

3. ASSOCIATION

3A. ASSOCIATION AS A STYLE OF LIFE AND ACTION

Summary:

1. The concept of Association. – 2. How St. JBDS uses the word. 2.1. A rare but essential word. 2.2. Origin of the Association. 2.3. Association as an essential structure in the community. – 3. To hold schools together and by association. 3.1. Communitarian educative action. 3.2. Uniformity in pedagogical methods. 3.3. Co-operation in the management of the school. – 4. Association as a style of life. 4.1. He did nothing using his own authority. 4.2. "We order you in the name and on behalf of the body of the Society..."

1. THE CONCEPT OF ASSOCIATION

The word Association signifies a bond between persons, aiming at a goal to be pursued together, but at the same time, the word defines the way in which the goal should be attained.

The Dictionnaire de Trévoux (1721) offers the following definition: "A social agreement by which two or more persons join together, either to help each other, or to work together or to live more comfortably. The closest association is that which is constituted in marriage. Association is entered into by a perfectly simple consent".

2. HOW ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE USES THE WORD

2.1. A rare but essential word

The word association (and the verb to associate) rarely occurs in the writings of St. La Salle, but it takes on an extraordinary importance when he uses it to describe his vision of the life of the Brother, his consecration, his mission, the communitarian dimension of his apostolic commitment.

Besides the type of internal bond which characterises the Institute of the Brothers of the

Christian Schools, to the extent of forming the object of a specific vow for its members, the word association is always used by the Founder on several occasions to mean a bond between persons. The most important passages where this is mentioned are:

* In the "Devoirs d'un Chrétien" (Da 377): Association means the union of a man and a woman in marriage, "raising that association and that union of the man with the woman to the dignity of a sacrament" for the benefit of the married couple and the achievement of the aims of the marriage.

* In the Meditations, (MF 174.2), the term is used to describe the bonds between St. Bruno and the six persons "he gathered together" to experience together what religious life was like. The same meaning is given to it in "short life of St. Yon", in the appendix to the Meditations (CL 12, p. 269), when it is said that "St Yon associated himself with the evangelizing mission" through St. Denis, and in the "Devoirs d'un Chrétien" (Da 252) where it is said that St. John preached first at Jerusalem "where, with St. Peter, he got St. Paul to associate himself with the other Apostles".

However, the main significance of what La Salle had in mind, and to which we want to draw

the attention of the reader, is that which stands out in the Brothers' formula of vows constantly repeated since 1694:¹ "I promise and vow to unite myself and to remain in the Society of the Brothers, to keep together and by association gratuitous schools... These vows of association and stability in the said Society and of obedience..." (CL 2,42). But the public use of the word "association" had a precedent which has remained a secret.

2.2. The origin of the Association.

At the close of 1691, at a crucial moment for the budding Institute of the Christian Schools, La Salle found himself obliged to look for the most appropriate means to rescue and consolidate his work.

Having described the very serious situation which prevailed in 1690-1691, Blain states: "After much reflection on the means to shore up an edifice which was crumbling at the same time as it was being erected, he was inspired to: associate himself with the two Brothers whom he considered most qualified to prop up the budding community and to bind them to himself by an irrevocable engagement, that of continuing its foundation" (Blain 1, p. 312).

The formula which was used secretly² by the trio on Nov. 21, 1691 to make their association formal constitutes what we call the heroic vow. It asserts what has been said here: "Most Holy Trinity, we consecrate ourselves entirely to Thee, to procure with all our ability and efforts the establishment of the Society of the Christian Schools, and for this purpose, I, John Baptist de la Salle, priest; I, Nicholas Vuyart, and I, Gabriel Drolin... make the vow of association and union, to bring about and maintain the said establishment... In view of which we promise to do together and by common accord, everything we shall think in conscience, and regardless of any human consideration, to be for the greater good of the said Society..." (Blain 1, p. 313).

In this formula, we already find the gist of the Lasallian concept of association:

— Association is the basis for the foundation of the Institute;

— Association means "unanimous action and common consent" in all the decisions necessary to safeguard the life of the Society;

— Association defines the reciprocal bond which keeps together the members of the Institute.

The vow made on Nov. 21, 1691 represents a clear profession of faith and hope. Brothers Sauvage and Campos stress the prophetic value of this gesture which, for La Salle, does not only spell out his trust in God, but also his concrete and increasing confidence in the men with whom he had associated himself:

"The perpetual and "heroic" vow is La Salle's reaction to a desperate situation; a dash forward, an act of theological hope.

AN ACT OF HOPE IN A FAITHFUL GOD.

The formula of vows starts with an invocation to the Holy Trinity, which acts as a **GUIDELINE** to the content of the commitment. It is God who had entrusted La Salle with the care of the schools. The certainty that he was guided by God's will does not abandon him then: however dark the night, he intends to keep going, relying on this interior certainty. For it is God's work which is being carried out and he cannot give it up. The living God who was with him at the start, who is still present throughout this night and speaks to his heart will always be there; he will continue to call for creativity and will provide the light and strength required to answer in a concrete manner.

La Salle's act of theological hope manifests and strengthens itself by an act of hope in concrete men. The Founder's gesture is not that of a prisoner or a convict, but a free and liberating gesture which frees him from his perplexity. It is a gesture of love, of a love implying a concrete trust in men. In his perplexity, this trust in men manifests itself realistically in fresh efforts to join his friends.

In so doing, La Salle's action looks like a prophetic gesture in the biblical sense of the word. It is the gesture of a Seer who, inspired by the Spirit, is able to discern through the darkness of the night and the ambiguous fragility of the signs, a presence, a call, the will of the living God at work among men for the realisation of man's salvation: "the liberation, the life of men, the Alliance".³

2.3. Association as a mainstay of the community structure

As has already been said, starting with the formula of 1691, association serves to express, as early as 1694, a fundamental element of the consecration of all the Brothers, and to describe the life structure of the Society of the Christian Schools.

We shall therefore come across it in several key texts:

* In the formula of perpetual vows made by twelve Brothers on the Feast of the Holy Trinity 1694,⁴ as has already been said.

