentary evidence of his work, which is the list of the Brothers indicted in the writing masters' lawsuit of June 1704, indicates that he was teaching in Paris at that time.<sup>273</sup> In 1705 he was probably the one sent with Brother Ponce to open the school in Darnétal, but he may have been back in Paris in 1706, for he was on the list in the lawsuit again. He was in Darnétal in October 1707 with Brother Denis, and when Denis became sick in 1708, Robert was in charge of the school with the assistance of a young Brother.

268. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 184.

269. *Cahiers lasalliens* 3, p. 35.

270. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

271. *Cahiers lasalliens* 40/1, p. 159.

272. *Cahiers lasalliens* 3, p. 36.

273. *Cahiers lasalliens* 40/2, p. 71.

De La Salle wrote to Robert in March 1709, encouraging him to make vows for three years on the feast of the Most Holy Trinity.<sup>274</sup> Robert was still in Darnétal, with Brother Bruno as his Director, when Brother Barthélemy made his visit there on 2 April 1717.<sup>275</sup> Robert was one of the Brothers who signed the burial certificate of the Founder on 8 April 1719.<sup>276</sup>

Ten years later, in 1729, he was authorized to make vows according to the Bull for all his life as a serving Brother. This was unusual, for ordinarily it would be a serving Brother who would be allowed to make vows as a teaching Brother. It could be that Robert made this choice to have a respite from as many as twenty-five years of teaching, which had not been all that easy for him. It could also be that he was making vows for all his life for the first time, after more than twenty-five years of temporary vows or of no vows at all.

Some Brothers made only temporary vows all their lives, and some apparently never made vows. This seems clear from the early community practice of prayers for the dead. Separate prescriptions were made for Brothers with perpetual vows, for Brothers with only temporary vows, and for Brothers with no vows at all.<sup>277</sup> It is possible that those with vows deserved more suffrages because of their greater merit or their greater liability in the practice of vows.

There was no mention of vows in the Rule of 1705, which was typical of other religious communities,<sup>278</sup> although the Brothers made vows from the beginning: association to keep schools for the poor, stability in the Institute, and obedience. What really held the Brothers together was not their vows so much as their inner commitment to one another and to the work of the schools, their common garb, and the practices of their community life. There were no vows of poverty or chastity for the Brothers until they were mandated by the Church in 1725 with the Bull of Approbation. There were, however, chapters on these two virtues in the first Rule, of which the earliest extant copy is dated 1705.

Robert kept many of the monthly letters he had received from De La Salle. Ten of them are in the critical edition, six of them clearly addressed to him, the other four probably directed to him.<sup>279</sup> In them Robert comes through as a rough-and-ready person, better suited for

274. *Letters*, 43, 19.

275. *Cahiers lasalliens* 40/1, p. 186.

276. *Cahiers lasalliens* 26, pp. 315–316.

277. *Cahiers lasalliens* 25, p. 86.

278. *Cahiers lasalliens* 11, pp. 71, 77.

279. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, pp. 266–292.

work in class than as the leader of a community, maybe even better as a serving Brother than in the classroom. He seems to have been short tempered and impulsive. He embarrassed Denis when they walked together in Darnétal or Rouen, though it is not clear how he did that. He had a problem of slapping the pupils. The Founder asked Denis to see to it that Robert stopped doing this in Darnétal, and De La Salle wrote to Robert himself about this in earlier and later letters.

The Founder also told him not to run after the pupils and not to shout at their mothers. He urged Robert to live peaceably with the Brother he was living with, avoid outbursts of anger, and refrain from yelling out the window. In one of the letters, the Founder says, "Out of love for God, put up with the trouble that people give you outside the community."<sup>280</sup>

Robert must have been a diamond in the rough. Like Mathias, however, Robert's love for De La Salle led him to keep the letters he received from the Founder, though they were not all that complimentary. And he persevered until death, which came to him in the community of Meaux in 1734 at the age of fifty-eight or sixty-one, depending on which date of birth is correct.

## Brother Alphonse

Brother Alphonse (Pierre Marie) was born in Saint-Chéron-lez-Chartres, in the diocese of Chartres, on 5 November 1677 and entered the Institute on 27 June 1700.<sup>281</sup> There is no mention of vows in the *Catalogue*; he may be one who never did take vows.

In 1708 he was undoubtedly a serving Brother in Guise; Brother Hubert was his Director. De La Salle wrote to Hubert in January of that year, "True, Brother Alphonse can be difficult at times, but you must try to get him to be more amenable," and later in the same letter, "You go to the kitchen and spend time talking with Brother Alphonse. This gives rise to familiarity and to his lack of respect for you."<sup>282</sup>

Here again is an example of the spirituality of the time: an emphasis not only on silence itself but also on a kind of social ranking of the Director over the other Brothers in the community which was preserved by maintaining some sort of distance, at least by silence, between the Director and the members of his community.

280. *Letters*, 44.9.

281. *Cahiers lasalliens* 3, p. 36.

282. *Letters*, 9.3, 12.

Brother Alphonse was in Rethel on 23 February 1717 when Brother Barthélemy visited there on his rounds of all the communities of France.<sup>283</sup> He died in Rethel on 13 December 1727 at the age of fifty. He is one of those Brothers who did humble work for more than twenty-five years with little or no record in history but still an important part of the founding of the Institute.

### Brother Henri (2nd)

Brother Henri (Joachim Pelard) was born in Guise, in the diocese of Laon, on 3 October 1683 and entered the Institute on 28 November 1700.<sup>284</sup> He is probably the one who, according to Blain, was the son of a poor shoemaker in Picardy, for Guise is in that area of France.<sup>285</sup> If what Blain says is true, Henri came into the Institute without knowing how to write, was received out of charity by De La Salle, and was given the training he needed to become a teacher.

The first record of any assignment indicates that he was one of the five Brothers staffing the hospice and the schools of Rouen on 24 November 1705.<sup>286</sup> Next, he and Brother Sébastien were assigned to open the Brothers' school in Grenoble in October 1708.<sup>287</sup>

In May or June of 1713,<sup>288</sup> when the Founder came to Mende from his retreat in the monastery of Saint Maximin, Henri was one of the Brothers in that community. Blain's account tells that De La Salle was rudely refused lodging and that he had to take shelter elsewhere, first with the Capuchins and then with a pious woman of the city, Madame Saint Denis. Biographers have struggled to understand exactly what happened on that occasion, except Maïllefer, who makes no mention at all of the Founder's going to Mende from his retreat at Saint Maximin but has him traveling directly to Grenoble via Marseille.<sup>289</sup> What actually happened will probably never be known for certainty.

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283. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 186.

284. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 36.

285. Blain, vol. 2, book 3, chap. 6, Cahiers lasalliens 8, p. 48.

286. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 265.

287. Poutet, *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 2, p. 184, note 14.

288. Cf. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 490.

289. Maïllefer, Cahiers lasalliens 6, pp. 213–215; *Two Early Biographies*,

After reviewing all the evidence at hand and studying the positions of the other biographers, Gallego has developed his own scenario, which will be adopted for this account.<sup>290</sup>

Gallego does not accept the story as told by Blain.<sup>291</sup> He feels that Blain typically exaggerates the humiliation of De La Salle in order to highlight the virtue of the Founder. Blain may have been influenced by the account that Barthélemy gives of Isidore's report about conditions in Mende, which has been related in the story of Isidore's life. In Gallego's view, that account is motivated by Isidore's need to justify his own conduct, especially his leaving the Institute.<sup>292</sup>

Gallego says that Brother Bernardin visited De La Salle when the Founder was at the monastery of Saint Maximin. He holds this position because of the details about De La Salle at Saint Maximin which Bernardin gave in written testimony of 6 May 1742.<sup>293</sup> In this document Bernardin states that the Founder did not have a change of clothes during the forty days of his retreat and that he left there to go to Marseille on his way to Mende with only seven livres and ten sous (about seventy dollars), which would leave him very little money for food.<sup>294</sup>

Gallego believes that a year earlier, in 1712, when De La Salle traveled from Avignon to Marseille, Bernardin came with the Founder, in order to go with him to Rome or to replace one of the Brothers from Marseille who would go to Rome to help Gabriel Drolin.<sup>295</sup>

When Bernardin visited De La Salle at the monastery of Saint Maximin, probably in the spring of 1713, he brought news of the developments in Marseille: possibly the departure from the Institute of Brother Ponce and other Brothers and the death of Brother Médard in February 1713.<sup>296</sup>

Brother Médard had been sent to Mende in December 1712, in order that Brother Timothée, the Director there, could come to Marseille as Director of Novices.<sup>297</sup> Médard seems to have been an unstable person, about whom there is no record in *Livret des Premiers Vœux* or in the *Catologue*. Lucard says that Médard had been in the

290 Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 477.

