

# 20. EXERCISES

## Summary:

1. Meaning of the word. – 2. School exercises. 2.1. The pupils'. 2.2. Those of the Teachers. – 3. House exercises. 3.1 Their list. 3.2. Their spirituality. – 4. The daily actions. – 5. "A School without exercises does not function properly".

## 1. MEANING OF THE WORD

In the 17th century, the word "exercise" meant "activity, an habitual occupation".<sup>1</sup> That is the meaning John Baptist de la Salle gives it when he uses it in such sentences as: "For that reason you must not allow your senses any activity" (R. 90); "When you indulge in those games which provide exercise for the body..." (RB 147); "A walk is a good exercise which contributes considerably physically and disposes the mind to undertake the activities which are proper to it" (RB 137); "Recreation is an exercise to which some time may be allotted every day to relax the mind from serious occupations and the body from the tiring occupations given to it to do during the day (RB 131). The equivalence between "Exercises", "occupations" and "employment is worth noting. The reference is to a physical or intellectual activity, which may however also be spiritual: "Prayer is an exercise which surpasses man's natural forces". (Da 424) or again: "Mental Prayer is an angelic exercise" (R. 120).

The word EXERCISES means "practice" when referring to a trade or a virtue. For instance: "Those who are engaged in a practice or an occupation which is for them an occasion of sin...war, business, the profession of lawyer, procurator, sergeant, bar keeper and the like..." (I. 150). Of course, the Founder uses it most of the time with reference to educational activities, whatever be the name he gives them. For example: "The teachers

who are taken up by some school activity" (CE preface 6), "showing<sup>2</sup> their love and zeal for the salvation of their neighbour and for all the exterior exercises of his profession" (R 21), "what is good in the exercise of his duties..." (MR 196.3), "to draw on you through prayer the graces of God which you stand in need of in this occupation (MR 200.1); "God will lavish his graces and blessings on you in the exercise of your ministry" (MF 155.3). In this last case, he quotes the example of St. Paul "for it is said of him that having, instructed the people of Ephesus for three months in the synagogue of the Jews, he taught later every day in the school of one Tiran and continued this exercise for two years" (MR 200.2).

As for "Exercise of virtue" (RB 150, Dc 104, MF 192.2) it mostly concerns obedience (MD 13.1), penance (MD 1.3, Dc 21), mortification (MF, 131.3), interior recollection (MF 179.3).

John Baptist de La Salle gives pride of place to the virtue of religion. He defines devotion as a "Virtue which makes one serve God and perform his religious exercises with affection and promptitude" (GA 385). To the pagans "who live without any practice of religion, he opposes the faithful who assemble to "practise the Christian religion" (Db 264, Dc 7); "the practices of our religion (Db 167), whether these are "exterior" (Db 4) or "public" (Dc 5), "ordinary",<sup>3</sup> "the least ordinary and the extraordinary ones" (Dc 5).

The same may be said of Piety. For example: "The confraternities have been set up only to per-

form several exercises of piety and good works ... the chief obligations of the members ... are...to say some special prayers, to take part in several functions or at several exercises of piety" (Dc 18); "Sloth is a distaste for spiritual practices" (Db 133, GA 382) whilst its counterpart "makes us serve God and perform our exercises of piety with affection" (Da 187).

We know that among other scholastic writings of John Baptist de La Salle, he wrote a book on "The exercises of piety which are performed during the day in Christian schools". This book was first approved in 1696. It is referred to three times in the *Conduct of Schools* (CE 76,78, 202) and four times in his *Letters to Gabriel Drolin* (L 17.7, L 18.8, L 19.18, L 20.11). The edition of 1760 has been reprinted in *Cahier Lasallien* No. 18.