* In a very important text, drawn up on the same occasion.⁵

* In "the formula for the election of a superior" which they drew up the following day, the twelve who made the vow in 1694 recall explicitly that the commitment of the previous day binds them together in an "association". And it is as a result of this new state of things that they proceed with the regular election of a superior and that they draw up definitely this or that statutory regulation:

"We the undersigned, having associated ourselves with M. John-Baptist de la Salle, priest, to hold together and by association gratuitous schools by the vows which we made yesterday, affirm that, as a result of our vows and the association which binds us through them, we have chosen for superior M. John-Baptist de la Salle: we promise to obey him showing our entire submission in accordance with the vow we made, we shall obey likewise those whom he appoints as our superiors, We declare that we also maintain that the present election which we have made of the said M. de la Salle as our superior, is not meant to have any evil consequences, our intention being that, after him, in future and always, there will not be any person, and none will be accepted by us, nor be chosen as superior, who is priest or has received holy orders, and that we will not even accept nor admit any superior who is not associated with us and has made the vow with us, like all those who will be associated with us in future".⁶

In this fundamental document can clearly be seen the total awareness which the Founder and

the Brothers had concerning the central place the concept of association deserved to have, either as a basis for the personal bond existing between them, or for the present and future of the institution itself.

Moreover, as Campos and Sauvage state, this preoccupation was not theoretical: "Once more we realize here the strong connection between the total consecration to God and his Kingdom and the structural internal process of a fraternal association fully aware of its objectives and the necessary means to reach them. Such an explicit way of doing things was later to become a force able to strengthen the Community in squalls which could have destroyed it. For in the twenty years that followed, the principle of government of the Institute by itself was to be questioned several times".⁷

* In the explanation about what obligations the vows imply: "Recueil de différents petits traités à l'usage des Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes",⁸ in the section related to association one may read: "The obligations of the vows are: to keep schools in association, with those who form part of the Institute, and those who will in times to come be part of it, in any place where they may be sent and to do whatever job may be given to them by their superiors".

3. TO KEEP THE SCHOOLS TOGETHER AND BY ASSOCIATION

The first area on which association will have a very serious influence is precisely that of the foundation and conduct of the apostolic mission of the Brothers in the school.

It is not in vain that in the formulas analysed above the logical trend of mind is: "we have united and associated ourselves to keep schools together and by association". In the 1691 heroic vow, there was a clear explanation as to how the vow could be kept in practice: "to do together and by common consent all that was necessary for their maintenance and development".

In practical terms, for the Founder and the Brothers that meant:

3.1. A community educational apostolate

The need to give the apostolic activity of the Brothers a strict community basis was a requirement that the Founder perceived immediately and constantly. In that consists De La Salle's ingenious and original intuition, which presupposes and at the same time postulates the idea of association. This is clearly stressed in the following page of Michel Sauvage:

"It was therefore necessary to get them together: to organise a "Community" which could co-ordinate efforts, set up the general methods, as well as keep up the apostolic drive; a common life was imperative, making it necessary for all to accept a set of rules, implying also the need for each to make himself available and to submit to a common lifestyle. This life in common, thus geared towards the apostolate, had of necessity to be distinguished by the need for a spiritual formation based on prayer and asceticism. Finally and above all, a Leader, "a master in spirituality" was needed.

John Baptist understood almost immediately, one might say, the concrete implications of life in "community" as a requisite for the success of the schools; he had to get the masters to live together under the same roof, give them a common programme of spiritual exercises. He very soon carried that out; he rents a house where they can lodge; he gives them a regulation. And he follows them up as best he can. However, he will only take the final decision when he has clearly understood that God is calling him to consecrate himself entirely to these schoolmasters whom he had been directing only "exteriorly", until then, as he himself said. From then on, he will understand that he must become like one of them, share their whole existence, their "exercises", accept like them material insecurity.

From then onwards, aware that God's will was on his side, J.B. will not swerve one inch from its accomplishment. To the building up of his community, he will bring to bear a power and a perseverance which some will take for obstinacy: he will defend its originality, its internal autonomy with inflexibility, considering that in order to guar-

antee the formation, the stability of its members, the community of the Brothers had to possess its own well-defined character, the outlines of which were to become gradually more precise in his eyes, in the light of past experience".⁹

3.2. Uniformity in teaching methods

This is the second fruit of association in the scholastic sphere, clearly spelled out in several Lassaillian texts: "They will teach all their pupils according to the method which is given to them and which is universally practised in the Institute and they will neither change anything nor introduce anything new in it" (RC 7.3 p. 34). The Conduct of Schools¹⁰ explains this "method which is given to them", controlling in every detail the whole school life and carrying the principle "together and by association" to its fullest and most fruitful consequences.

This principle is rendered more effective still by the permanent commitment never to exercise the ministry of education alone, a commitment vouched for in the Bull of Approbation of the Institute: "Scholas regent semper associati et saltem bini singulis scholis simul praesunt"¹¹ which quite opportunely justifies this decision by the association. Brother Michel SAUVAGE comments:

"What distinguishes these school-teachers at first sight, is the fact that they are living together, never keeping schools alone: a fundamental rule of the Institute, very soon defined by the Founder, and which he never wanted to break, and as a result, he refused to send Brothers to isolated places in the countryside. The Brothers also vow to "run schools together and by association". In this manner, greater uniformity in the teaching could be guaranteed; the pedagogical progress which the Founder's action helps to realise, being the work of a living community, will have better chances of lasting; his community will be very careful to treasure, to recopy constantly not without conforming them to new requirements. The pedagogical writings of M. de la Salle: The Duties of a Christian, the Conduct of Schools, the Rules of Good Manners and Civility will thus be often re-edited".¹²

3.3. Co-operation in the management of the school

It is not only the school that should be animated by a community and in a concrete manner by at least two Brothers working together, there must also exist within the teaching community itself a network of mutual relationships, of collaboration, of stimulation, of advice... which express in day-to-day practice the spirit and the letter of the association.

We would like to recall but a few of the basic elements¹³ which are underlined by the Conduct of Schools:

- the formation of young teachers by more experienced Brothers (CE 185);
- the role of the Inspector of Schools (RC p. 48; CE op. 249-290);
- numerous consultations are contemplated during the interval between “lessons”; the sharing out of class duties or “Offices” among pupils; Rewards, Corrections, etc.. (CE p. 273... 204-205; 99; 139, 148; 150; 157).

Moreover, in the Preface of the Conduct of Schools, we note very clearly a style — but over this we shall have occasion to come back — which tells a lot about the concrete implementation of association between the first Brothers:

“This method has been prepared and put in order only after a great number of conferences with the oldest and most capable teachers among the Brothers of the Institute, and after several years of experience. Nothing has been added that has not been thoroughly deliberated and tested, and of which the advantages and disadvantages have not been weighed and, in so far as possible, the good or bad consequences have not been foreseen”. (CE, CL 24,2).