291 Blain, vol. 2, book 3, chap. 6, Cahiers lasalliens 8, pp. 47–49.

292 Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 492, note 108.

293 Lucard, *Vie du Vénérable Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, 2, p. 76.

294 Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 489.

295 Ibid., p. 480, note 42.

296 Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 378; Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, pp. 489–490.

297 Poutet, *Le XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 2, p. 181.

communities of Calais and Grenoble and had left the Institute, probably from Grenoble.<sup>298</sup> He returned to De La Salle in Marseille for re-admission, and the Founder accepted him. He was not long in Mende before the cold weather became too much for him, and he left without authorization, intending to go to Avignon. On the way, he suffered pleurisy and stopped in the community in Alès, where he died within seven days.<sup>299</sup>

De La Salle sent Bernardin to Mende to replace Médard and to be the Director.<sup>300</sup> With him were Henri and Nicolas, one of two Brothers (the other is Macaire) whose names are on the documents of Brother Barthélemy's visits to the communities in 1716 and 1717 but not in the *Catalogue*. All we know about Nicolas is what Blain tells in his story about Mende.

There were, then, three Brothers in Mende when De La Salle made his visit there. Bernardin certainly did not turn the Founder away. Because there were only three beds in the house, De La Salle went to the Capuchins for lodging but visited the community of the Brothers during the day for prayers and perhaps meals.<sup>301</sup>

Henri was possibly angry with the Founder for two reasons, and he probably received him coldly. First, he may have hoped to be the Director after Timothée, but apparently no one was named to that position when Timothée was brought to Marseille, and Henri, as the one longest in the Institute, had assumed the position until Bernardin came.<sup>302</sup> Second, Henri may have been upset because there was quite a period, after Médard left and before Bernardin arrived, when he and Nicolas had to do the work of three Brothers in the school.

Nicolas, the third Brother at Mende, also may have gotten into the act, according to Gallego, by making some more or less playful remarks to the effect that it would help if De La Salle would contribute to the purchase of the food they were eating.<sup>303</sup>

The fact is that De La Salle assigned Henri to be Director of the community in Les Vans that same year;<sup>304</sup> his signature as Director is on a receipt dated 21 August 1713. This does not seem consistent with the rude behavior of Henri reported by Blain. Also, the Founder or Timothée—whom De La Salle put in charge of the communities in the

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298. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, p. 284.

299. *Ibid.*, p. 295.

300. *Ibid.*, p. 295. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 490.

301. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 491.

302. *Ibid.*, note 105.

303. *Ibid.*, p. 491.

304. *Ibid.*, p. 493.

south—assigned Henri to be Director of Mende later in 1713 or early in 1714, when Bernardin was assigned as Director of Alès.

When Isidore, who had joined Henri at Mende, quit there and went to Paris in 1714, Henri was left alone in Mende until 1716. In that year, Nicolas was sent to be with him. The two of them were there when Barthélemy made his visit at Christmastime 1716. They signed their agreement to the General Assembly on 27 December, but Henri added a clause—with which Nicolas agreed—to the effect that the Brothers in the south should be given adequate representation at the Assembly.<sup>305</sup> Evidently Henri was not slow to assert himself in such matters.

Henri and Nicolas died during the plague of 1721, which had spread north from Marseille to Mende. They were faithful to the end in their service to the city of Mende. On 21 September the city council had given Henri the responsibility, with a priest, to distribute help to the sick. He died from the plague on 14 October; Nicolas had died two weeks earlier.<sup>306</sup> For both it was a heroic end to their lives as Brothers, an especially good one for Henri, who thereby redeemed any reputation he may have earned for days of conflict with the Founder.

## Brother Albert

Brother Albert was an extremely competent Brother who, according to most writers, did not persevere in the Institute. Gallego, however, charitably holds out the possibility that he may have died around the year 1711, which would explain why his name is not on the list of the *Catalogue* of the Brothers drawn up around the year 1714.<sup>307</sup> One argument against this suggestion is the fact that De La Salle did not mention Albert's death in any of the letters he sent to Gabriel afterward, though he did mention the deaths of other Brothers in an earlier letter to Rome.

Almost the only things known for sure about this Brother are learned from De La Salle's letters to Gabriel. He is mentioned six times in five of these letters<sup>308</sup> and alluded to in two others.<sup>309</sup> It seems

305. *Vie du Frère Barthélemy*, pp. 109–110.

306. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, I, p. 385.

307. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 483, note 66.

308. *Letters*, 16.2, 19.18, 20. 23.6, 26.10.

309. *Ibid.*, 17.15 and 24.12.

clear that Gabriel knew Albert, which means that Albert was a Brother before 1702. Another conjecture, based on the skill he possessed as a capable leader, is that he had more than the ordinary degree of education that was typical of the Brothers; he could have been one of those described by Blain<sup>310</sup> who gave up a university career to join De La Salle as early as 1684. It is even suggested that he knew Latin.<sup>311</sup>

Albert is also mentioned in letters to Brother Joseph and to Brother Mathias which will be described later. There is no record of Albert's family name, when he entered the Institute, or what vows he took. It is clear that he had good administrative skills and that De La Salle appreciated his ability to start off a school efficiently. It seems probable, from the assignments that De La Salle gave him as early as 1705, that Albert entered the Institute around the year 1700, though his name is not in *Livret des Premiers Vœux* among those who took vows for all their lives in 1705.

In one letter to Gabriel, written on 27 April 1705, De La Salle mentions that Albert is in charge of the school in Avignon,<sup>312</sup> which he opened;<sup>313</sup> this was a significant assignment, because Avignon was a papal city, territory belonging to the pope, and for that reason a prize in the mind of the Founder. In addition, De La Salle found it convenient to send his books to Avignon for Church approval to print, and he wanted to send and receive his letters through Avignon, in order to get the benefit of lower papal postal costs; Albert was entrusted with handling the transfer of the books and with forwarding the letters.<sup>314</sup>

In his letter of 27 April 1705, De La Salle says that he wanted to send Albert to Rome but that Gabriel had indicated in an earlier letter that he did not want him.<sup>315</sup> It is interesting that the Founder again says in a later letter (4 September 1705) that he could send Albert to help Gabriel, if he needs him. He adds:

We are going to open a school in Marseille, and after Brother Albert has been there until Easter, I will be able to send him to you to give a little help in your endeavors, if they are not going well. He is really good at that. In the first six months he would work wonders.<sup>316</sup>

310. Blain, vol. 2, book 2, chap. 1, Cahiers lasalliens 7, p. 224.

311. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 129.

312. *Letters*, 16.2.

313. *Ibid.*, 17.15.

314. *Ibid.*, 19.18, 20.1.

315. *Ibid.*, 17.15.

316. *Ibid.*, 19.20.

This seems like an unfavorable comparison between what Gabriel has accomplished in three years and what De La Salle would expect Albert to do. Again, in his letter of 21 June 1706, De La Salle says that he is sending a Brother from Avignon to Rome in five or six months, which could be the same Brother Albert.<sup>317</sup>

De La Salle said “in five or six months,” because he was thinking then of sending Albert to set up a school in Valréas, which he could do in that length of time. Albert did accomplish that, but because of a delayed start, he did not begin until April 1707.

