

*Lasallian  
Studies*

**7**

**THE INSTITUTE  
IN THE EDUCATIONAL  
SERVICE OF THE POOR**

**Brother Bruno ALPAGO, FSC**

**Brothers of the Christian Schools  
ROME**



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**BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS**  
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## INTRODUCTION

In 1965, in its 4th and last session, the ecumenical 2nd Vatican Council published the Decree "Perfectæ Caritatis" on the adapted renewal of religious life in the Church<sup>1</sup>. It called upon religious institutes to know and to maintain faithfully the spirit and intentions of their Founders. The founding inspiration of these institutes was now to be adapted to the new conditions that existed, and these conditions would provide the criteria for this renovation (n.2).

The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools did not neglect the invitation of the Church. The work and documents of the 39th General Chapter, held in separate sessions in 1966 and 1967, were both a sign and a powerful encouragement for a process of renewal that was profound, long, wide-ranging, but not without its tensions.

The spirit of the congregation was very clearly fixed in the mind of the Founder: the spirit of faith and of zeal. All the Brothers knew it and had always known it. The 2nd chapter of the Rule reproduced word for word what St John Baptist de La Salle had originally written two and a half centuries previously. The exceptional value of this page was always stressed, and editions of the Rule after 1967 have always thought it

necessary to include it as a precious introduction.

Nor were the intentions of the Founder regarding his work in any doubt. In 1966, the first chapter of the Rule on "the end and necessity of this Institute" reproduced exactly what was written in the 1718 Rule<sup>2</sup>. Every Brother knew, and had always known, that "there is a very great need for this Institute, because the artisans and the poor, being normally little instructed and occupied all day long earning their own and their children's livelihood, cannot themselves give them the instruction they need and a decent and Christian education...It was in order to procure this advantage for the children of the artisans and the poor that the Christian Schools were founded".

This clear and concise text was not included in new editions of the Rule, but its warning cry sounded loud and clear during

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<sup>1</sup> From October 6th - 8th, it was voted on piecemeal; on October 11th, the whole document was voted on. On October 28th, Pope Paul VI promulgated the definitive text.

<sup>2</sup> In 1861, the attempt to suppress an article failed. The changes made in 1947 removed nothing from the previous text; its additions were indicated by asterisks.

the 39th General Chapter. The confrontation between the founding intentions and the current practice of the Institute in 1966 led the Chapter to engage the whole Institute in a process of conversion to the poor, of a return to the poor<sup>3</sup>.

To help to bring about this conversion, a number of Brothers undertook to discover more about the poverty of those days, and the service given to the poor by St John Baptist de La Salle and the work he founded. Their research was rewarding. It had never been doubted that the Founder and the first Brothers had in fact dedicated themselves as a group, and almost exclusively, to the world of the poor. We now know very much more about that world, but what happened later attracted much less attention. In fact, Brothers often know very little about the history of their congregation and, in particular, about when, how, why and to what extent, this religious family – born for the purpose of making the benefits of a Christian education accessible to the children of the artisans and the poor – made or accepted changes which eventually made its conversion to the poor necessary. Was it right to speak of a need to return to the poor?

This is how things stood in 1991, when the Director of Lasallian Studies in Rome invited the author to undertake some research into the kind of service our congregation had given the poor in the course of its history. Without ever having studied his-

tory, almost completely ignorant of Lasallian history, without experience of research, but with the hope of delving into something that might prove exciting, the author accepted the invitation after obtaining permission from his District. This enabled him to work in Rome, initially for three terms, and eventually for a little more than a whole year. The documents used come exclusively from the Generalate, but even so, have not been explored or exploited exhaustively.

Even though much more could be said on this topic, and certain fundamental questions are left unanswered, it is opportune to publish the results now – however provisional or precarious – of my research; research with all its faults – which cannot be hidden – its lack of balance, its immaturity, its superficiality and faulty analysis, and its lack of sang-froid which reveals the dilettante by chance.