4. ASSOCIATION AS A LIFE STYLE

What was stated in the formula of consecration: “I promise and vow to unite myself and to stay in the Society with the Brothers”, was not meant only for the life of the Brother as a teacher: “together and by association constitutes the Founder’s and the Brothers’ very own and permanent life style, it had to affect every aspect of daily life.

We shall here recall only two of the most important of these aspects.

4.1. He did nothing without consultation¹⁴

What has been quoted about the drafting of the “Conduct” is not an isolated or unusual gesture but rather La Salle’s habitual way of proceeding. “All the biographers of the Founder put in evidence the way in which this principle was invariably at the centre of his decisional processes and being applied at the moment of the birth of the Brothers’ Religious family. “He never did anything of his own will”: It is the most commonly heard expression every time reference is made to the drafting of the Common Rules, the choice of school methods, the making of the vows, his transfer to Paris, the internal organisation of the Institute, etc... A continuous effort of discernment of God’s will and the good to be done, thanks to the contribution made by the community through prayer, dialogue, confrontation, discussion... constituted the Founder’s habitual way of acting when faced with the toughest choices”.¹⁵

4.2. “We command you in the name and on behalf of the Body of the society”¹⁶

The Brothers had sufficiently well grasped the meaning, in theory and practice, of “together and by association”. On several occasions, they gave evidence of this.¹⁷

Suffice it to recall the crucial moment during which this life style expressed itself most fully and explicitly, not only by the Founder but also by the Brothers.

It occurred when a letter was addressed, on April 1, 1714, to make him return to Paris to resume the Direction of the “Society”. A letter echoing abundantly the formula of vows and revolving around the basic concept of association:

“The conclusion of the letter contains a clear reference to the vow of association made by La Salle in 1694: “We order you, in the name and on behalf of the body of the Society to whom you promised obedience, to resume without delay the general direction of our Society”. But it is the entire context of the letter of the Brothers and the

very language they use, which recalls the formula of Vows. It is “to procure the greater glory of God that the Brothers undertook that step; La Salle had received from God the call to “set up and conduct” the Society of the Christian Schools; the word “Society” — or its equivalent, “Company” — is repeated four times in these few lines: the purpose of the letter was to tell the Founder that his Brothers always stood in need of his presence and his concern: “the good of the Society” which he had committed himself to promote required it, and the “common consent” of the associates pleaded with him to come back.

But through this reminder of the language used in the formula of vows, the Letter also regained through it a dynamic momentum and a mystic meaning. For if the entire text considers the “welfare of the Society”, it recalls at the start that the latter was set up “for the glory of God”.

The Institute existed by itself, since its members had decided to get together on their own initiative. The body of the Society remained alive and compact, for it showed itself and spoke up as an entity. The association held well together: it is in its name that the Brothers of the Parisian area assembled, it was on it that they based themselves to recall their Founder...

So, the Brothers’ decision proved in practice that the structuring of the Institute had reached its goal and on that score, the Founder’s role as Father had been carried out with success: La Salle had fathered a living body, conscious of its own existence, active, responsible. But in its literal meaning the letter which the Brothers sent their Founder said much more. It asserted that this living organism was endowed with a soul. It proved that the father had also been able to breathe a spirit into the association formed by his sons. The structuring process brought to light and upheld an inspiration”.¹⁸

In the light of what we have just recalled in a nutshell, it is clear that the association concept is pivotal and creative in the totality of the lasallian vision, not only when it is a question of the interior and spiritual outlook of the persons concerned but also in the principles and forceful words applied to community and apostolic life which owed La Salle its origin and identity.

¹ The public formulae used by the Brothers before 1694 have been kept. We possess that of 1694, autographed, at the AMG among the Letters of the Founder and repeated 13 times in the “Livret des premiers vœux” (cf CL 2 p. 42).

² CL 2, p. 40 Bro. Maurice HERMANS underlines: “The words and the circumstances of the permanent act make it possible, certainly, to speak here of “a secret association”: “associated” obliged to act henceforth, “unanimously and by common consent”. M. de la Salle and his two disciples, unknown to all the others, are just that. No outside person no other Brother had any say in it; also, none had been informed. For our texts, the first perpetual vows of Nicolas Vuyart and Gabriel Drolin will only bear the date 6th June 1694. The first two biographers — Bernard and Maillefer — know nothing about the heroic act: their informers, Bros. Antoine and Jean themselves also seem not to have been in the know”.

³ M. SAUVAGE-M. CAMPOS, A.E.P., Beauchesne, Paris 1976, pp. 145-146.

⁴ BLAIN I, pp. 343-344.

⁵ CL 2, p. 43; Blain I, pp. 345-348.

⁶ Livres des premiers vœux, folio 18: Complete text with names and signatures in CL 3, pp. 10-11.

⁷ SAUVAGE and CAMPOS, *o.c.*, p. 200.

⁸ CL 15, p. 4: This text is repeated and slightly added to in the Common Rules of 1726 [9]. By the same vow, they promise to open schools by association with the Brothers assembled for that purpose, anywhere where they may be sent; or to do anything they will be asked to do by their superiors, as is said in the formula of vows CL 25,6.

⁹ M. SAUVAGE, *CAL.*, 1991, pp. 54-55.

¹⁰ CE in the Preface it is stated: “It has been necessary to draw up this *Conduite des Ecoles Chrétiennes* so that everything would be done uniformly in all the schools and in all the places where there are Brothers of this Institute and that practices be always the same”.

¹¹ Bulle 6, CL 11, p. 359.

¹² M. SAUVAGE, *o.c.*, p. 63.

¹³ M. PRESCIUTTINI, *La scuola opera di Comunità*, in *Rivista Lasalliana* 1/1991, pp. 30-35.

¹⁴ MAR. p. 72: the expression is slightly changed in the CL 6 p. 73. cf. Blain I, p. 340.

¹⁵ M. PRESCIUTTINI, *L’attualità del Fondatore*, in *Atti del 2º Congresso Nazionale Lasalliano*, Roma 1990, pp. 24-25.

Cf. Saturnino GALLEGÓ, *San Juan Bautista de La Salle*, BAC, Madrid 1986, vol. 1, pp. 178, 195, 209, 239, 243, 262, 315, 342.

¹⁶ BLAIN 2, p. 118. There one can find the whole text of the Letter.

¹⁷ For example, when an ecclesiastical superior is imposed on the Brothers: Campos and Sauvage, AEP, p. 200; Blain I, p. 409-413.: In 1702, as a result of tendentious reports which has reached him about M. de la Salle, Card. de Noailles, Archbishop of Paris, had decided to replace him by an ecclesiastical superior of his choice. The information was passed on to the Brothers by the Vicar General. But the Brothers reacted very strongly against this change: they finally obtained that the Superior nominated by Noailles would have no real authority, and that M. de La Salle would continue to govern their Society”.