## 2. SCHOOL EXERCISES

### 2.1. Those of the pupils:

But when the Founder speaks about the pupils' exercises, he does not refer only to practices of piety done in class, he considers also without any distinction, all their other school activities. The following quotations show this: "In each school, a pupil will be appointed to ring the bell at the start of school and the activities which take place there" (CE 209). "In the writers' class, a small bell will be rung to mark the beginning of school exercises" (CE 228). "In each large classroom, there should be a number of desks corresponding to the number of pupils for the writing exercises there" (CE 219). "The teachers will see to it that the pupils do not amuse themselves during lunch and the afternoon break, but that they be very attentive to the exercises in the school at that time" (CE 8). Whilst his fellow pupils are eating, a pupil will recite in a loud voice the morning and night prayers, the commandments of God and of the Church, the responses of the Mass or formulae quoted from the diocesan catechism, following a detailed procedure to be found in Art. 2 of the second chapter of the *Conduct of Schools*" (CE 9).

Applied in this manner, the word "exercises" takes on a different shade of meaning i.e. "action aimed at formation" which it normally would not

have<sup>4</sup> but which it has today. It must be remembered that the Lasallian school is meant to be an apprenticeship which envelops all the aspects of a child's existence: intellectual, social, moral and Christian.

### 2.2. Those of the teachers

Consequently and logically, the Founder employs this expression with reference to the professional work of the Brothers: "The school being the place where the Brothers spend most of their time during the day and the work they do there being that which they have most at heart and which is most liable to distract them, they should be most careful to watch over themselves so as not to lose any of the merit they should derive from it for the salvation of their soul and not to miss any of their obligations".

These are quite varied, in fact: lessons, instructions, the formation to a life of piety, moral education. Lessons which would be termed "secular" to-day, are reading, spelling and arithmetic (RC 34), undertaken to "help pupils correct their mistakes" and "make the pupils work harder" (R 22). The instructions involve the teaching of catechetics (CE 97) on "the mysteries of our holy religion" and "the Christian maxims" (RC 16) to which must be added the memorization of prayers, formulae, the commandments, the responses at Mass..." (R 35). Piety grows through the practice of prayer (CE 75), the attendance at Mass (CE 84), the reception of the Sacraments (RC 17). As for "A sensible Christian education" (RC 17), the Brothers make sure to impart it "through prayer...their vigilance and their exemplary conduct in school" (RC 20) as well as through "correction" (CE 140, RC 38, MR 203, 204). All of them "external exercises of their profession".

It is easy to understand why the Founder made so many recommendations. The Brothers must prepare their lessons with so much care that their teaching will become an evangelizing activity: "Since you are obliged to work for the salvation of your neighbour, endeavour to bring to your labour the same dispositions as St. Cajetan brought to the exercise of his ministry. Apply yourself to the study of religion, read good books, make mental prayer fervently, and, according to the spirit of

your Institute, mortify your mind and senses. You must strive to attain a perfect knowledge of the truths of religion by study, because ignorance in such matters would be criminal since it would cause ignorance in those whom you should instruct. Mental prayer and mortification are no less necessary in order to draw down the blessings of God on yourself and on those who are confided to your care" (MF 153.1). The same meditation suggests that the teachers imitate the example of the Clerks Regular in the integrity of their morals as well as in their edifying and disinterested conduct in the exercise of their functions and he adds: "These two things are equally necessary for you in your Institute... they are the two means by which to achieve great results in your apostolate. By your regularity, you will edify your disciples, you will be a constant example of modesty, reserve and piety, and this will render your teaching effective. Disinterestedness will lead you to do everything through grace and solely for God, and, as a result, God will infallibly bless what you do (MF 153 1,2).

Other virtues are necessary for the same reason: "If you wish to produce much fruit in souls by the exercise of your ministry, nothing will contribute more effectively thereto than seclusion from the world and the practice of temperance. The latter greatly helps to preserve chastity, and the former draws down the grace of God in abundance, not only on yourself, but also on others" (MF 136.1).

However, the point which is most stressed by John Baptist de la Salle is that concerning the sufferings, the contempt, the persecutions endured for the school: "You too are called to announce the truths of the Gospel. Acquit yourself efficiently of this task, and see that those whom you instruct are fully acquainted with the truths of our holy religion and after having exhausted yourself in this noble exercise of your apostolate, expect no other recompense here below than to suffer and die, as Jesus Himself died, in the midst of pains and sufferings" (MF 175.3). "Let it therefore be seen in your whole conduct towards the children entrusted to you that you look upon yourselves as ministers of God, if you exercise it with charity and a sincere and genuine zeal, supporting with much patience the sufferings you will have to en-

sure, rejoicing at the thought of being despised and persecuted by them to the extent of having to give your life for Jesus in the exercise of your ministry (MR 201.1). "Do not be surprised, therefore, if you meet with trials and opposition in the exercise of your apostolate. The more you suffer, the more resolute you should be to acquit yourself conscientiously of your work. Rest assured that God will then shower His blessings upon you in abundance" (MF 126.2). "For the more faithfully you adhere to God when you have occasion to suffer, the more God will pour His graces and blessings upon you in the exercise of your ministry" (MF 155.3).