Earlier, Albert had been the one to establish the school in Marseille, and he received a formal expression of thanks from the city. It is in this municipal record that we learn the full name of Brother Albert, if that is what it really was. Rigault reports from the record that “Brother Albert-de-l’Enfant-Jésus” was called to the meeting on 6 April 1706 to receive public congratulations. He was asked “to apply himself principally to train the children in reverence for God and to instruct them in all the duties of a Christian. This is what the Brother promised with much modesty and reliance on the help of the Lord.”<sup>318</sup>

It is possible that Albert-de-l’Enfant-Jésus was not the real name of Albert but a title given to him by the authorities in Marseille. Lucard points out that because of their devotion to the Child Jesus, the Brothers were sometimes called the Brothers of the Child Jesus and the Institute was referred to as the Brothers of the Christian Schools of the Child Jesus.<sup>319</sup> One of the early seals of the Institute was an image of Saint Joseph with the Child Jesus.

Albert was sent from the south of France to become the Director of the school in Troyes, possibly around the year 1707 or 1708. De La Salle wrote Brother Mathias on 4 April (assigned to 1708 from internal evidence) in response to Mathias’s request for a transfer from Mende, possibly to go to Troyes or to live with Albert. De La Salle tells Brother Mathias, “Brother Albert is not the type for you.”<sup>320</sup> Félix-Paul suggests that Albert had become accustomed, because of all his work founding schools in Avignon, Marseille, and Valréas, to visit people outside the community, something Mathias may have had in mind, for the Founder had to warn Mathias about it in earlier letters.<sup>321</sup>

The next reference to Albert is in De La Salle’s letter to Brother Joseph, the Visitor of the north, who was confronted with a serious

317. *Ibid.*, 24.12

318. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, I, p. 352.

319. Lucard, *Annales de l’Institut*, I, p. 273, note 1.

320. *Letters*, 61.2.

321. *Ibid.*, 57.3, 58.10, 62.5, 64.12.



An example of an early seal of the Institute, with images of Saint Joseph and the Child Jesus. The illustration (enlarged to twice the original size) is of a wax seal on a handwritten assignment sent to Brother Joseph giving him the authority to visit all the communities of the north except Paris. The document, dated 1717 and bearing De La Salle's signature, is preserved in the Generalate Archives in Rome. *Bulletin des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes*, 1994:171, 1954:164, 1957:191.

housing problem in Troyes. De La Salle tells Joseph not to do anything until he could come to Troyes. He also tells Joseph not to mention his coming to anyone, not even Albert. This seems to suggest some lack of confidence in Albert.<sup>322</sup> It may be connected with a report that had been circulated that Albert and the Brother living with him had a quarrel, maybe even an exchange of blows.<sup>323</sup> This may have precipitated Albert's departure from the Institute and been one reason why De La Salle was coming to Troyes, that is, not only to settle the housing problem but also to have a talk with Albert.<sup>324</sup>

If that presumption is true, it is one more sad ending to what was an illustrious career as a Brother, another sorrow in the heart of De La Salle. For Albert was a key person in the development of the Institute, a Brother with a special talent for inaugurating new ventures, evidently gifted with diplomacy, energy, educational know-how, and at ease moving from one assignment to another in De La Salle's service.

322. *Ibid.*, 53.3

323. *Ibid.*, 31.20.

324. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 167.

## Brother Mathias

Mathias is another Brother who is known almost exclusively from the letters of De La Salle. He probably entered the Institute around the year 1700. Though it appears that he left the Institute when he was still quite young, Mathias kept ten letters the Founder had written him, and they were found many years later in the attic of a house in the small town of Pernes near Avignon.

These letters were written to Mathias within a span of a year and a half, from 3 December 1706 to 16 May 1708, while Mathias was first in the Reims community, then in Paris at his request in early 1707, then transferred again at his request to Mende in June 1707. At Mende he asked to be returned to Paris but was sent to Avignon in June 1708; from there he left the Institute sometime before 1710, when another Brother received the name Mathias.

These letters, which were discovered around 1850, form a special group among the fifty-three autograph originals of De La Salle that have been preserved, because they reveal so much about the kindness of the Founder, but they also illustrate one type of Brother who lived and worked with him. There are, of course, no letters written to De La Salle by Mathias (or by any of the other Brothers); we have to discern the character of Mathias from what De La Salle wrote to him, almost all of which was in response to what Mathias had written to the Founder.

The best way to appreciate the personalities of the two correspondents is to read all ten letters in their entirety. For the purpose of this book on the early Brothers, it seems appropriate to cite just two complete letters as fairly typical. The first is dated 3 December 1706:

You are the first one to whom I am writing this month, my very dear Brother.

I want nothing more than to be able to comfort you in your troubles, but you must see that I cannot do so unless I know what they are. I am not at all sure what worries you.

You simply tell me that you are not well. I do not know if this is your only reason for asking to come back to Paris or to be sent elsewhere. Let me know what the cause of it all is.

You tell me hardly anything in your letters. A thing that needs saying only once, you repeat over and over again.

Let me know all your problems. If they come from the fact that I don't write to you, from now on I will write to you every time

that I write to the Brothers. But, please, make sure that your letters are written in a better hand and with better spelling, for I can hardly read them.

In your prayer, continue to occupy yourself with the preparatory acts. You are doing well to apply yourself to become interiorly recollected and to avoid distractions.

The only reason you give me for transferring you is that you do not fit in with the community in Reims. Surely you realize that in our Society we must adapt ourselves to wherever we may be sent by our Superiors, since obedience is the principal rule and the source of the greatest contentment among the Brothers.

I do not understand what you mean by saying that you are disgusted with the way you are treated. Explain this to me, and I will try to remedy what troubles you.

Be assured, my very dear Brother, that I want only your welfare and peace of mind and that I am,

Devotedly yours in our Lord,

De La Salle<sup>325</sup>

The second letter was written on 23 March 1708:

I think you are as well off as you could be, my very dear Brother, and that you ought to be satisfied with the Brother who is charged with directing you now.

So try to carry out your duties well, and apply yourself to your spiritual exercises, for it is these that will sanctify you and lead you to God.

Resolve to become very recollected, and take all possible means to do so.

Act in such a way as to increase the number of your students as much as you can.

I am quite convinced that the Brother who is with you is not at all annoying and that you are satisfied with him.

Aren't you ashamed of saying, "Imagine such a handsome young man as I am in such a vocation as this?"

You are very fortunate to be in your vocation, which is holy and leads to holiness and which does you honor both in this life and for your salvation.

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<sup>325</sup> *Letters*, 55.

What a wonderfully handsome young man you are! How can you talk about yourself like that! Is this the way a religious should speak?

If I am not satisfied with the letters you write, it is because you sometimes write offensively. Be careful to write more discreetly and more courteously.

Surely you see that it is very wrong to get angry and to harbor resentment.

You also see that it is very bad to lose your temper and follow your feelings; that is to act more like an animal than a reasonable being.

Take care not to let yourself be carried away by impatience in class, for that is not the way to establish order or silence.

Answering back is detrimental to the obedience you should practice.

It is very wrong to let yourself be carried away by every idea that comes into your head, for many such thoughts are wrong.

Let yourself be guided by obedience, and you will see that God will bless you.

I beg him to pour out his graces on you, and I am, my very dear Brother,

Devotedly yours in our Lord,

De La Salle<sup>326</sup>

Mathias, for all his shortcomings, seems to have been a successful teacher. On 10 October 1707, the municipal council of Mende recorded special thanks to the bishop of the city for having brought the three teachers of M. de La Salle to teach their children, adding their satisfaction for the "marvelous results" accomplished by the three Brothers.<sup>327</sup>

One other trait of Mathias can be presumed. He must have had a great respect, if not love, for De La Salle to have preserved to the end the rather uncomplimentary letters that the Founder had sent to him. For this, posterity is also grateful.