¹⁸ SAUVAGE et CAMPOS, AEP, pp. 206-209, cf. M. CAMPOS, CL 45, pp. 306-312.

Complementary Themes:

Community-Society-Institute, Consecration, School, Employment, Ministry, Mission, Obedience, Stability, Vows.

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Bro. Mario PRESCIUTTINI
Translated from French by Bro. James CALLEJA

3B. L'ASSOCIATION IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE INSTITUTE

Summary:

1. Towards an association. – 2. Association in the early days of the Institute. – 3. Association after the death of the Founder. – Conclusion.

“Without understanding it very well, you have come because God Himself was seeking you out, and because you were beginning to find Him, and because in the depths of your heart, you wanted to love Him, praise Him and to devote yourself completely to His service“. (Prologue to the Rule, 1966).

To some degree, these words reveal the sentiments which we believe to have inspired De La Salle and the first Brothers to establish the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. By their personal commitment, they demonstrate the desire to let themselves be taken up completely in the service of that God who had sought them out in this growing society, putting their beings, their hearts and their wills at the disposal of all. Almost without realising it, De La Salle had allowed himself to be led by God, who guides all things “wisely and gently”, then, “one commitment led him to another, without his being able to foresee it from the outset”.¹ He let himself be led by the hand of God as did these teachers who endeavoured to embrace the project put forward by Nyel and set in motion by the good will of the Canon of Rheims.

1. TOWARDS AN ASSOCIATION

It is useful to re-examine the events which were shaping the first steps of the origins of our community: we must bear in mind that these took place in Seventeenth Century France, in the city of Rheims; we must recall the early concern of our Father in the affairs of the schools; how the departure of Nyel left the first teachers and the venture of the schools, abandoned; the efforts of De La Salle to put some order into the lives of the teachers and into the service which they rendered to the

children of Rheims; when he invited the teachers, for the first time, to eat in the house of his own family, in order, eventually, to bring them to live with him, with the aim of attaining a “genuine way of living in community”.²

This is where we find the very seeds of a community which came together on the basis of a plan and will of God, “Who had foreseen it from all eternity”,³ and Who would lead them to express, in a much clearer manner, their commitment to the plan of salvation.⁴ In this way, up to the year 1686, this small community sought to express its desire to be consumed fully in the service of God, by pronouncing vows of obedience.⁵

All this is related by the first biographers.⁶ De La Salle had gathered the “principal Brothers”, in order to hold an assembly, probably in May 1686 in Rheims. The retreat-assembly began on Pentecost Sunday and lasted until Trinity Sunday: one of the reasons behind this was to study the question of vows. As Maillefer tells us, the Brothers wanted to make vows of obedience and chastity. It is probable that the vow of poverty was not discussed. De La Salle convinced the Brothers to make only the vow of obedience, and this happened probably on 9th June, 1686.⁷ Nor is the question of the duration of the first vows perfectly clear. The biographers talk about one year to three years.⁸ It seems more reasonable to us that the vows were made for one year in the early years of the Institute. If we accept that the biographers allowed themselves to be influenced, in their telling of this event, by what happened in 1694, we could, with good reason, deduce that both accounts were superimposed and that the formulas of vows of this first profession have not come down to us.⁹

These first professed members of the Society threw themselves into its development and growth

in Rheims, Rethel, Guise, Laon and eventually, Paris, where they arrived in 1688. However, along with this, problems emerged: deaths and retirements of the Brothers and no postulants entering, the first lawsuits in Paris, the crisis in the teachers' training college and the poor state of the founder's health, which brought him almost to the brink of death. One or other affair caused the small emerging community to totter. It is against the background of this situation that the so called heroic vow originated, a vow by which De La Salle associated himself with two Brothers in order to carry on the work they had started, and which was pronounced on 21st November, 1691. In this ceremony, which inspired hope in "the remnant of Israel", the vow of association appeared for the first time in our Community.¹⁰ It arose as a response in which total self-giving was expressed. In the mind of those who made it, this was the solution to the ills which were crushing society and those children and abandoned youths.¹¹

Blain tell us about the situation in which the "heroic vow" came to light as the expression of those who were trying to support and sustain a building threatened by ruin during the very course of its construction. As a result of his prayer and reflection, De La Salle was inspired to associate himself with two Brothers whom he considered as being the most ready. By association, De La Salle, Vuyart and Drolin sought to sustain the budding community, an act which, they were aware, demanded completely generous responses and irrevocable commitment, and which would ensure the establishment of the Community.

This stipulated gift of self becomes deeper, causing those to experience the profound sense of what the incarnation is, what generosity will come to mean, and to learn how to make sacrifices for the welfare and for the establishment of the Society, as they persevere in their set intention until death.¹² It was a personal life plan adopted in common and by association. The terms and the circumstances of the heroic vow lead one to suppose that it was a secret vow. This supposition is upheld by the fact that Bernard and Maillefer do not mention it at all. In this sense, we can apply the words of Blain in his depiction of the vow of 1694, over which it appears the facts have been superimposed.¹³

We shall pay special attention to the formula of the heroic vow, as it is the first known text in which the vow of association appears.

The internal structure of the heroic vow, which can be seen in the formula, consists of:

A. *An Invocation*: An invocation to the Blessed Trinity, made on the day of a liturgical feast as was customary at this time;¹⁴

B. *An Aim*: The offering of self in the presence of the Most Holy Trinity by consecration has, as its aim, a precise mission: the establishment of the Society of the Christian Schools. It should be noted that it is a consecration that is both personal and community-based, endorsed by the words: "we consecrate ourselves";

C. *Means*: The means chosen to achieve personal and community-based consecration is the vow of association and of union made by each of the signatories. Here, association is in a personal and specific form, as the names of the associates are made distinct in the formula. It is an association formed by clearly defined individuals.

D. *Content*: The objective of the consecration and the means are clearly stated. Association and union are vital for the common pursuit, honestly and without any human consideration, of the establishment of the Society of the Christian Schools, in the best way possible.¹⁵ This establishment of the Society is taken on as a collegiate project, which means doing, unanimously and by common consent, everything that they believe in conscience to be the best for the society. It is worth pointing out the community dimension which here acquires consecration and association as expressions of the gift of self to God.¹⁶

E. *Consequences*: Basically two:

1. to remain in the Society until death or until the complete establishment of the society without being able to leave it, even though the Society consist only of the co-signatories.

2. to be prepared to beg for alms and to live on bread alone.