These quotations, all concerned with "exercise in the school, offer several not by any means complete aspects of the spirituality which St. John Baptist de La Salle wants the Brothers to practise. And yet, we already notice here the existence of several elements (virtues and practices) which pertain to the religious life proper. The truth is that for the Brother of the Christian Schools who is an apostle, the teacher and the consecrated religious are one and the same person. To verify this, we must first study these acts and this specific behaviour.

### 3. EXERCISES PERFORMED IN THE HOUSE

It is one of the familiar expressions used by the Founder particularly in the Collection (R 37). However, he also says: "spiritual life exercises" (Da 333), "spiritual exercises" (EM 118, MF 126.3), "interior exercises" (EM 33, L 17,18, MF 125.3), "religious exercises" (MF 128.3), "holy exercises" (MF 191.2), "community exercises" (R 66, RI 350), "daily exercises" (RC 95), "ordinary exercises" (RC 55), or quite simply "exercises" (EM 10). On the other hand, each Brothers' house possesses "a room for exercises" (R 101, RC 101, 158).

Just as the life of the pupils at school is an apprenticeship which involves all their activities, in the same way, the existence of the Brothers does seem in the writings of the Founder controlled by a constant training aimed at making of them "true soldiers of Christ". Hence, "any effort to lead a

Christian life" is considered an exercise and so it is easy to move from this sense of the word exercise to that of "exterior and interior asceticism".<sup>6</sup>

Thus it was that Père Nicolas Barré in a letter on spiritual direction he addressed to a nun, invites her "not to give up any of her exercises of devotion, her silence, her recollection, her vocal and mental prayer, her examination of conscience, her spiritual readings, her charity towards her neighbour, the observance of the rule, modesty, kindness, the remembrance of the presence of God, her detachment from all creatures and from any particular friendship, to reserve and give herself entirely to God alone: if fervour, tenderness, attention and similar graces are needed to accomplish well all the exercises mentioned above, she should not upset herself but strive to do them with the least possible negligence" (p. 35, 36).<sup>7</sup>

This list may seem disparate and we may be led, by reason of its very composition, to wonder whether it is not incomplete, or if we should not conclude that its author included in it only the essential exercises, leaving his correspondent free to complete the list in a way she probably was familiar with through experience.

As for John Baptist de La Salle, he dedicated no fewer than three chapters of the Rule to the Exercises: Chapter 3: "Concerning the community spirit of this Institute and the Exercises which are to be done in common", Chapter 4: "Concerning the exercises of piety which will be done in this Institute", Chapter 5: "Concerning the exercises of humility and mortification which shall be practised in this Institute". However these chapters are not exhaustive and one must look for the missing data in other chapters (2nd, 7th, 8th, 16th, 27th, 28th) as well as in the Collection.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.1. List of exercises

As they pertain to worship, to community as ceticism or personal asceticism, one may be tempted, to see more clearly in the matter, to classify the exercises in three categories:

#### 3.1.1. Acts of worship

(not to be called exercises):

— The Mass: it is not mentioned in Chapter 4; the Community Mass is different from that of the

pupils; to warn the Brothers, twenty strokes shall be tolled (RC 95) and when it is ended the O Domina Mea is said (RC 96).

— Communion: weekly (RC 23).

— Thanksgiving: half an hour.

— The reception of the sacrament of Penance every week "at a time when it will not make them miss school or mental prayer" (RC 24).

— Mental Prayer: "the first and principal of the daily exercises" (RC 22).

— Vocal Prayers: half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening, taking into account the reading of the subject of the meditation for the next day (RC 102). To these must be added the litanies of the Infant Jesus and those of St. Joseph.