Many Brothers, in different and complementary ways, have contributed to the completion of this work. Whatever merit there is in these pages is rightly theirs. My thanks go to all who so richly deserve them, in particular, to Brothers Léon Lauraire and Alain Houry, successive Directors of Lasallian Studies, who believed the subject was useful, and who constantly and courageously

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<sup>3</sup> *Declaration on the Brother of the Christian Schools in the world of today* (34.4).

supported my research; and to Brothers Edwin Bannon and André Rocher, competent and friendly Institute archivists; to Brother Michel Sauvage who had the invaluable kindness to read my manuscript, to suggest numerous improvements, and encourage constantly an author somewhat inclined to become discouraged. There are many others – too many to count and mention by

name – whom I thank also: without their fraternal and silent help this work would never have appeared.

Noviciat De La Salle  
Cordoba (Argentina),  
September 2nd 1998

Feast of Blessed Salomon Leclercq, martyr.

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE TIME OF THE FOUNDATION

In her history of the French bourgeoisie, Régine Pernoud speaks of Jean Jacques Olier, Vincent de Paul and John Baptist de La Salle as being “sincere believers” belonging to this 17th century social class, and she adds that, “even if they practise a religion strongly tainted by humanism, they do so in all sincerity”. A little further on, she refers to them as founders, each in his own right, of course, of movements dedicated to the radical renewal of the religious life of their days, or to its expression through acts of practical charity: “Olier founded the seminary of St Sulpice in response to an urgent need to train the clergy, a responsibility totally neglected by worldly bishops who could not bear to reside in their own diocese; St John Baptist de La Salle devoted himself to the Christian education of the ordinary people who had been abandoned to their own devices with the disappearance of parish schools; St Vincent de Paul provided the only charitable movement the century can lay claim to”.<sup>1</sup>

John Baptist, eldest son of Louis de La Salle (1625-1672) and Nicole Moët de Brouillet (1633-1671), was born in Rheims, in the family home, on April 30th 1651. Shortly before his 68th birthday, he died in Rouen in the novitiate of the Brothers of

the Christian Schools, on Good Friday, April 7th 1719. His life corresponds more or less with the reign of Louis XIV.<sup>2</sup>

In history, his name is linked with the Christian education of the masses. It is well known that he devoted the greater part of his life to its promotion, and that he founded a congregation of men totally committed to this work, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. In the course of time, the Founder and his disciples became progressively aware that “the necessity of this Institute is very great because the working class and the poor being usually little instructed, and being occupied all day in gaining a livelihood for themselves and their families, cannot give their children the needed instruction, or a suitable Christian education. It was to procure this advantage for the children of the working class and of

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<sup>1</sup> Régine Pernoud, *Histoire de la bourgeoisie en France*, Volume 2, p. 69-71.

<sup>2</sup> Born in 1638, Louis XIV inherited the crown on the death of his father Louis XIII in 1643. He reached his majority in 1651, was crowned in Rheims in 1654, and assumed personal control of the government of the Kingdom in 1661, on the death of Cardinal Mazarin, and kept it till his death at Versailles in September 1715.

the poor, that the Christian Schools were founded".<sup>3</sup>

In the pages that follow, we should like to take a closer look at the poor and the working class that concern us, as well as at

the service provided for them by De La Salle and his Brothers. We are not the first to do this, but our efforts will be inspired only to a limited extent by the work talented researchers have made publicly available.

## 1. "THE CHILDREN OF THE WORKING CLASS AND OF THE POOR"

### The poor: a word with a diversity of meanings

While poverty was a condition that afflicted a great many subjects of the Sun King, and the term was used frequently in the written and spoken language, the meaning of the word itself differed considerably, depending on who wrote it, who read it, who said it or who heard it, in the last few years of the 17th century.<sup>4</sup>

In the previous century, Luis Vives taught that "whoever received help from others was poor". Consequently, all human beings were poor, and the human condition was most manifest in those who were considered particularly poor. This point of view had many interesting consequences which, however, did not reflect the thinking of the majority of people, and were totally opposed to the views of those who would not attribute to the poor the dignity of a human being.

The term "poverty" was understood in a variety of ways: for example, it was used to describe both a humble way of life, and a situation characterised by hunger and destitution. The notional difference between the two situations was difficult to grasp because

of the ease with which people passed from the first to the second. The majority of poor people ran a very real risk of becoming destitute, and many either become so temporarily, or fell into a permanent state of chronic destitution. This explains why the term "poor" often conjures up "destitute" and is exemplified in the person of the beggar. "Poverty does not consist in having little, but in the need into which scarcity makes a person fall. To put it more clearly, the poor person is destitute, and the destitute person is poor"<sup>5</sup>. Philippe de Béthune, a diplomat, is in agreement with this view when he describes the three categories of people who

<sup>3</sup> RC I, 4-5, is already present in the 1705 manuscript (CL 25).