From what we have seen so far, we can state that each one offers up his personal liberty to embrace a common project, which will be carried out even if it means undergoing the greatest material

deprivations, as an expression of his gift of self to God, which each has felt called to make. Thus, the association is based on the declaration of a total dedication to God, to an evangelical project for the poor, espoused by the whole community.

F. *Ratification*: Finally, the associates show evidence of loyalty and confirm the deed with their signatures, as a seal of solemnity and of absolute trust in God.¹⁷

It would not be long before the fruits of this generous and trusting dedication would make itself felt in the young community. The Brothers feel moved to request De La Salle to allow them make a perpetual vow in the Society. Although the problems of the Community had not diminished, the act of kenosis had been achieved, the position of the "remnant of Israel" was such that the number of Brothers had increased to about thirty¹⁸ and apparently, their generosity had also increased. This, then, was the state of the Institute at the start of 1694: the Brothers commenced their reflections on the feasibility of making a perpetual commitment. The house at Vaugirard started to function and here the training of the novices took place, and it was here that the assembly which approved the way of life, followed by the members of the community, was approved.¹⁹

It is interesting to make another comparison of what the biographers tell us. It is possible that Blain exaggerated things²⁰ and Maillefer, who never manages to be clear on this point, demonstrates clearly that the enterprise of making a perpetual commitment comes from the Brothers and is the fruit of their prayers and of their reflections.

2. ASSOCIATION IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE INSTITUTE

The Brothers had thought that their temporary commitments were transient and because of this they wanted to make perpetual commitments. Let us consider, because we have to, what antecedents exist to show that the older Brothers could have already renewed their vows of obedience over a period of eight years? However, from the very start, De La Salle showed himself reluctant to accept this proposal. Because of this, he invited his

Brothers to make a four month-long reflection/retreat to which he invited those he considered to be the most capable and ready to make perpetual vows: 12 were invited. The main aims of their reflection would be to seek out the will of God together and to prepare themselves, inwardly, to carry it out and to come to a mature decision. On Pentecost Sunday, 1694, the retreat would start in Vaugirard, and would end on Trinity Sunday, with the making of perpetual vows.

Following the same analytical method that we applied to the heroic vow, we shall indicate the schema which we seem to perceive in the final vow formula of these Brothers:

A. *Invocation*: an invocation to the Blessed Trinity, the feast on which the vows were to be made.

B. *Aim*: The aim is to consecrate oneself entirely to God, to keep, together and by association, gratuitous schools. This is expressed, in this instance, in a personal sense, under the formula: "I consecrate myself".

C. *Means*: The means chosen to achieve consecration are the vows of obedience, association and stability in the Society. Here, again, association is made a reality, as each one of the Brothers who are associated and who made a common commitment, are named.

D. *Content*: Those who have made vows seek the Glory of God, as far as is possible and as required by Him. They promise to keep, together and by association, gratuitous schools, wherever they may be sent and to carry out any task assigned to them in the Society, whether by the body of the Society or by the superiors.

We must emphasise personal availability to look after the free schools, the task of discerning God's will and paying careful heed to His summons, as the concept of 'belonging' which the word body gives rise to, the complete abandonment of self to the superiors and to the Society, and the personal availability to carry out any given work.²¹

E. *Consequences*: These may be summed up in the following two senses:

1. To be prepared to live on bread alone and to seek alms, in order to achieve the maintaining

of the free schools and

2. To keep the promises taken for the whole of one's life.

We must take note of the fact that the task of maintaining the gratuitous schools by association is united to the extreme situation of having to beg for alms and live on bread alone. The commitment to the free schools is the same as the greatest donation of self.

F. *Ratification*: Signatures are appended as a testimony of faith as to what has been enacted and with the intention of putting it into practice. By making a straightforward comparison between the formulas of 1691 and 1694, we can show that while the structure, in itself, is similar, the formula of 1694 introduces several nuances which seem to us to be important enough to bear in mind:

1. The manner of expressing the consecration moves from a plural emphasis — the 'we' of the 1691 formula — to a formula where the singular form — the 'I' — is stressed.

2. From the single vow of association and union,²² one moves on to express other vows, such as the "uniting myself to and living in Society", "stability" and "obedience".

3. The words used in the vow of association and union, which are aimed at establishing the Society, are redolent of the milieu of crisis in which this vow was pronounced. However, on saying "to keep together and by association gratuitous schools, wherever I may be sent, for the greater glory of God", a new feeling of self-perception is introduced: one is in a new institution, which has already been established and which has its own particular objectives.

4. Finally, in the vows of 1691, a statement of community discernment is made, expressed in the desire to carry out unanimously and by common agreement, what becomes, in the 1694 vows, a carrying out in the Society, the task assigned either by the superiors, or by the body of the Society. This is a new element: obedience to the body of the society.

The day after the making of the 1694 vows,²³ the Brothers, gathered together on retreat, and the newly perpetually professed, carried out the election of the Superior of the Society, at the request

of De La Salle. Let us remember that it was a constant preoccupation of De La Salle to leave the society provided with a Superior elected from amongst themselves.²⁴ The results of the two ballots²⁵ clearly demonstrated De La Salle to be the elected Superior.

The minutes of the election, drawn up on this occasion, contain elements of interest for us. Association, and therefore being associated, occupies a central position here. A distinctive character is given to the foundation, like a mark of identity. Again, the minutes make explicit the essence of association, which is to keep, together and by association, free schools. The association, itself, is reason for the the Brothers, to feel that they had the right to elect the Superior of the Society, and in the same way, to reject any other who was not a member of the Society. Moreover, the minutes express the resolution that new members of the community be part of the association, just like those who signed their names.

As a means of explaining the different commitments taken on by the early Brothers, De La Salle drew up the "Collection of Different Small Treatises".²⁶ Although, there is uncertainty as to when the first text was written and it is difficult to give a precise date,²⁷ we cannot fail to reflect that the text to which we are referring is one of the most ancient and one of those which was in use during the whole period of the setting up of the infant community. The text we are referring to points out the obligations imposed on the Brothers by the vows.²⁸ From a perusal of it we can note various points:

1. The first obligation highlighted is that of keeping free schools by association with all those with whom they have been associated. This demands from the signatory a complete willingness to discharge the task assigned and equally to carry this out in whatever place is designated.

2. There is a second obligation which is connected to the first one, and that is to remain in the Society and not to leave it on one's own accord. In this way, the formula of the already well known heroic vow is incorporated anew. This formula demands complete self-annihilation with a view to maintaining the Society, being prepared, as well, to live on bread and alms. This all means that the schools and the Society are not to be abandoned,

and that the superiors and the body of the Society are to be obeyed.