From one of De La Salle's letters, the existence of a certain Brother Cyprien is known, although nothing further about him is recorded. Mathias had asked if he could be transferred to live with Cyprien.

326. *Ibid.*, 60.

327. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, pp. 356–357.

De La Salle wrote:

I don't think that I will place you with Brother Cyprien. Brother Albert [the Director of the community] is not the type for you. You often don't realize what you are asking.<sup>328</sup>

The Founder may have had tongue in cheek when he wrote that last sentence, for Mathias may have known well enough that Brother Albert, probably in the community of Troyes as Director at that time, shared Mathias's yearning to be out of the community visiting the town or its people. One other fact about Brother Cyprien is that he died in Rethel in 1713.<sup>329</sup>

### Brother Paulin and Brother Séverin

Two additional letters, not written to Mathias but found with the ten sent to him, were addressed by De La Salle to two other Brothers, Paulin<sup>330</sup> and Séverin,<sup>331</sup> both of whom may have left the Institute around the same time as Mathias, perhaps also from the same community of Avignon. Little is known about these two Brothers. Félix-Paul speculates that the three of them may have lived together.<sup>332</sup> Perhaps they may even have set up a parish school in Pernes. It would not be unusual for former Brothers to continue in the work of teaching and to maintain a close association with one another.

The letter to Paulin was probably written in 1705, when he was working in one of the schools in Rouen and living in the General Hospice. There is a reference in the letter to the fact that Paulin was finding the work in Rouen difficult, which is understandable considering that the Brothers were not only teaching large classes but also taking care of the poor in the hospice.<sup>333</sup>

There is some evidence that Paulin was one of the first two Brothers (the other was Joachim) to teach in the school of the parish of Saint Laurent in Marseille in 1706.<sup>334</sup> Both Paulin and Joachim seem to have been changed from Rouen to Marseille at the same time. In 1708 Joachim was in Mende, and it is possible that Paulin was also

328. *Letters*, 61.2.

329. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint-Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 248.

330. *Letters*, 36.

331. *Ibid.*, 51.

332. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint-Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 266.

333. Blain, vol. 2, book 3, chap. 3, *Calicets lasalliens* 0, pp. 23ff.

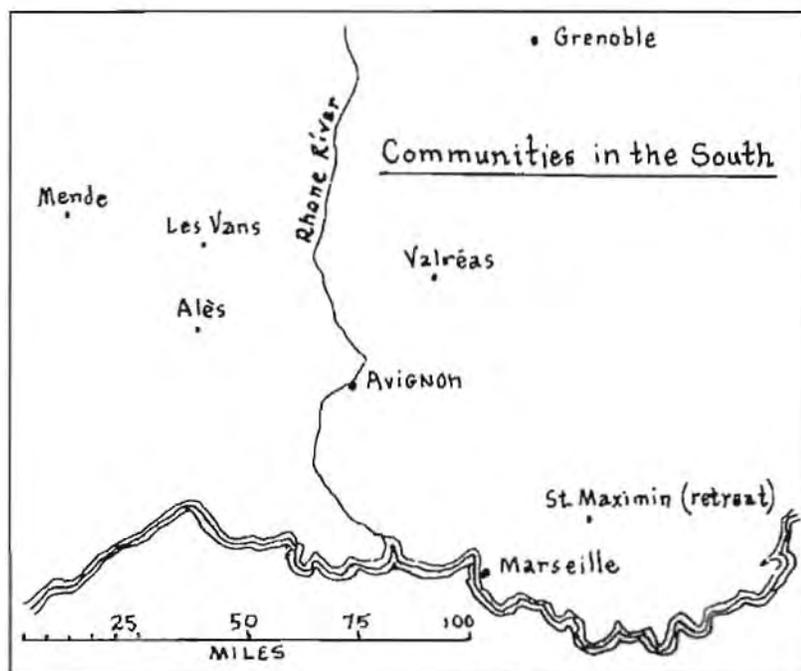
334. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint-Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 262.

transferred from Marseille around that time and that he lived with Mathias in Avignon before leaving the Institute.<sup>335</sup>

The letter to Séverin was written on 13 July 1706 and is the Founder's answer to the Brother's qualms of conscience about the need to make restitution after having calumniated a deceased woman. De La Salle assures Séverin that he need not worry, that what he has already done is sufficient, that he should follow the advice of his confessor, and that De La Salle himself frees Séverin from all guilt in the matter.

### Brother Louis (2nd)

All that is known about this second Brother Louis is that he is listed in the community records of Laon as the Director from 1704 to 1706<sup>336</sup> and that he died in Rouen on 28 March 1709.<sup>337</sup>



335. *Ibid.*, p. 266.

336. *Cahiers lasalliens* 11, p. 197.

337. Manuscript *Obituary*.

## Brothers Who Entered from 1701 through 1705

Name	Diocese	Born	Entered	Died
Luc (Gérard Sertel)	Senlis	?	1701	1730
Hyacinthe (Gentien Gastignon)	Blois	1669	1701	1751
Sébastien (Jean-Baptiste Tririon)	Reims	1682	1701	1745
Simon (2nd) (Lambert Coron)	Cambrai	1672	1701	1728
Marc (Jean Morel)	Paris	1677	1702	1728
Félix (Claude Bequet)	Noyon	1676	1702	1745
Alexis (Jourdain)	Amiens	?	1702	?
Jean-Baptiste (Michel Servin)	Chartres	1673	1703	1733
Isidore (Théodore Gaspard Lambert)	?	?	?	?
Bernardin (Pierre-Martin Ronsin)	Reims	1686	1704	1751
Hilaire (Edme-Thomas Rivot)	Auxerre	1682	1704	1739
Joachim (François Chable)	Auxerre	1682	1704	?
Urbain (François du Nas)	Chartres	1675	1704	?
Basile (Théopiste Chereau)	Blois	1677	1704	?
Bruno (Barthélemy Puroge)	Auxerre	1683	1704	1737
Adrien (Étienne Le Narré)	Paris	1673	1705	1716
Fiacre (Jacques Nonnez)	Châlons-sur-Marne	1683	1705	1756
Antonin (Gervais-Protais Dubrecq)	Paris	1685	1705	1756
Jérôme (Thomas Bavant)	Rouen	1670	1705	?
Michel (Vincent Floquet)	Laon	1680	1705	1762
Jacques (2nd) (Charles Bouilly)	Laon	1679	1705	1760
Romain (Nicolas Le Hucher)	Rouen	1670	1705	?
Honoré (Nicolas du Moutier)	Laon	1661	1705	1721
Eustache (Sébastien Couvret)	Chartres	1666	1705	1729
Pacôme (André Sceillier)	Paris	1675	1705	1717
Gervais (Louis Sceillier)	Paris	1679	1705	1741

Although Brother Barthélemy also entered in 1703, his story will be told in a separate chapter.

The story of Brother Isidore has already been told in the account of Brother Hubert, who entered in 1700.

The stories of the last two on this list, Brothers Pacôme and Gervais, have also been told, along with that of their father, Brother Hilarion (who entered the same time with them), as also that of their other brother, Brother Dominique, in the account of the fifth member of this family, Brother Théodore, who entered the Institute in 1700.<sup>338</sup>

338. See pp. 110–114.

Two others in the group that entered from 1701 through 1705. Brothers Alexis and Urbain, are listed as having left the Institute; nothing further is known about Urbain. The *Catalogue* states that Alexis “made vows for all his life,” but he evidently left between 1714, when the record of the *Catalogue* was started, and 1716, when another Brother Alexis is listed in the *Catalogue*.