<sup>4</sup> This whole section is based on the work by Philippe SASSIER: *Du bon usage des pauvres. Histoire d'un thème politique. XVI<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, p. 61-121.

<sup>5</sup> Béroalde's poem goes as follows:

"Poverty is not having little,  
but the need into which poverty makes you fall.  
When everything is said and done, the poor man  
is miserable

And the miserable man is poor".

(Taken from Ph. SASSIER, *op.cit.*, p. 65)



make up the Estates: "the great, the poor who lack everything, and the mediocre"<sup>6</sup>. Godeau, a bishop, thinks likewise: for him, a poor person is one who "lacks everything necessary for life"<sup>7</sup>.

There are other views, of course. For example, according to Pierre de Camus, another bishop: "Poverty consists in not having stable and assured income and revenue which make it possible to live without working. Consequently, a person, whose only source of livelihood is his physical or intellectual work, can consider himself to be poor".

The prevailing tendency is to identify poverty with destitution and not with working, and so the embodiment of poverty is the beggar. This is borne out by the first edition of the "Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française" in 1694, where we find: "Poor, adj.: person who does not have the things necessary for life, who has too little...Poor is also a noun, and then it means a beggar, a man who is really in need. The ashamed poor: persons who have fallen on hard times and are too ashamed to beg publicly for alms. Parish poor: the poor who depend on the alms of the parish".

The two dictionaries known as Furetière and Trévoux, repeat or develop the same views about poverty.<sup>8</sup>

Strictly speaking, what are the "things necessary for life" for a poor person? The answer can be only the following one, or one very similar to it: "To ensure daily bread for oneself and for one's dependents", giv-

ing the terms ensure, bread and daily their literal meaning.<sup>9</sup>

### The multitude of poor people

We should not suppose that, in the 17th century, the majority of French people were in permanent danger of dying of hunger. All the same, poverty was widespread. Much of the population, certainly more than half, ran the risk of not having at one time or another its famous daily bread.

Some people spent their whole life in this way; others had to face this situation after losing a state of relative well-being and not being able to regain it; and others, finally, experienced, more or less frequently, moments of crisis. A wage sufficient to live on in November, because of the recent harvest and moderate prices, can prove to be insuf-

<sup>6</sup> "mediocre": those who are between the two others; mediocrity

<sup>7</sup> A contemporary description, which sees in poverty "hard indigence of things necessary for life", makes a distinction between two sorts of poverty: poverty which is "peaceful, modest, industrious", and the other kind, which is "bold, whining, moaning, thieving, sacrilegious, dirty, vicious, in a word, the root of all evil". He almost classifies the poor according as they are "good" or "bad".

<sup>8</sup> All point out that, by extention, persons are called poor who do not have enough to live with dignity according to their rank. In this sense, a prince who possesses only ten thousand livres in income is a beggar by profession. This is not, however, the most usual meaning of the term poor.

<sup>9</sup> One can see the extent to which bread is the staple diet in Marcel LACHIVER's, *Les années de misère*, p. 35-42.

ficient in May, when stocks are exhausted and the next harvest is still some time away. Illness involves extra expenses, which become more serious when working-days are lost. Given the lack of family allowances at the time, what was sufficient to support a small family normally, was no longer enough when other children were born. Fluctuation in the market meant that, at any time, hundreds of workers could be laid off because their work was no longer needed.

Freak climatic conditions could ruin harvests and send up the prices of cereals (and particularly quickly, the price of cereals used to feed the poor), and the result was famine. The peasants, who had to sell, and sell at a loss, their houses, land and tools to pay off their debts, flocked to the towns to swell the ranks of the beggars.

And in the period that concerns us here, there was no shortage of these freak climatic conditions. There was the terrible winter of 1663-64; then that of 1683-84, and the little "ice age" from 1687 to 1700. During this latter period, there was also the particularly cold year of 1692 and the "rotten" year of 1693: this meant two lost harvests (and that of 1691 had been a poor one also). In addition, there was an epidemic and the war, and the net result of all this, in 1693-94, was a decrease in the population amounting to a million and a half persons.<sup>10</sup> Even when climatic conditions had settled down, there was the murderously cold winter of 1708-09.