3. Again, we draw attention to the quality of membership necessary for the superiors, and their state as superiors elected by the body of the society or of those who are brought together for this purpose in the the name of the superiors.

4. There is also a moral obligation attached to the making of vows, whereby a violation is considered as a mortal sin and a sacrilege.

Reflection on this text leads us to think that the teaching on association, which had been brought to light in the first years of the setting up of the community, continued to develop and take shape. This process of reflection looks at the other factors, which, with the common life and the whole experience, had left their mark on the development of the community. The experience, which was the fruit of the heroic vow, can be seen in the "Collection": in 1694, the Brothers' desire to make, and their statement to live out, their vows in perpetuity; the problems which arose on account of the election of the Superior and his lay state; the necessity to give the schools regular teachers, the importance of community life for these teachers, a life which demands a heroic disposition, based on the radical renunciation of oneself, to maintain the association. In synthesis, the Lasallian writings incorporate the experience of the life and the maturing of the reflection made through the eyes of faith, all of which continue to be expressed in the formulas of the vows which correspond fully to the experience of the community and its challenges.

An examination of the formulas preserved in our archives, entitled *Register of the First Vows*²⁹ which contains the formulas of 1694, the record of the election of the Superior in the same year and 23 formulas dated between 1695 and 1705, allows us to evaluate two instances of minor variations. With regard to the formulation of the promise of association, the majority of the documents confirm, once more, what has been stated earlier.³⁰ We come across the difference from the formulas we have mentioned in those of Brothers Pierre Cluse and Simon Sceillier. In these vow formulas, it can be seen that the promise to keep free schools by association is not included, although the words that follow the vow of association are retained;

and mention is made, in the third person, of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

There is some reason to suppose that the difference between the two formulas is due to the fact that Brothers Pierre and Simon were temporal (serving) Brothers and therefore not working directly in the schools. This means that the difference is that they place themselves at the service of the ones who look after the schools, here named as Christian. As this point is not directly connected with the present work, it is enough to simply draw attention to it.³¹

In the last years of his life, De La Salle again experienced the dejection and distress which in by-gone years had led him to make the heroic vow. His presence in Marseilles had brought a series of setbacks to the community, for which he believed himself responsible. Moreover, an earlier series of personal accusations is linked to this. He felt that he was an obstacle to the establishment of the Society and not being able to find any strength in himself to resist, he took himself off to the hermitage of St. Maximin, as a way of seeking the will of God and the work of God.³² In the face of depression and uncertainty, De La Salle wished to find solace, away from his sons, in prayer and in the contemplation of God. He went to Grenoble, where he was able to lead the life of a Brother among the Brothers, whilst keeping himself away from the affairs of the government of the Institute. His Brothers decided to bring him back from this quasi-retreat, demanding his presence in Paris. They reminded him that they were united by a vow of association to carry out the work of God, a vow ratified by the body of the Society. They pointed out that he belonged to this society and the need it had of his governing it. Those who signed this letter were the Brothers of Versailles, Paris and St. Denis who had come together in Paris on 1st April, 1714.

The style of the letter is familiar to us and we cannot help but compare it with the one which was written by De La Salle himself on 21st November, 1691. The background is the same: the building (the Institute) was again about to collapse. On this occasion, it was his Brothers who, making his style their own and using his typical response to the situation, called upon him to take charge of the Society, by virtue of the promise of

association that he had made and lived out for all those years. Although the vow of association is not mentioned in the letter, its spirit is present in all its force: it is only by virtue of this association that he understood that his Brothers could demand, with the force of authority, his taking charge and his presence. De La Salle returned to Paris and found that the fulfilling of his task was God's will, just as in the past he found that the divine will demanded his generous gift of self. As Bro. Michel Sauvage points out, "It was association that restored life to De La Salle in his vocation",³³ in this instance of a superior elected by his Brothers to guide the destiny of the Society.

The same basic elements of the heroic vow are revealed in the internal structure of the letter of 1714:

A. *Invocation*: This is addressed to De La Salle under the heading of "our very beloved Father".

B. *Aim*: The purpose of addressing themselves to De La Salle, the only one who can help to save the mission of founding the schools, is with God's greater glory, the good of the Church and of the Society in mind.

C. *Means*: The means of achieving the objective is that De La Salle should resume the government of the Institute, the holy work of God, making it clear that the work is carried out in the body of the Society.

D. *Content*: The fact that the Institute is being governed by its elected superior, means that God pours out the necessary gifts and graces through the medium of its leader, and this redounds to the great benefit of the Church.

E. *Consequences*: As a result, De La Salle has to resume the government of the Society, in accordance with the association which unites them, and because of the vow of obedience pledged to the body of the same.

F. *Ratification*: De La Salle's associates, by virtue of their signatures, show evidence of their intentions, their care and their order.

De La Salle's followers, imbued with his spirit,

reminded him of the difficulties they had lived through together, as well as their desire to allow themselves to be consumed for the founding of the free schools. They reminded him that he belonged to the community and that he had dedicated himself in it to carry out the work of God, and that, with the power that comes from association, he sought to announce salvation to the poor and abandoned. We cannot doubt that this language touched the heart of De La Salle deeply and was the impetus that directed his steps to Paris. Once again, the vow of association, which originated as a response to troubled times, emerges as an essential characteristic of the community.

3. ASSOCIATION AFTER THE DEATH OF THE FOUNDER

After the death of De La Salle, the Brothers wanted to obtain recognition for the Institute through Papal approbation and letters Patent from the King of France, all of which would allow the Brothers to exist as a legal entity. On occasions, we had believed that it was in this process, and more exactly in the Bull of Approbation, that the explicit mention of the vow of association disappeared. In line with the research carried out by Bro. Maurice Auguste,³⁴ we can understand how the change from: "to keep together and by association gratuitous schools" to "to teach the poor gratuitously" came about. This step, having come from the pen of the Brothers, reaffirms our belief that association was defined in a practical endorsement, which is to keep free schools. In other words, the early Brothers understood that the profound meaning of our vocation, which is that of looking after the most needy and the poor, depends, of necessity, on association which maintains the free schools.

We can read a description of the community of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in a manuscript, found in Rouen, and dated 1721, which is very close to the first testimonial handed over to Fr. Vivant, in order to start negotiations with the Holy See for obtaining approval for the Institute.³⁵ It is interesting to note that in this manuscript the vow is stated as "to keep schools by association and gratuitously", making it farther on, equivalent

to the vow “of teaching gratuitously”. The manuscript treats the vow of association and the vow of teaching gratuitously, in an explicit way, as synonymous and the first time that we see it in this form, is in this document.