— The Office of the Most Blessed Virgin: the vespers and compline of which will be recited on Sunday by the Brothers who do not accompany the pupils to church (RC 106).

— The Rosary: daily, three decades in the morning and three in the afternoon.

— Visits to the Blessed Sacrament: which are obligatory "when passing a church that happens to be open" (R 132).

— Acts of adoration of the presence of God: "every where in the house when they enter or leave a room".

— Kissing the floor "when they make a mistake in the chapel" (RC 25).

— Invocations: recommended as a means to acquire interior piety (RC 56,63) and topics for reflection during the office and vocal prayers (R 101).

#### 3.1.2. Community activities

— Meals: conforming to monastic tradition.

— The recreations which follow: The Collection of topics about which the Brothers should converse formed part of Chap. 6 of the 1705 Rules. It is now in the Collection.

— The accusation of one's faults: "once a day".

— The advertismment of defects: once a week.

— The reddition of conduct: now called the private interview.

— Recollection: a spiritual review of the week (RD 138).

— The annual retreat (RC 138).



- Silence: exterior, one of the examples given in Art. 1 of Chap. 16 (RC 63).
- Regularity.

### 3.1.3. Personal activities

- The study of catechism: several moments of the day are dedicated to it (RC 97, 99, 1011, 102).
- Spiritual reading: in relation with mental prayer.
- Reading the New Testament: to acquire and live in the spirit of faith (RC 18).
- The examinations: particular examinations at midday, the evening examen before going to bed, the examens which follow each action.
- The remembrance of the presence of God: throughout the actions.
- Silence: interior.
- Recollection: what we call “listening reverently”.
- Retreat: to hold oneself figuratively “cut off” from the community.
- Vigilance: the typical self-control of 17th century spirituality.
- Mortification of the senses.
- Mortification of the mind: both often mentioned in the Collection (R 5, 19, 38, 39, 44, 47, 83, 85).

**3.2. A large part of the spiritual doctrine** of John Baptist de La Salle deals with the performance of exercises and in the first place with their obligation. Each Brother must “make his exercises”, “must carry them out”, “dedicate himself to them”, “apply himself to them”. They must be done “exactly”, “punctually” “faithfully” “assiduously”. And that, as soon as he rises: “Resolve from this moment to be very exact and punctual in all the community exercises; for fidelity in all the exercises of the day, often depends upon this first act and resolution (R 66). They must be done “in the house” (L 51.12), “avoid showing cowardice or absenting yourself from them “without an evident necessity and the permission of the Bro. Director” (RC 65). Moreover, the latter is doubly responsible in this matter: his own regularity: “He will be very assiduous at all the community exercises...and will not miss any of them” (RC 155) and that of his community: “He will not excuse

any of his Brothers from the daily exercises...” (RC 157). Hence, his oft repeated insistence to “leave everything at the first stroke of the bell” (RC 64); “Be faithful to your exercises and to leave everything at the first stroke of the bell” (L 58.3). “Be faithful, my dear Brother, to leave everything at the first stroke of the bell” (L 54.1). “Be faithful...to do everything that God wants you to do, considering that you should follow his guidance in everything. Consequently, be ready to leave everything as soon as the bell rings and calls you to do some exercises and that nothing holds you back...” (MD 6.3). Have you left everything at the first sound of the bell, even when you were with outsiders? You must never fail in this, for it is the first sound of the bell that indicates the will of God for you” (MF 92.1).

At the same time, he derives pleasure in enumerating the fruits of this fidelity. They strengthen the spiritual life because they smother the spirit of the world. “Act, in such a way, as to abandon this worldly mentality towards which you are inclined, by dedicating yourself to mental prayer and interior exercises”. (L. 17.18) by developing piety in the soul: “Act in such a way through your continual interior diligence to your exercises, it becomes so intimate in you as to be inalterable” (MF 180.2); or by reinvigorating it: “Apply yourself to mental prayer and the other exercises of piety; and be exact in the observance of the Rules of the community. Such are the surest means of re-establishing your soul in those good sentiments which had formerly reigned therein” (MD 71.3).