And there was also the impulsive behaviour of men. In the reign of Louis XIV, there

was an unending succession of wars. In 1648, the Treaty of Westphalia marked, at least officially, the end of the 30 Years War. Then civil war broke out in France, the so-called "Fronde" which lasted 4 years. Hostilities between France and Spain were brought to an end only in 1659 by the Peace of the Pyrenees. During the personal rule of the King, conflicts grew longer and longer: 1667-68, campaigns in Flanders and in Franche Comté; in 1670, the annexation of Lorraine; 1672-79, the war with Holland; 1688-97, war against the League of Augsburg. After hardly enough time to lick wounds, there broke out the Spanish War of Succession (1701-1713). To all this can be added the sporadic outbreaks of internal conflict in Protestant regions following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685.

If to all this is added the non-existence of a social service (if we discount a few new ventures in this field), it is clear that the economic situation of the peasants, workers and small craftsmen was very vulnerable. Living habitually on the threshold of subsistence, or a little above, any contingency could force them to become beggars. In this sense, and in this period, "a poor person is one who can become so" (Jean Gutton).

All these factors worked together to ensure that the number of the poor remained high. As figures are not readily available,

<sup>10</sup> France did not experience a similar demographic catastrophe for the next 300 years (cf. Marcel LACHIVER, *op.cit.*, p. 96-208 and 480).

perhaps the following examples will help, even if they cannot really replace a detailed study.

Research in the town of Amiens<sup>11</sup> provides a fair amount of useful information based on the poor relief tax register. For the years 1625-1633, the names of 2,428 contributors are listed. These represent less than half, and perhaps only two-fifths, of the population of Amiens. Those who do not contribute belong to the poorer sections of the population. For example: there are more than 1,500 specialised textile workers (a typical industry of the town), but only 155 of them pay the tax. Of the 2,429 who are on the list, a good half of them (1,239) pay the minimum contribution. Of these latter, 452, that is, fewer than 36%, declare they have no profession, and 681, that is, fewer than 55%, are craftsmen of various kinds. To summarise: those who are not in a position to pay, and those who pay only the minimum, constitute more than 75% of the population. Most of these are people who work.<sup>12</sup>

In 1707, in the years when bread was cheap, Marshal Vauban made a less than flattering assessment of the situation:

"Almost a tenth of the population is forced to beg and, in fact, begs...Of the other nine-tenths, five are incapable of giving alms to the one-tenth, because they themselves are very close to the same destitution. Of the remaining four-tenths, three are not well-off and encumbered with debts and court cases. In the remaining tenth, (nobles, ecclesiastics, bourgeois and well-established

merchants) there are no more than a hundred thousand small or large families that could be said to be very well-off".<sup>13</sup>

Lachiver, quoted earlier, has calculated that, at the time of Louis XIV, about 75% of the population of France was composed of poor people and of those with so little to their name that, when the price of basic food-stuffs rose, they were unable to cope.<sup>14</sup>

### Attitude towards the poor

The 17th century did not forget that Jesus of Nazareth had lived in poverty, nor that the poor were images of Jesus Christ whom one serves when serving them.

This view did not preclude other attitudes. The poor person, especially when identified with the beggar, is easily associated with disorder. What is meant here is social disorder, because beggars make noise, smell and are violent, and their miserable condition is not a pleasant sight for decent

<sup>11</sup> Pierre DEVON, *Amiens, capitale provinciale. Étude sur la société urbaine au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1967, quoted by Henri Bédél (see next note).

<sup>12</sup> Henri BÉDEL, *Les "artisans et les pauvres" au temps des origines de l'Institut*. The information here applies to a specific time and place, but to a place which is sufficiently prosperous to be well above the poorest towns. Amiens was one of the principal centres of the textile industry, and the years 1625-1635 seem to have been the best in the whole of the 17th century for this industry in France. (Cf. *Histoire économique et sociale de la France*, vol. 2, p. 236).