Other documents, written with the same purpose as before, appeared in 1722. One is the “Abrégés” and the other is the “Supplique non corrigée”. The new elements of the development referred to above are found in both of these documents. In the “Abrégés”, it is stated that the schools will always be run in an associated form, but the vow of association to keep gratuitous schools is not included. In the “Supplique non corrigée”, the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously is added, as we know it today in the Bull. With these documents as a background, we can understand better the wording of the definitive Petition and the reply to it in the Bull of Approbation, “In Apostolicae Dignitatis Solio”. A study of both documents leaves no doubt that the Apostolic See approved of what the Brothers were seeking. The texts are almost the same, except for some variation in the wording which alters neither the meaning nor the substance.

Finally, with the Bull of Approbation, association is expressed as a means of running the schools, fulfilling its meaning with the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously, as is stated in its sixth and seventh articles. In accord with what we have stated in the present work, we could not talk about a change in the spirit of association which seeks the salvation of poor children through education, just as it had come to be identified with the community. We think that it is simply a question of a variation in expression, with the same substance, but which retains, with all the strength of the spirit of association which forms part of the fundamental intuition, all of which serves to confirm the substance of the vow of association.

We find no special mention of the vows in the known editions of the Rule, such as those of 1705 and 1718. It is only in the 1726 edition of the Rule that the chapter on the vows is inserted, as a way of making the text conform to the Bull of Approbation of 1725. However, it is possible to refer to two texts of the first Rule and these preserve unchanged, in three versions, aspects which concern

the essence of the vow of association.³⁶ In these excerpts, the Institute is defined, in itself, as a Society and, therefore, its members are associates. The end purpose of this association is to keep free schools, as is vowed and is understood as fundamental to the Institute. There is no doubt that these texts are connected with the oldest tradition of the Congregation and its spirit is identified by the life and work of its members, all of which determined the Rule. On the other hand, the vow of association is mentioned in both of the texts of 1705 and 1718, as we have seen above.

When the text of the Rule of 1726 was adapted, the chapter on the vows was included, without changing the earlier versions. In this Chapter XVIII, which speaks of the obligations of the vows, we notice that “teaching children gratuitously” means the same thing as “keeping schools by association”. Both concepts are incorporated in the same vow and with the same outcome: to teach children and to give them Christian education, without receiving any material recompense. It is the very meaning that the free gift of salvation has, a gift which we Brothers have received from Jesus Christ, and which, in the same way, we must share freely with those for whom we are responsible.

We already know about the close unity which has been established between education and salvation in Lasallian doctrine, and how this work of God is carried out, in these times, in the Christian school. We can find a parallel between the monastic life, where the work of God is to sing the Office and praise God within the monastery, and the work of the Brothers, where God is praised by means of teaching the most needy, a work carried out in the Christian school. In this way, the school becomes for the Brothers a theological location where life is consecrated to the education of the poor, where association is the form of life and where witness is given to the Risen Christ.

The formula of vows used in the Rule of 1726, continues in the spirit of association, without mentioning it specifically, in order to comply with the prescriptions of the Bull and to be in harmony with the substance and meaning with which the word association was charged. We must state once more that this expression is a continuation of the Lasallian tradition and spirit, and is by no means,

a breaking away or a change of direction. Its expression is completely in line with the living tradition of the Institute, as embodied by De La Salle and his first followers and lived with active fidelity by their successors.

Conclusion

It is clear that association, which is genuine and proper to the Institute, cannot be interpreted without reference to the personal 'journey' of De La Salle and his followers, nor can it be taken in isolation as a response depending on, and set in motion by, the educational and salvational needs of the poor of their day. Association is more than a simple classification of a vow or a term of casuistry. It is more than a vow; it is a way of life; it is a dynamic of relationship; it is a way of being; it is a distinctive sign which constitutes the identity of the emerging community. In this sense, we think it important to reflect on the words uttered by De La Salle in the "Account of the Beginnings", in which he interprets his personal history and how the Lord of History, and of the poor, operates in him. He tells us: "God who conducts all things wisely and gently, and who is not at all accustomed to force the inclinations of men, wishing to draw me altogether into undertaking the care of the schools, has done so in a quite imperceptible way and in a short time, such that one commitment has led me into another without my having foreseen it in the beginning".³⁷

In the life of De La Salle, association has been an actual sign of the way in which God has guided his life, of the way in which he came to make a commitment and to risk his life on behalf of the plan with which God inspired him for the benefit of the poor. In this power of association, he could discern the unceasing calls by means of which the Spirit was able to give flesh to the will of God, making reality of a mystical project. He found out the way to give life to God's salvific design for all men, and he was able to follow the will of God, making a Gospel response to the times in which he lived, to his church and to his people.

Summing up, it is by association that we can best appreciate the charism which enriches the Church through De La Salle. If we could describe

the essential elements of our charism, they would appear in the following statement:

The Founder, faced with the needs that he discerned in the poor and abandoned, associated himself to others who were attracted by the same reality, and "together" they devoted themselves to striving to educate them, as a means of bringing them to salvation. This is the way they chose to consecrate themselves to God who called them through the needy.

The practical means of breathing life into the charism experienced by Saint John Baptist De La Salle, was to be, in his own times, the Christian school. Today, we believe that we must retrace the Founder's journey, and this demands that we keep the essential elements of his charism alive. The heritage that we have received from him through association is undeniable in this process. It is in association and by association that we must continually return, to attempt to discover the salvific needs of the poor of our day, and this will demand that we seek the educational alternatives of our time to ensure that our less-favoured ones will come to Glory. It is precisely this: bringing the spirit which inspired our Founder, alive, now, in our time.

¹ *Memoir of the Beginnings* - Blain 1, p. 169.

² "The behaviour of these teachers, in this new house, bore clear witness that M. De La Salle had been inspired by God to make them come there; for they were much more organised in certain things than they had been before: as in the first place, going to bed; 2. in prayer; 3. at Holy Mass and in taking their meals" (Bernard, p. 35).

³ Bernard, p. 22.

⁴ 1 Tim. 2,4.

⁵ Here, we understand that the "vow" only means a simple promise, reserved within the society, and without any canonical connotation, and nor is there any implication of "entry into the religious life". Cf. C.L. 2, pp. 65-68.

⁶ From what we can see, there was uncertainty among the first biographers about the date of the making of the first vows. It seems most likely to us that it was in 1686. The vows were definitely temporary and were vows of obedience only. Cf. C.L. 2, p. 34 & foll.