They are, particularly for religious, a sure path to sanctity. “Strive therefore to do your duty and to apply yourself to your exercises for they will sanctify you and will lead you to God” (L 47.2); “Fidelity and punctuality to one’s exercises: have you been faithful in this regard as to one of the principal means of salvation, as it is indeed? Because this fidelity gives you a certain assurance that you will strictly keep the commandments of God, for whoever is faithful in little things will also be faithful in the bigger ones, says Our Lord (MF 91.1). Since you are expected to bring about the sanctification of your pupils, you ought yourself to possess holiness in an uncommon degree, for you have to communicate it to others as much by your good example as by the words of salva-

tion which you address them daily. You will be greatly aided in acquiring the perfection of your state which God expects of you, by serious application to mental prayer, love of community exercises, and greater fidelity in carrying them out. This should be the object of your daily prayer, and you should have it so much at heart that you should never cease asking for it till you have been heard" (MD 39,2).

He points out the obstacles to be overcome: "external occupations" which "dissipate considerably the mind, would prevent you from concentrating on those exercises which require a mind intensely occupied with God" (MF 114.3); curiosity: "Do not give in to curiosity for that is very harmful. It is probably because you are curious that you find it difficult to apply yourself to mental prayer and other exercises" (L 57.7); cowardice: "You must be very careful not to yield to cowardice in the exercises. That is not the way to deserve God's blessing" (L 11.5); "repugnance for your vocation and the spiritual exercises" (MF 125.2); the privation of consolations arising from the senses "which you should love" (R 60); On the contrary, here are some helps: Recollection where "you will find your satisfaction only in assiduity and application to the spiritual exercises" (MF 127.3); habit: "When you will have done your spiritual exercises for some time, you will find the routine much easier" (L 497) but especially grace: "Those who love their state find in it nothing but pleasure and satisfaction in all the exercises of piety which it entails, because they will have acquired a habit which through the unction of grace and the love of God will have become<sup>9</sup> sweet and agreeable" (MF 98.1).

In Chapter 2 of the Explanation of the Mental Prayer, John Baptist de La Salle has written one of the most beautiful pages on the presence of Jesus Christ among the Brothers. In it, we read: "Is it not a great happiness for you when during an assembly of the Brothers for mental prayer or some other exercise you are certain that you are in the Company of Our Lord who is in your midst... Jesus Christ is in the midst of the Brothers in their exercises to give them the spirit of their state and to keep them and strengthen them in the possession of this spirit which is for them the source and assurance of their salvation, if they possess it always

intensely and without alteration... Jesus Christ is in the midst of the Brothers during their exercises so that all their actions being focussed on Jesus Christ as on their centre, they form one with him through the union they will have with Jesus Christ working in them and through them. Jesus Christ is in the midst of the Brothers to bestow on them his fulfilment and perfection (EM 9,10).

#### 4. DAILY ACTIONS (R. 36)

In this last passage, we have encountered one of John Baptist de La Salle's preoccupations regarding the spiritual life of the Brothers: that they maintain continuity between the exercises which they do and the remainder of their other actions. In the Considerations "Concerning the exercises and actions of the day" (the title itself is pregnant with meaning), he asks: "Do you often recall the presence of God during your exercises and actions? Are you careful at the beginning to offer them to him and at the end to thank him for the graces he bestowed on you, to pray to him to continue to do so and to beg his pardon for the faults you may have committed whilst doing them?" (R. 105). What justifies these queries is the teaching which he enlarges upon in the Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer, by means of two very rich comparisons: "He is in their midst to give them His Holy Spirit and to lead them to him in all their actions and in their conduct... For Jesus Christ is for them like the sun which not only communicates to plants the power to produce, but gives their fruits a sweetness and perfection which is more or less considerable in proportion to their exposure to its rays. In the same way, the Brothers perform the exercises and actions of their state with more or less perfection in proportion to their relationship, union and familiarity with Jesus Christ and to whether their actions are related to him, have him as their focus and draw from him all their power just as the branches draw their sap from the stem of the vine. So there is a continuous movement of our actions towards Jesus Christ and from Jesus Christ towards us, since he it is who animates them... It is the Holy Spirit who enlivens our actions and who being a living spirit prevents

them from being dead, and not only as Christian actions, but even according to our state and our perfection which requires of them a special perfection" (EM 9, 10, 11).