<sup>13</sup> Quoted by Philippe SASSIER, *op.cit.*, p.126f

<sup>14</sup> Marcel LACHIVER, *op.cit.*, p. 431

people. They are especially a threat to public order because they attack and kill people, and foment all kind of sedition in the hope of improving their own situation. They represent moral disorder also, because poor people are vagabonds, lazy and impious. As a royal edict promulgated on April 16th 1656 affirms: "begging and idleness (are) the source of all disorders".<sup>15</sup>

This calls into question the assistance given by society to the poor. In a Christian society, everyone knows that almsgiving is a work of charity which contributes to the salvation of the person who practises it. All are conscious of the powerful bonds of solidarity that bind them to others, and Bossuet runs no risk of being taken for a Marxist when he declares that "nature, or rather, to speak in a more Christian fashion, God has given his children, from the very beginning, equal rights over everything they need".<sup>16</sup> The existence of rich people is justified precisely by their role as a visible providence for the poor (a praiseworthy providence, given the very negative description of the poor, and a role which does not close the gap between rich and poor, which does not make the rich poor, nor the poor rich, and which does not make them brothers in society).

Faced with a multitude of poor people, the social assistance administrators wished to create some kind of order. They began by distinguishing the real from the false poor. Only the former had a right to be helped: they were the ones who could not provide for their needs by their work (ei-

ther because they had no work or did not earn enough), who maintained the humble attitude proper to their state, and belonged to the jurisdiction – town or parish – which provided the assistance. These are the poor who really represent Jesus Christ, and it is charity to these that saves those who practise it.

Finally, in a century which exalts the ideal of the successful man, the image of the poor beggar is easily identified with the idea of failure. To overcome his failure, the poor person must make himself useful, and to do that, he must work (idleness is corrupting) and pray as a social intercessor to God for those who assist him. Evidently the "false poor" must work also, because their begging is unjustified and a form of robbery which does a disservice to the really poor.

In this context, poverty as an ideal of religious life is not much appreciated by society. The formators of the clergy advise their candidates to aim at an economic "aurea mediocritas". Any rich person who tries to rid himself of his riches will have to fight a few battles against the "world".

### **The political response to the problem of the poor**

In the 17th century, aid to the poor, traditionally entrusted to the Church, became a secular matter. This did not mean that ec-

<sup>15</sup> Quoted by Philippe SASSIER, *op.cit.*, p. 63

<sup>16</sup> Quoted by Philippe SASSIER, *op.cit.*, p. 90

clesiastical organisations were no longer involved, but that this aid had become a concern of the State, and that consequently, the criteria applied were no longer only evangelical but were political also; and the organisation and administration of this aid were in the hands of the town or State authorities.

The decision having been taken to alleviate the evil of poverty in a definitive manner, the "great confinement" in general hospitals was extended to the whole of France. The creation of these institutions dated at least from the 16th century, but their spread throughout the country and their obligatory character dated from the second half of the 17th century. Preceded by other towns, Paris opened its general hospital in 1656. In 1662, a royal edict obliged all towns or important localities of the kingdom to establish their own, but their spread to the provinces came after 1680.

The general hospital was intended to confine all kinds of "able-bodied poor": old men, children, abandoned or sent there, unemployed workers, single women, poor married couples with or without children, unruly children. Sometimes, even sick people were admitted, but these usually were sent to the Hôtel Dieu. In the general hospital, children of school age received a rudimentary education (reading and writing). Older children were apprenticed. People able to work were given maintenance tasks to do, made to perform some service in the house, or produce goods for sale. For this purpose, workshops (mostly textile) were

set up, but this led to complaints from professional workers outside, and from buyers, because of the low quality of the goods. All the inmates were provided with accommodation, board and health care. The daily timetable was monastic, with fixed times for rising and retiring, for meals, work and prayer. There was also corporal punishment, when it was thought appropriate.

Given this type of structure, the general hospital was seen as an appropriate means of attaining a number of political objectives. First of all, there was the objective of public order. Locked up, the poor could no longer cause disorder, put life and property at risk, nor exhibit their sad condition in the town and mar its beauty. In this way the poor could be counted and their names noted. Begging was strictly forbidden. There was also a second objective, an economic one based on usefulness. Thanks to the more or less forced labour, the poor ceased to be simply a burden on the community, and became more or less a part of the wealth-producing process. By saving them from idleness, they were morally and socially regenerated. Finally, there was the charitable objective of helping the needy. The general hospital channeled effectively the aid of the community to the real poor, avoiding the unproductive dispersion which characterised purely individual initiatives.