⁷ It is possible that one of the outward reasons for not making vows of chastity was that these were reserved to the Sovereign Pontiff under the old form of Canon Law. It could have been unwise to have chosen a vow of this nature under the conditions that obtained in the growing Society. The above-mentioned vow of obedience carried the force of obligation among its members and submission to the Superior of the Institute, which is the force of a vow private to the members of a society. Bro. Maurice has examined this question in C.L. 2, pp. 12-36 and 66-69.

⁸ Bro. Maurice draws our attention to this question in C.L. 2, pp. 34-36.

⁹ We must realise that at the time when the first biographies were being written, witnesses of this time were not available. The more reliable testimony of Gabriel Drolin could only have been taken around 1730. Cf. Poutet's Thesis 1, p. 734.

¹⁰ In the *Dictionnaire Universel* of 1701, Volume 1, we find association defined as: "by common consent agreement, by which two or several persons come together to provide mutual assistance, or to act in common, or to live more conveniently....An association is entered into by simple consent". The meaning is limited, but it does give us the notion of a plan drawn up in common and sustained by simple agreement.

¹¹ In this ceremony, we can discern the biblical position of the "remnant of Israel". When the whole people distanced themselves from Yahweh, some of them remained faithful to the Lord, setting themselves up as a sign of hope and as a seed of grace for the conversion of the people. Cf. 11, Cr. 34,9; 34,21; Esdr. 9,15; Is. 10,20; 11,16; 42,15; 50,20; Ez. 9,8; Mi. 2,12; So. 2,9; Rm. 9,27, *passim*.

¹² The thoughts expressed in the heroic vow call to mind the thoughts of the Incarnation, the donation and the pascal offering of Our Lord, as expressed in Philippians 2, 6-11. The heroic vow can be read in a paschal vein: "...He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form....".

¹³ Cf. C.L. 2, p. 20 and C.L. 11, p. 54.

¹⁴ Many Orders, Congregations and Communities which lead a common life pronounced their commitments with an invocation to the Most Holy Trinity, although they generally used to add an invocation to the Blessed Virgin or to their holy Patrons. Cf. C.L. 2, pp. 56-57 and 43.

¹⁵ The insistence, on establishing the Society contains, in our view, two aspects. In the deepest of these, the purpose is to serve the most needy children through education, which is carried out, in practice, by means of a facility which they transformed, viz. the school.

¹⁶ When we speak, in this context, about consecration, we do so with the meaning of a personal offering to God who calls us, of a generous gift of self, made in association with others, of an oblation which gains full meaning in the word 'for', and in no way as a consecration which suggests entry into the religious life, making vows of religion, having canonical rank and status.

¹⁷ We must recall, at this stage, that the signatories had already pronounced their vow of obedience, which was renewed up to the present time, on the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, and which had become customary in the Society, possibly since 1686.

¹⁸ It is calculated that in 1694, there were no more than 30 Brothers.

¹⁹ In 1694, the manner of spending the time of recreation was put before the Brothers for their consideration. Cf. Maillefer Re. 106-107. Gallego 1, p. 262.

²⁰ It is clear that Blain exaggerates when he claims that the perpetual vows of 1694 were made in secret. Surely, he is interpreting later events, the vows made at Vaugirard, in the light of the heroic vow of 1691. Moreover, on the contrary, he states that the Register of Vows, was started at this profession. This record is kept in the archives of the Mother House and is reproduced in C.L. 3. Another of Blain's exaggerations occurs

where he points out that De La Salle wrote "Roman Priest" after his name; it is evident from this register of vows that the Founder simply signed himself 'De La Salle'. Cf. C.L. 2, p.25, note 2 and p. 26, notes 1 to 4.

²¹ It should be noted that the idea of the body of the Society appears for the first time here, although we cannot determine precisely those who represent the body. We presume that they are those entitled "principal Brothers", but neither is the method of determining them clear.

²² We must take into account that De La Salle, Vuyart and Drolin had already renewed their vows of obedience on the Feast of the Blessed Trinity, to which the vow of stability was actually added.

²³ Bro. Maurice Auguste states that the word "seventh" is recorded in the minutes, and because of this, the date of the minutes could well be the "sixth". Cf. C.L. 3, p. 10.

²⁴ It was De La Salle's constant preoccupation to provide the Institute with a superior elected from amongst themselves, in order to avoid the temptation of the clergy to interfere in the Institute by installing a priest as superior. Presumably because of this, it was clearly placed on record in the election minutes that the community will not have a priest, nor anyone who has received sacred orders, as superior. Cf. C.L. 3, p. 10.

²⁵ Maillefer Re pp. 109-110.

²⁶ This text is reproduced in C.L. 15.

²⁷ The determination of the precise date of the writing of the Collection is still doubtful. We are acquainted with an edition, the first 58 pages of which were preserved from an older edition. There is no doubt that the whole book was written in various stages. For more information, consult C.L. 2, p. 61, notes 2 and 3.

²⁸ Viz. the vows of obedience, stability and association.

²⁹ *Livret des premiers voeux*, AMG.

³⁰ "...and vow to unite myself and to live in society with the Brothers who are associated to keep, together and by association, gratuitous schools wherever I may be sent, and I promise and vow to do this even should I be obliged to beg for alms and to live on bread alone...".

³¹ For a deeper study of the vow formulas which are kept in the Archives of the Mother House (AMG), consult C.L. 3.

³² His interior feelings of dejection made him answer a Brother who came to visit him in order to beg him not to give up the work he had started: "God be blessed, my dear Brother! What are you thinking of to address me in such a way? Don't you know that I am not sufficiently able to command others? Don't you know that several of you do not want me any longer as their Superior? They are right, because I am very incapable".

³³ Conference given at Parmenic, on "La Lettre 1714".

³⁴ Cf. in C.L. 11 and the documents referred to in this study.

³⁵ It is thought that a similar memorandum in Rouen had been put into the dossier addressed to Jean Vivant in 1722. Cf. C.L. 11, pp. 124-131.

³⁶ Cf. final note, No. 17.

³⁷ Bernard, p. 33. ["Dieu, qui conduit toutes choses sagement et suavement, et qui n'a point coutume de forcer l'inclination de hommes, voulant m'engager tout à fait à prendre le soin des écoles, l'a fait d'une manière fort imperceptible et en beaucoup de temps, de telle sorte qu'un engagement (qui) m'a conduit à un autre, sans l'avoir prévu dans le commencement".

Bro. Rodolfo ANDAUR

Translated from Spanish by Bro. Aidan KILTY