To attain this perfection, these actions must be performed:

— "WITH A SPIRIT OF FAITH" and "FOR GOD": "Concerning the daily actions, the fervour with which they should be made and the facility with which the Brothers can save themselves in the Society if they do them through a spirit of faith and religion, and nothing more" (R. 36). "It is especially in your actions that faith must be evident, if you do them out of a spirit of faith as you are bound to according to the spirit of your Institute" (MF 147.3). "It is likewise that faith which should make you act... having only God in view in your actions" (MF 87.1). "You must do your actions only in the view of God and to please him" (MF 75.3).

— "MOVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT": "Come then, Holy Spirit, take possession of my heart and animate all my actions so well that it may be said that you are doing them more than I am and that I have no life and movement except those given to me by you" (EM 18).

— "IN UNION WITH JESUS": "Do you unite all your actions with the actions and plans of Jesus Christ?" (R. 95)

— "IN CONFORMITY WITH HIS MAXIMS": "Let it appear by the conformity that your actions will have with the holy maxims that in reality you believe in them and put them into practice" (MF 84.1).

— "THROUGH THE INFLUENCE OF GRACE": "Let there be nothing in your actions which is not produced by grace" (MD 4.3).

— "IN A SPIRIT OF MEDITATION": "Endeavour to do all your actions in a spirit of meditation, that is one of the best means of sanctifying them" (MF 129.2).

— "THROUGH OBEDIENCE": "To please God you only need to do an action through obedience when it is done with such simplicity that all you are aiming at is to obey" (MD 57.3).

We may thus note the profound coherence of Lasallian spirituality: even when it presents by way

of illustration specific and straightforward action, listed as "exercises", it situates them once more in the totality which integrates the whole existence. And the linguistic relationship serves only to underline the fundamental cohesion between the daily activities, the daily exercises, the exterior exercises (those connected with the school) and the interior exercises (done in the Brothers' House).

## 5. "THE SCHOOL WITHOUT THE EXERCISES DOES NOT FUNCTION WELL"

A well known expression of the Founder is often quoted: "Let the school be run properly"<sup>10</sup> which is understood to mean the good organisation of scholastic institutions or the large number of diplomas which its students obtain. It so happens that these two interpretations are incorrect.<sup>11</sup> Of course, John Baptist de La Salle desires his schools to be run properly and that they contribute to the success of the students, but that is not the result he aims at in the above mentioned quotation. His aim is much more ambitious: he explained it in Chapter I of his Rule: "The aim of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children; it is for this purpose that the Brothers keep schools, that, having the children under their care from morning until evening, they may teach them to lead good lives, by instructing them in the mysteries of our holy religion and by inspiring them with Christian maxims, and thus give them a suitable education" (RC 16).

However, these teachers cannot fulfil their functions if they are not eager to develop in themselves an authentic Christian life, animated by faith and zeal.<sup>12</sup> And the source where they will nourish it and fortify it is, in the opinion of the Founder, to be found nowhere else except in the regular performance of all their exercises. That is what he writes on February 26, 1709, to Bro. Robert, director of the school of Darnétal: "Take care that the school is run properly, just as well as regularity in the house" (L 57.12), as he had written, on April 13, 1708, to Bro. Matthias, a Brother from Mende: "You must not only acquit yourself of your duty in the school but also in the other exercises, for a school without exercises is not run properly" (L 49.6).

The Brother's whole life is made up of a continuous movement to and from God, which he finds in his exercises and the "disciples" he is in charge of: "It is your duty to rise every day by mental prayer to God to learn from Him all that you must teach your children, and then come down to them and accommodate yourself to their level in order to teach them what God has communicated to you for them as much in your mental prayer as in the Holy Scriptures, which furnish you with the truths of religion and the practical maxims of the holy Gospel" (MR 198.1). "You must teach catechism every day, helping your disciples to learn the basic truths of our religion. In this way, you will be following the example of the Apostles and of Jesus Christ himself, who devoted himself daily to this ministry. Like them also, you must afterwards leave your work and devote yourself to reading and mental prayer, in order to learn at their source the truths and the holy maxims which you wish to teach, and draw upon yourself the grace of God that you need to fulfil your ministry according to the spirit and the intention of the Church which entrusted it to you" (MR 200.2). "You have spiritual exercises which are arranged for your own sanctification, but if you have an ardent zeal for the salvation of those whom you are called to teach, you will not fail to perform them and to relate them to this purpose. In doing this, you will draw on your students the graces needed to contribute to their salvation, and you can be assured that if you act this way for their salvation, God himself will take responsibility for yours" (MR 205.2).