All these good theories were not enough, however, to ensure the implementation of the successive edicts ordering the confinement of the poor. Sometimes, a quick decision to provide a general hospital remained

a dead letter because of a lack of funds. Very often, the poor resisted efforts to lock them up. For its part, the population was perfectly willing to help them directly. St Vincent de Paul, who had no objection to general hospitals, founded the Daughters of Charity to look after the poor without sending them to the general hospital. Charity schools dependent on parishes offered education to their poor children rather than send them to the hospital. Pious souls wished to respect and regenerate the image of Jesus Christ in the poor without, if possible, depriving them of their freedom.

### Craftsmen

According to the dictionary of the French Academy, the craftsman (artisan) is a worker in a mechanical art, a professional. The Furetière dictionary says more or less the same things and gives some examples: shoemakers, locksmiths, joiners, hat makers, etc. The Trévoux dictionary (1721) repeats what the others say, but complements them by mentioning craftsmen (or merchants) who despite their social position, have made their name in the Arts or Sciences.

These “mechanical arts” did not all have the same status, socially or economically. Goldsmiths and jewellers, tapestry makers and armourers and a few others were the most respected professions. Below them, there was a large group of “minor craftsmen” who did the more common work in wood, leather, wool and construction. Lower still, there were the unskilled labourers who could offer only the strength of their arms.<sup>17</sup>

Within a craft, the apprentices constituted the bottom rung of the ladder. When they completed their apprenticeship, they became companion workers. Access to the highest grade, that of the master craftsman, was made very difficult by a series of obstacles, some of which were economic. Precise and detailed regulations governed even the smallest aspects of relations within the same craft, with others crafts, and with the authorities. These organisations, which had sprung up within the context of small businesses, now had to face new working conditions which heralded the arrival of the industrial revolution. Solidarity grew more on the same professional level than between the different levels of the same craft. It was not rare for masters to reduce their apprentices to a state of slavery, and so apprentices formed their own (illegal) societies, and organised strikes.

There were craftsmen – and they were in the majority – who worked for a wage. Others were self-employed. Others had other craftsmen working for them, and these were the best off. The equipment of these workers varied from a set of tools to a more or less well set-up workshop and a shop to sell their products.

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<sup>17</sup> One can see how little esteem there was for manual work at this time by reading Régine PÉRNAUD, *op.cit.*, p. 77-99, who quotes Charles Loyseau's *Traité des Ordres et simples dignités*. This latter work appeared in 1610, and was reprinted throughout the course of the 17th century, a proof that its ideas were appreciated and shared.

Some managed to save money to improve their house and their living standard, others bought a piece of land and planted a vineyard or sowed a crop. But in most cases, minor craftsmen and unqualified workers lived from day to day, without any savings for difficult times. Any unexpected occurrence (illness, death of a parent, falling off in the demand for workers, a birth, an accident) could force them to have recourse to outside aid in order to survive, on which many of them already depended to some extent.

As a consequence, the dividing line between the craftsmen and the poor could be very thin. As the Intendant of Poitiers wrote in 1684: "The craftsmen are so poor that, when they can no longer work, they are locked up in the hospital". Fifteen years later, his colleague in Tours spoke of "three thousand men and women, almost all silk workers, all without work, who came as a mob demanding alms".<sup>18</sup> It is not surprising that in Lasallian texts craftsmen (artisans) and the poor appear together, or that together they are simply defined as the poor.

## 2. DE LA SALLE'S COMMITMENT TO THE POOR A JOURNEY THAT WAS AN EXODUS AND AN INCARNATION

Son of a presidial councillor and of a lady of the landed gentry, the eldest of eleven children (four of whom died in infancy), John Baptist de La Salle spent his early years uneventfully in a Christian home of a good social and economic standing.

A precocious attraction to the priesthood<sup>19</sup> enabled him to receive a canonry from a relative before he was 16. At the age of 18, he was awarded the Master of Arts, with a distinction, at the College of the University of Rheims. As he actually wished to become a priest and not simply benefit from a living, he went on immediately to his theological studies. At the end of 12 months, his parents sent him to Paris to complete his priestly formation at the seminary of St Sulpice and at the Sorbonne.

His first year in the capital ended in sadness: his mother died in July 1671. He could not complete his second year because his father died in his turn on April 9th 1672. On returning to the family house, the young canon had to see to the management of the family fortune, look after his younger brothers and sisters, several of whom continued to live with him, and to organise their education.