Very little is known about seven Brothers in this group who entered from 1701 through 1705:

- ♦ Brother Luc (Gérard Sertel) entered in 1701 and died in Marseille in 1730.
- ♦ Brother Marc (Jean Morel) entered in 1702 and died in Calais in 1728.
- ♦ Brother Félix (Claude Bequet) entered in 1702 and also died in Calais, in 1745.
- ♦ Brother Jean-Baptiste (Michel Servin) entered in 1703 and died in Reims in 1733.
- ♦ Brother Bruno (Barthélemy Purorge) entered in 1704, was the Director of the community in Darnétal for a number of years, and died at Saint Yon in 1737.
- ♦ Brother Adrien (Étienne Le Narré) entered in 1705 and died in Guise in 1729.
- ♦ Brother Eustache (Sébastien Couvret) entered in 1705 and died in Laon in 1729.

All persevered until their deaths, giving a combined total of almost 200 years of service to the Institute, yet there is practically no record of all their years of work. Such, perhaps, is the lot of most of the teachers in the history of the world.

## Brother Hyacinthe

Brother Hyacinthe (Gentien Gastignon) was born in Saint-Denis-sur-Loire, diocese of Blois, on 1 November 1669 and entered the Institute at the age of thirty-two on 4 May 1701.<sup>339</sup> *Livret des Premiers Vœux* has the vow formula he made for all his life on 3 June 1703.<sup>340</sup> The vows he took as a serving Brother were of obedience and stability.

339. *Cahiers lasalliens* 3, p. 37.

340. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

Serving Brothers did not take the vow of association to keep gratuitous schools.

Hyacinthe was in Brother Hubert's community in Chartres in 1707; he was fourteen years older than Hubert and evidently had some difficulty getting along with a younger man in charge of him.

In 1709 he wrote to De La Salle about the new bishop's plan to change the residence of the Brothers, and he went to see De La Salle, most likely in Paris, to talk about this. He probably wrote the letter and came to see the Founder with Hubert's permission. De La Salle wrote Hubert that it was not necessary for Hyacinthe to write or come to see him, and he added that Hyacinthe did not agree with Hubert about the suitability of the proposed residence for the Brothers.<sup>341</sup>

Probably as a result of this relationship with Hubert, Hyacinthe was transferred to another community at the end of that school year. He may have been transferred to Versailles, for he was there in April 1717 when Brother Barthélemy made his visit in preparation for the General Assembly.<sup>342</sup>

Hyacinthe was at the founding of the Brothers' community in Saint-Omer on 16 October 1720. In all these assignments, he was working as a serving Brother, most likely as a cook, but doing some substitute teaching from time to time.

In 1723 Brother Timothée authorized Hyacinthe to make the vows of a teaching Brother and appointed him to be the Director of the community in Mende when that community was reopened after having been closed during the plague of 1720-1721; he remained there until 1729.<sup>343</sup>

Hyacinthe renewed his vows according to the Bull of Approbation on 22 September 1733.<sup>344</sup> He was Director of the community in Saint-Denis in 1740 and died in Chartres on 13 April 1751.<sup>345</sup>

341. *Letters*, 11.1.

342. *Cahiers lasalliens* 40/1, p. 186.

343. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, p. 428.

344. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 206.

345. Manuscript *Obituary*.

## Brother Sébastien

Brother Sébastien (Jean-Baptiste Tririon) was born in Varennes, diocese of Reims, on 5 March 1682 and entered the Institute on 22 May 1701. He took vows for three years, though the date is not given.<sup>346</sup> He made perpetual vows on 22 September 1725 at Saint Yon.<sup>347</sup>

In 1706 Sébastien was on the list of the Brothers forbidden to teach in the parish of Saint Sulpice as a result of the lawsuit by the writing masters.

In 1707 he was sent with Brother Mathias to join Brother Ponce in the community of Mende, which was opened that year. They arrived on 21 June 1707, having come from Paris; the cost of their journey, sixty livres (six hundred dollars), which was refunded by the bishop, seems to indicate that they either came by coach or traveled on foot and had to pay for lodging at several stops along the way.<sup>348</sup>

Sébastien was probably paired with Mathias to help Mathias be more settled, for in two of the letters written to Mathias in 1708, De La Salle reminded him that he should not complain, since he was living with a companionable confrere in the person of Sébastien.<sup>349</sup> In a third letter to Mathias, De La Salle had to tell him that the shoes made for Sébastien were too small for Sébastien and that since they fit Mathias, Mathias should wear them.<sup>350</sup> On such serious matters the Superior had to intervene!

In 1708 Sébastien was sent to Grenoble with another Brother to open the Brothers' school in the parish of Saint Laurent; he was back again in Paris in 1709, then in due course was sent to Chartres, where he signed the agreement for the General Assembly when Brother Barthélemy visited there on 9 December 1716.<sup>351</sup>

At the General Chapter of 1734, Sébastien was listed as the former Director of Calais. He died in Guise on 20 June 1745.

346. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 37.

347. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 251.

348. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

349. *Letters*, 60.5, 61.5, 8.

350. *Ibid.*, 62.9.

351. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 251, Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 185.

### Brother Simon (2nd)

Brother Simon (Lambert Coron) was born on 30 May 1672 in the town of Condé-sur-l'Escaut in the diocese of Cambrai. He entered the Institute on 20 June 1701 and made vows for all his life, though the date is not given.<sup>352</sup>

Simon was sent with Brother Barnabé to open the school in Mâcon for the school year 1709–1710. Early in the next school year, on 22 December 1711, he and Barnabé were expelled from the town because people did not want to have religious as teachers and the Brothers were dressed like religious.<sup>353</sup> The bishop of the town did not intervene, most likely because the school had been opened by one of the priests without his advice and consent. This event has already been described in the story about Brother Barnabé.

Simon was in Reims when Brother Barthélemy made his visit there on 28 February 1717,<sup>354</sup> and he died in Reims on 19 March 1728.<sup>355</sup>

### Brother Bernardin

Brother Bernardin (Pierre-Martin Ronsin) was born on 4 April 1686 in the town of Auwillers, diocese of Reims, and entered the Institute in 1704.<sup>356</sup> Rigault describes him and Timothée as two tireless helpers of De La Salle in the south of France during the most difficult moments of the Founder's apostolic work.<sup>357</sup>

Avignon is Bernardin's first assignment of record, where he is described as an excellent teacher in charge of the first class on the occasion of De La Salle's visit there in 1712.<sup>358</sup> When the Founder left Avignon to go to Marseille, he took Bernardin with him, possibly with the intent of also taking him to Rome with him in order to give Brother Gabriel a companion.<sup>359</sup> As it turned out, De La Salle did not go to Rome, and he planned to have Bernardin be the Director for the parish school of Saint Martin in Marseille, a project that was not achieved

352. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 37.

353. Poutet, *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle et les Origines Lasalliennes*, 2, pp. 59, 248.

354. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 186.

355. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 37.

356. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

357. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 2, pp. 41–42.

358. Lucard, *Vie du Vénérable Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, 2, p. 58.

359. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, p. 480.

because of the opposition to De La Salle and the Brothers that developed.<sup>360</sup>

As told in the story of Brother Henri, when De La Salle was on retreat in 1713 at the monastery of Saint Maximin, Bernardin came to visit him and brought him news of what was happening in Marseille and other communities in the south.<sup>361</sup> On learning of the death of Brother Médard, De La Salle sent Bernardin as Director to Mende.<sup>362</sup> He was there when De La Salle visited before going to Grenoble.

In 1714 De La Salle transferred Bernardin to Alès as the Director, and Bernardin remained there until 1720, when he was called upon by Brother Timothée, the new Superior, to be the Director of the two schools in Saint-Omer.<sup>363</sup> In the meantime, he had participated in the General Chapters of 1717 and 1720.

Bernardin was one of the thirty-one Brothers at the Chapter of 1725, which was held for the solemn reception of the Bull of Approval. After the Chapter he joined with the others in renewing his vows according to the Bull. He also attended the transfer of the remains of the Founder from the church of Saint Sever to the chapel at Saint Yon in 1734 and the Chapter that followed.