Commenting on the famous sentence on the *Mémoire sur l'habit* "Community exercises and school duties require man's total dedication", Bro. Miguel Campos remarks: The community is what unifies the unique life of the Brother, to do God's will. Community exercises are intended to help the Brothers to apply an evangelical dimension to their community employment; this community employment puts into actual practice this evangelical life in the implementation of the mission of the Son of God" (CL 45.194).

School exercises and house exercises, though distinct are always mentioned as being one, because they are inseparable from the reality of life, and keeping this balance is not achieved

without conflict. John Baptist de La Salle is aware of it "Do not dwell on thoughts concerning the school during mental prayer, each thing in its own time" (L 56.7). To safeguard the Brothers' personal salvation, he insists as a matter of principle on the primacy of the exercises: "I do not want to prefer anything to my salvation and, as from today, if I am pressed by the disorderly desire to learn exterior things such as writing, arithmetic and similar things, although they are necessary or useful in my employment and I am allowed to do it, I will convince myself that those must not be compared with, still less preferred<sup>15</sup> to the spiritual exercises which are set up to procure my salvation (EM 118). He can however afford to show realism and understanding towards a Director, somewhat muddle-headed and snowed under with work: "You must rather miss some exercise than use school time to do some necessary business, for you must not waste a single moment of school (L 56.5). All his wisdom is contained in the quotation placed under the title of the *Conduct of Schools* (1720 edition): Watch over yourself and take care to teach others; persevere in these exercises, for in this way you will save yourself, and those who listen to you" (1 Tim 4,16).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. RICHELET, *Dictionnaire français*, Amsterdam 1680; FURETIÈRE, *Dictionnaire universel*, La Haie 1690; CAYROU, *Le français classique*, Paris 1948.

<sup>2</sup> The word affection meant at that time "devotedness, attachment of the will, zeal". Cf. RICHELET, FURETIÈRE, TRÉVOUX, CAYROU.

<sup>3</sup> The word "ordinary" meant at that time "habitual, current".

<sup>4</sup> Whilst it is a frequent connotation of the verb "to exercise" cf. CAYROU.

<sup>5</sup> Not "moving" as today by "efficacious". Refer in this work to "to touch hearts".

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*. Col 1904.

<sup>7</sup> Nicolas BARRÉ: *Recueil de Lettres Spirituelles*, Rouen 1697.

<sup>8</sup> A close relationship ties the Rules and the *Recueil*: some texts are common or, after they had figured in one, have been later on attached to the other.

<sup>9</sup> The agreement of the past participle is not always carefully applied at that time.

<sup>10</sup> It is to be found only in his correspondence L 16.3, L 58.20, L 34.18, L 75.8, L 57.12, L 49.6. Hence, it may be thought that it belonged to his spoken language.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Lasalliana*, leaflets 15.11-C.58 (April 1989) and 19.13-C.82 (Sept. 1990).



<sup>12</sup> That is a Christian Education, since they are Christians. Cf. MR 204.1. Refer to the preface of the *Devoirs d'un Chrétien*.

<sup>13</sup> Lasalliana has consecrated several pages to the formation of the Lasallian teachers; one can easily find therein these

data on the spiritual life.

<sup>14</sup> Some references where the necessary union between exercises and the employment: L 33.1, L 38.5, L 38.26, L 51.4, L 99.5, MF 114.3...

<sup>15</sup> (is not relevant in English).

### Complementary Themes:

Catechism, Employment, Worldly spirit, Holy Spirit, Instructions, Maxims, Ministry, Modesty, Mortification, Mystery, Obedience, Mental Prayer, Piety, Prayer, Regularity, Retreat, Salvation, Zeal.

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