In May 1732 he had opened the school in Valence, and he was called on again in 1745 to open another school, in Privas, the territory of militant Calvinists who challenged the presence of the Brothers.<sup>364</sup> When the town authority came to tell the Brothers that they had to leave, Bernardin responded that they had come at the request of the bishop and would leave only at his request.<sup>365</sup>

Brother Bernardin died in the community of Mirepoix in 1751 at the age of sixty-five. He had been a Brother for forty-eight years, one of the stalwarts who significantly supported De La Salle when he needed it most and contributed generously to the foundation of the Institute.

360. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, p. 292.

361. Gallego, *Vida y Pensamiento*, pp. 488–489.

362. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 377.

363. *Ibid.*, 2, p. 15.

364. *Ibid.*, p. 209.

365. *Ibid.*

## Brother Hilaire

Brother Hilaire (Edme-Thomas Rivot) was born on 10 April 1682 in the town of Escamps in the diocese of Auxerre, and he entered the Institute on 10 July 1704.<sup>366</sup> He was a serving Brother, and the first documentation about him is in a letter to Brother Denis in 1708, when De La Salle tells Denis that he should have nothing to do with Hilaire when he visits Saint Yon on the mid-week half holiday.<sup>367</sup> Brother Barthélemy, Director of Novices at Saint Yon, may have written to De La Salle that Brother Denis was disturbing the novices or the community at Saint Yon on those occasions.

A letter to Brother Hubert in 1710 establishes that Brother Hilaire was present in the community of Chartres.<sup>368</sup> De La Salle tells Hubert not to teach Hilaire how to write; evidently the Founder wanted Hilaire to stick to his job as a serving Brother.

This letter is significant because in it De La Salle tells Hubert in clear terms that he wants the communities to have one person, a serving Brother, to take care of temporal affairs and another person, the Director, to be responsible for the school, the community, and the supervision of the serving Brother. De La Salle felt that the Directors were doing too much and neglecting the community spiritual exercises. He insists that Hubert make use of Hilaire as a serving Brother in charge of the temporal needs of the community. The Founder's plan, however, was not well received by the Directors, and when the Rule was revised by them at the General Chapter of 1717, it was not included.<sup>369</sup>

In 1710, while Hilaire was with Hubert, the tension over the separation of powers was going on. Hilaire was probably the cook for the community at that time. De La Salle remarks that the Brothers of Hubert's community feel that Hubert is in a bad humor because of Hilaire's being in charge of the money. Hilaire has told the Founder that Hubert is asking for money to spend as he pleases. De La Salle tells Hubert that he, Hubert, is more strict than the Founder himself, as well as other Directors, and that this is not wise. De La Salle says that Hilaire should not give the money to the Director but should buy what is needed. "You are to hand the money over to him," De La

366. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 39.

367. *Letters*, 5.4.

368. *Ibid.*, 12.30.

369. Cf. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, pp. 213–214.

Salle writes to Hubert. "If he doesn't buy what is needed, let me know, and I will certainly see that he does so."<sup>370</sup>

Hilaire returned to Saint Yon in due time; his presence there is documented on the occasion of Barthélemy's visit to the community on 7 May 1717.<sup>371</sup> He also signed the special document agreeing with the purchase of Saint Yon in 1718; on this document he is listed as the doorkeeper and the tailor.<sup>372</sup> Perhaps he had not been that good a cook. He signed another legal document regarding the ownership of Institute property in 1725, following the reception of letters patent and the Bull of Approbation.<sup>373</sup> He made his vows according to the Bull on 22 September 1734, and he died at Saint Yon on 17 May 1739.<sup>374</sup> A Brother for thirty-five years, he must have been an interesting person to live with.

### Brother Joachim

Brother Joachim (François Chable) was born on 18 February 1683 in the town of Ouzéy in the diocese of Sées. He entered the Institute in 1704 and made vows for all his life, but he is listed as having left the Institute.<sup>375</sup>

Joachim was assigned to the community of Rouen on November 1705, when the Brothers were living in the General Hospice and teaching in the schools of the city; he taught in the school of the parish of Saint Eloi.<sup>376</sup>

He is listed as one of the Brothers to open the school in the parish of Saint Laurent in Marseille with Brother Albert on 3 January 1706; on 2 September 1706, his name appears in the minutes of the meeting of the school's founders.<sup>377</sup>

In June 1708 he was sent to Mende,<sup>378</sup> in August 1709, with the Director, Brother Antoine, he was given a safe-passage document by the bishop in order to travel from Mende to Paris for retreat.<sup>379</sup> This is the last available record of him. He certainly did quite a bit of traveling with the Brothers.

370. *Letters*, 12.35.

371. *Cahiers lasalliens* 40/1, p. 187.

372. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 418.

373. *Ibid.*, 2, p. 113.

374. *Cahiers lasalliens* 3, p. 39.

375. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

376. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 285.

## Brother Basile

Brother Basile (Théopiste Chereau) was born on 22 June 1677 in the town of Vendôme, in the diocese of Blois, and entered the Institute in 1704. The register states that he was dismissed from the Institute, but no date or explanation is given.<sup>380</sup> No information is available about his assignments before 1717, when he was present in the Rouen community of Brothers teaching in the four schools of that city.<sup>381</sup>

It was while he was in that community that he, with some other Brothers, was attacked by two drunken men with a sword and a club early in the morning when the Brothers were on their way to Mass.<sup>382</sup> The Brothers were quite able to fend off the attack but reported it to the police; Basile is listed as the principal complainant, probably because he was the oldest or the one who bore the brunt of the attack.<sup>383</sup> The date was 28 July 1717. De La Salle was quite upset that the Brothers had filed charges, though the charges were dismissed when the Brothers agreed in writing to accept the apologies of the two culprits. The Founder preferred that the Brothers practice the Gospel more faithfully by turning the other cheek and making no effort to secure justice.

On 12 June 1718, Basile and five other Brothers renewed their vows with De La Salle and Brother Barthélemy at Saint Yon. On the reverse side of the vow formula are their signatures, and after the name of Basile, he is identified as the "assistant teacher of the older boarders," which probably meant those who were placed there by order of the king.<sup>384</sup> There is no further information available about Basile.

377. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 262.

378. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

379. *Cahiers lasalliens* 11, p. 579.

380. *Cahiers lasalliens* 3, p. 40.

381. *Cahiers lasalliens* 40/1, p. 186.

382. Blain, vol. 2, book 4, chap. 3, *Cahiers lasalliens* 8, pp. 469–470.

383. *Cahiers lasalliens* 40/2, p. 86.

384. *Cahiers lasalliens* 3, p. 22.

## Brother Fiacre

Brother Fiacre (Jacques Nonnez) was born on 26 November 1683 in the town of Verrières, diocese of Châlons-sur-Marne, and entered the Institute at Saint Yon on 11 June 1705. He took vows for all his life.

The earliest document with his name is the one signed during Barthélemy's visit to the community of Boulogne on 21 March 1717; Fiacre was the Director of that community,<sup>385</sup> and in that capacity he attended the General Chapter of 1717. After the Chapter, he was assigned as Visitor for the communities in the north when Timothée was assigned to do the same work in the south of France.<sup>386</sup>

In November 1717, Fiacre was in the Paris community as the Visitor of the north when Barthélemy visited there to accept the community's endorsement of his election as Superior.

Fiacre's signature is on two formulas of the renewal of vows, one on 25 May 1717 with Brother Barthélemy and fifteen other Brothers, the other on 12 June 1718 with De La Salle, Brother Barthélemy, and five other Brothers. On the reverse of this latter formula, Fiacre is identified as "designated to visit the houses of our Society."

On 3 June 1718, he is named as one of the Brothers who formed a kind of executive committee to help Brother Barthélemy make important decisions before the next Chapter.<sup>387</sup>

Fiacre was a member of the Chapter of 1720, when Timothée was elected Superior; after the Chapter, Fiacre was assigned to replace Timothée as Visitor of the south and Director of the community in Avignon. As Director of Avignon, he attended the Chapter of 1725 for the solemn reception of the Bull of Approbation and renewed his vows according to the Bull.

In 1727 Fiacre was sent to Rome with Brother Thomas to give some long-awaited relief to Brother Gabriel after his twenty-five years of solitary life and work in the papal city. Fiacre was also commissioned by the Superior to pay his respects to the pope and offer him the thanks of the Institute for granting the Bull of Approbation.<sup>388</sup> He stayed when Thomas and Gabriel returned to France. He was assisted later by Brother Sylvestre but returned to France himself in 1732 to resume his posts as Director of the community in Avignon and Visitor for the communities in the south.

385. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 186.

386. Lucard, *Annales de l'Institut*, 1, p. 366.

387. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 419.

388. *Ibid.*, 2, p. 117.

Fiacre signed an agreement in 1735 to provide Brothers for the school in Die. The contract caused a stir back in Saint Yon, because one of the subjects included in it was Latin. Fiacre may not have read the fine print which forbade the Brothers themselves to teach Latin. The school began in 1736 with a priest on the faculty to teach Latin.<sup>389</sup>

Fiacre no doubt attended the General Chapters of 1734, 1745, and 1751. He died on 15 December 1756 in the community of Lunéville, which is located in Lorraine.

A word about Lunéville: this was the municipal residence of Stanislas Leczinski, Duke of Lorraine by treaty with France and formerly king of Poland. He was the father-in-law of Louis XV and had a deep concern for the education of the poor. His interest was such that he visited Saint Yon to see the work of the Brothers and generously arranged for the support of schools like Saint Yon for his capital city, Nancy, as well as in Lunéville, in Metz, and for the town of Maréville, near Nancy. It was Brother Exupère who represented the Brothers in the arrangements made with the duke.<sup>390</sup> It is probable that Fiacre was living in retirement at that time in the community of Lunéville, where he later died in 1756 at the age of seventy-three.

There is no mention of Fiacre's death in Lucard's *Annales*, which seems strange, because Lucard generally gives such notice for Brothers who have made notable contributions to the work of the Institute. Fiacre certainly was a competent and loyal Brother who did great work for the Institute. No doubt there is some testimony to him in the files of the Institute which has not yet been published.

## Brother Antonin

Brother Antonin (Gervais-Protais Dubrecq) was born on 18 March 1685 in the parish of Saint Nicolas in Paris and entered the Institute on 17 May 1705. He died in Reims on 14 November 1756, a Brother for more than fifty years. Unfortunately, little is known of his life during all those years.

In a letter written on 30 January 1708 to Brother Hubert, Director of the community in Guise, De La Salle writes:

If Brother Antonin has no confidence in you, it is because you do not win it by your reserve, your seriousness, and your fidelity to

389. *Ibid.*, pp. 201–202.

390. *Ibid.*, pp. 280–281.

the Rule. You do not show sufficient prudence or fidelity to the Rule, and this draws down on you the disdain of the others.<sup>391</sup>

In another letter of 18 April, probably in the same year, the Founder, again addressing Hubert, says, “You should encourage Brother Antonin to be frank and to tell you everything with simplicity.”<sup>392</sup> At the time, Hubert was twenty-five years old and learning how to be a Director; Antonin, at the age of twenty-three and probably in his first community, was also learning, especially how to live in community.

The next documented fact available for this study is Brother Antonin’s signature on the document of the community of Rouen when Brother Barthélemy visited there on 27 March 1717.<sup>393</sup> It is also known that he made perpetual vows in 1734 and, as Director of the community in Laon, was a delegate to the Chapters of 1745 and 1751.<sup>394</sup>

### Brother Jérôme

Brother Jérôme (Thomas Bavant) was born on 1 October 1670 in the town of Yébleron, diocese of Rouen, and entered the Institute in 1705. The *Catalogue* states that he made vows for all his life but that he was dismissed from the Institute on 3 May 1728. No explanation of this is given.<sup>395</sup>

Jérôme is one of those who signed the agreement for the General Assembly of 1717 when Brother Barthélemy visited the Paris community in preparation for the Assembly.<sup>396</sup> Jérôme was also in Paris in November 1717 when Barthélemy returned there to secure the Brothers’ acceptance of his election by the Assembly.<sup>397</sup> This is all the information available on Brother Jérôme.

391. *Letters*, 9.16.

392. *Ibid.*, 10.17.

393. *Cahiers lasalliens* 40/1, p. 186.

394. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 198.

395. *Cahiers lasalliens* 3, p. 41.

396. *Cahiers lasalliens* 40/1, p. 186.

397. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 413.

### Brother Michel (2nd)

Brother Michel (Vincent Floquet) was born on 10 December 1680 in the town of Marle, diocese of Laon, and entered the Institute in 1705. He made vows for all his life and persevered until his death on 10 April 1762 at the age of eighty-one.<sup>398</sup>

Michel was in Paris on 25 April 1717 when Brother Barthélemy visited there on his tour of the communities before the General Assembly of 1717.<sup>399</sup> His name on the agreement of the community to the proposal for the General Assembly is the second one after the name of the Director, Brother Jean, which may mean that Michel was the Sub-Director. After the Assembly, he was called to be the Director of the school community in Rouen<sup>400</sup> and named by the new Superior, Barthélemy, to the special group which the Superior could consult on important decisions before the next General Chapter.<sup>401</sup>

Michel attended the Chapter of 1725 as Sub-Director of the community in Versailles,<sup>402</sup> also the Chapter of 1734<sup>403</sup> and the Chapter of 1745.<sup>404</sup> He was one of the Brothers called on for more than fifty-six years to do important work in the Institute before and after the death of the Founder.

### Brother Jacques (2nd)

Brother Jacques (Charles Bouilly) was born on 11 February 1679 in the town of Marchais, diocese of Laon, and entered the Institute on 15 August 1705. The register states that he took vows for three years.<sup>405</sup>

Jacques was in Grenoble when De La Salle stayed with the Brothers there in 1713–1714; contrary to Rigault,<sup>406</sup> he was not the Director; Brother Jean Jacquot was the Director at that time.<sup>407</sup> Jacques was the Director of Grenoble, however, in 1716,<sup>408</sup> and on 26 January

398. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 41.

399. Ibid.

400. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 413.

401. Ibid., p. 419.

402. Ibid., 2, p. 108.

403. Ibid., p. 147.

404. Ibid., p. 299.

405. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 41.

406. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 379.

407. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 218.

408. Ibid.

1717, when Brother Barthélemy visited the community on his tour in preparation for the General Assembly.<sup>409</sup>

Jacques was the Brother whom De La Salle sent to Paris in 1713 to learn from Barthélemy how the Institute was getting along in the north.<sup>410</sup> It was on this occasion that De La Salle took over Brother Jacques's role as teacher in the school of the Saint Laurent parish during his absence.

Jacques came to the Assembly of 1717 as a representative of the communities in the south, along with Timothée from Avignon and Bernardin from Alès.<sup>411</sup> He was also at the Chapter of 1720 for the election of Timothée as Superior and again at the Chapter of 1725, when he was Director of the community in Alès. On that occasion he renewed for all his life his vows according to the Bull of Approbation.

Brother Jacques died in Angers on 16 July 1760. He was another of those few Brothers to be over eighty years of age at the time of his death.

### Brother Romain

Brother Romain (Nicolas Le Hucher) was born on 8 September 1670 in Saint Michel parish in the city of Rouen and entered the Institute on 23 November 1705. He made vows for all his life, and he died in Paris between 1714, when he is registered in the *Catalogue*, and September 1719, when the name Romain was given to another Brother.<sup>412</sup> He was the Director of Troyes in 1717, when Brother Barthélemy made his visit there on the tour of the communities,<sup>413</sup> but he was unable to attend the General Assembly in May of that year, probably because of the need to stay with the school.<sup>414</sup> No other information about Brother Romain is available.

409. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 185.

410. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 381.

411. *Ibid.*, p. 410.

412. Cahiers lasalliens 3, pp. 41, 64.

413. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 185.

414. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, p. 410.

## Brother Honoré

Brother Honoré (Nicolas du Moutier) was born on 2 January 1661 in the town of Liesse, diocese of Laon, and entered the Institute on 15 December 1705 at the age of forty-four. He took vows for all his life,<sup>415</sup> probably as a serving Brother. He had been a domestic in the house of the Prince of Soubise,<sup>416</sup> though this is questioned by Hermans.<sup>417</sup> He was in the community of the school Brothers in Rouen, probably as the cook, when Barthélemy visited there on 27 March 1717.<sup>418</sup>

According to Rigault,<sup>419</sup> Brother Honoré's association with the Prince of Soubise proved valuable to the Institute in the following way. The prince was the father of Armand-Gaston, who became Cardinal Rohan, archbishop of Strasbourg and the French ambassador to the court in Rome. Both Barthélemy and Timothée, as Superiors, took Honoré with them when they made their courtesy calls to the cardinal, who was very happy to meet the former servant of his father's household.

In 1721, when Timothée was sending to Rome the package of materials with his petition for recognition of the Institute, he had Brother Honoré, accompanied by another Brother, bring these to the cardinal's residence. Though Honoré was unable to meet the cardinal, who was preparing for his trip to Rome, one of the cardinal's secretaries, M. Jean Vivant, welcomed the Brothers and promised to deliver the petition to the proper authorities in Rome. This M. Vivant was the brother of M. François Vivant, who had earlier helped the Brothers in Paris ward off the encroachments of M. de Brou.<sup>420</sup>

Brother Honoré brought these materials to the cardinal's residence in the spring of 1721. In August of that year, Honoré died in Paris at the age of sixty.

415. Cahiers lasalliens 3, p. 42.

416. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 2, p. 67.

417. Cahiers lasalliens 11, p. 110, note 1.

418. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 186.

419. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 2, pp. 67–68, 74–75.

420. Blain, vol. 2, book 3, chap. 19. Cahiers lasalliens 8, pp. 189ff.

## Some Additional Stories by Blain

The supplement to Canon Blain's biography of De La Salle includes three chapters intended to inspire the reader and be a warning to the Brothers. It is clear that Blain had the Brothers in mind when he was writing his entire opus on the Founder. He may well have had a feeling of responsibility for the Institute as one of its appointed ecclesiastical superiors, in his case for the diocese of Rouen, especially since the novitiate and the Institute administration were in Rouen. He was quite disturbed when some Brothers criticized his two volumes on the life of De La Salle because of certain unflattering remarks made about the early Brothers. In response to the criticism, he wrote a lengthy letter defending himself, which was given support by Brother Timothée, the Superior.<sup>421</sup>

The first of the three chapters in the supplement describes, among other edifying things, several incidents in the lives of the early Brothers that seemed to be miraculous or at least a sign of the care that Providence was taking of the Christian Schools. An example is the collapse of a classroom ceiling immediately after the last two pupils had gone down the stairs, an incident related earlier in the life of Brother Charles.

The second chapter relates stories about the premature and often sudden death by which God seemed to punish certain Brothers for their neglect of the duties of their vocation. Blain relates five stories of different young Brothers who began their lives as Brothers fervently but gradually became negligent and drawn away from their duties. Two of them became too ambitious for careers as calligraphers, one was seduced by an inheritance he received; a fourth formed a liaison with a young woman, and the fifth was beset by inconstancy and independence. All were struck down suddenly by one kind of illness or another and died quickly, though still Brothers. Blain concludes that all had been blessed with robust health, yet all died before the age of thirty because the Lord was displeased with their negligence.

Blain does not give the names of these Brothers, but one account coincides with the facts known about Brother Médard, whose brief story has been told in connection with the life of Brother Henri Pelard.

In a similar vein, the third chapter of this part of the supplement recounts "the evils that pursued and overwhelmed Brothers who have shamefully abandoned their vocation." Blain states frankly that he is

<sup>421</sup> Blain, vol. 2, the final four pages.

writing this chapter "to impress on all the Brothers an ever-renewed respect for their vocation and an effective resolution to fulfill its obligations with fervor and an infinite fear of abandoning it."

One example Blain gives is of a young man in the rue Neuve community during the time when De La Salle was absent and Brother Henri L'Heureux was acting Director. The young man first had the idea of joining another religious order in search of greater perfection. He actually absconded in clothes belonging to the community. Then he came back, only to leave again, this time to sign up on ship, get involved in smuggling tobacco, and be thrown into jail. He was released from jail, only to quarrel with dangerous people, one of whom stabbed him to death with a sword.

Another Brother fancied himself gifted in prescribing for the sick. He had a special cure for typhoid fever. He was in Laon and became quite popular with the people. When Barthélemy tried to transfer him to another community, he refused to go, and he left the Institute. But then he found out that people lost their confidence in him once he was no longer a Brother. He tried for a time to live the life of a hermit, but the clergy disapproved of this. He then became the caretaker of a store of grain and ended up getting horribly murdered by some shepherds when he may have been trying to defend what he was guarding.<sup>422</sup>

This last account seems to correspond with what is known about a Brother René (Jean-Baptiste Soyaux), who was cofounder and Director of the community in Les Vans in September 1713.<sup>423</sup> He was a member of the community in Laon on 4 March 1717, when Brother Barthélemy visited there.<sup>424</sup> In a history of the community of Laon, there is an account of an unnamed Brother similar to Blain's version in the supplement. The history cites as witnesses two Brothers who were living with René in 1717: André, the Director, and Eustache.<sup>425</sup>

Félix-Paul suggests that René's name is crossed out in the *Catalogue* because whoever kept the *Catalogue* did not want René's name associated with the Institute.

Altogether Blain tells the stories of ten Brothers who left the Institute and ended up unhappily. He gives the name of only one, Brother Onésime, who does not appear in the *Catalogue*, probably for the same reason that René's name was crossed out. Onésime made

422. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, pp. 207–208.

423. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, 1, pp. 369–370.

424. Cahiers lasalliens 40/1, p. 186.

425. Félix-Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, pp. 207–208.

the novitiate in the *Grande Maison* at the age of twenty, and he did well in the beginning, but about the year 1707, he became a real good-for-nothing. His major fault was becoming too familiar with the pupils.

On one occasion in Guise, he was carelessly playing with a youngster and in the process pierced the lad's tongue with a sharp instrument. The father complained to the police, and the Brother was expelled from town. De La Salle then stationed Onésime in the school of the parish of Saint Roch in Paris. There he was caught in other scandalous behavior, which resulted in the dismissal of all the Brothers from the parish! Onésime himself fled but eventually asked to be readmitted, and he was accepted by De La Salle.

While there is some ambiguity about the nature of Onésime's scandalous behavior, it seems that it was not of an overtly sexual nature. The Rule of that time states clearly that no one will be tolerated in the Institute in whom anything exterior against chastity has appeared or appears.<sup>426</sup>

De La Salle assigned Onésime to the boarding school at Saint Yon. It happened that while the Founder was absent, Onésime once again dishonored his employment by shameful conduct. When the vicar-general of Rouen heard of the incident, he ordered the dismissal of the poor Brother from the Institute. De La Salle was still away, and the Brothers gladly put into effect the vicar-general's order. When De La Salle returned, Onésime once again applied for readmission. This time, while the General Assembly was being held in 1717, the Founder turned the decision over to the Brothers, and they unanimously rejected the request.

Onésime continued as a teacher in a village near Chartres, which was his native town. He died there in 1720, apparently of natural causes, and the Brothers of Chartres were informed of his death by one of his relatives.

Onésime, René, and Médard are three Brothers not listed in *Liure des Premiers Vœux* or the *Catalogue* but described by Blain in the supplement to his life of the Founder. They could be part of the second generation; they have been added here separately because of a lack of certainty concerning their lives as Brothers.

<sup>426</sup> Cahiers lasalliens 25, p. 71.