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<sup>18</sup> According to Philippe SASSIER, *op.cit.*, p.157. On artisans: Piergiovanni FORNARESIO, FSC, *I figli degli artigiani e le scuole lasalliane delle origini*. Also MAURICE AUGUSTE, FSC, *Les pauvres auxquels se vouaient saint Jean Baptiste de la Salle et les premiers frères*.

<sup>19</sup> He received the tonsure on March 11th 1662, shortly before his 11th birthday.

Despite all this, he continued his preparation for the priesthood, albeit at a slower pace, and was ordained on April 9th 1678. This stage in his life was marked by the friendship and spiritual direction of Canon Nicolas Roland, a man of great fervour who, in addition to his duties as theological canon, devoted his wealth, his time and his life to the service of orphans and poor girls, for whose education he founded a community of Sisters, the Sisters of the Child Jesus. On his death-bed, and only a few weeks after De La Salle's ordination, Roland appointed his protégé to be the executor of his will.

John Baptist was now 27 years old. He was a pious priest, a responsible canon, a prudent and successful administrator, a wealthy man perfectly at ease with the leading citizens of the town. He did not seem to have any particular plans in mind and, no longer guardian of his brothers and sisters, he prepared for his doctorate in theology. For the time being, he was a man without any commitments, but soon his life would take on another very specific direction: Christian schools for boys, run by a community of "professionals".

De La Salle did not arrive at his decision by a process of deduction. He was certainly well acquainted with the ideas that were disturbing the Church in France at the time. His friendship with Roland would have certainly enabled him to know of Nicolas Barré's educational work in Rouen, since the Sisters who founded the community in Rheims were sent by him. He was acquainted also with the preaching and the

work of Charles Démia for popular education in Lyons. His time at the seminary of St Sulpice must have put him into contact with the catechetical movement. De La Salle was aware, therefore, of what was going on around him, and knew that the Church had set in motion a great missionary movement which considered schools to be an instrument of a pastoral ministry among the common people. He knew also the passages in the Gospel which called for detachment in order to follow Jesus Christ. He knew all about the heroic lives of the saints. Some of Roland's friends even put De La Salle's name forward as someone suitable to undertake some educational work for poor boys, similar to what the deceased canon had done for girls. And yet, none of this made him decide.

The definitive turning point in his life, which led him to undertake the work to which God called him, came about in 1679. A series of unforeseen events brought him gradually to involve himself in the primary education of poor boys. The initiative did not come from him. Biographers, both past and present, and the research that has been done, show that initially, De La Salle did no more than support the efforts of others. His honest intentions in doing so prevented him from withdrawing when the other promoters of the scheme disappeared or took on a secondary role, leaving all the work in his hands. The seriousness with which he undertook his first commitments regarding this work, while still an outsider, made him eventually take full responsibility for it. De



La Salle was led to discover that God was calling him through these people and these events, and that the work of the Christian schools for the common people was the work that God was asking him to accomplish.

The fidelity with which he took these first steps led him to undertake other commitments. And each time he came into contact with the poor, whom he knew only by sight, he discovered more and more about them and their ambiguities.

It was a situation that called for discernment, but it was something he could not do by himself. He needed help, someone else to look at the situation, as well as enlightenment from God. And so, he consulted others, prayed and mortified himself.

He made decisions and the work took root. The first school was followed by others. Requests reached him in Rheims to open schools in Guise, Rethel and Laon. The small group of teachers became a community and De La Salle, through no effort or desire of his own, was its natural superior. The spiritual and professional guidance of these would-be teachers, as well as the running and organisation of the community, obliged him to live with them. This led to some dramatic choices, which not only were difficult for him, but were disapproved of by some members of his family and by his social circle. In order to give himself entirely to these new "brothers" and make himself available to them, for the furtherance of God's work, De La Salle left the family home (1682)<sup>20</sup>, gave up his canonry (1683),

and gave most of his wealth to the poor (1684-85).

Years later, speaking about these first steps, he summarised them as follows: "God, who conducts all things wisely and gently, and who is not accustomed to impose his will upon people, wishing me to commit myself completely to taking care of the schools, did so in an imperceptible manner and over a long period of time, so that one commitment led to another, without my having foreseen any of this initially".<sup>21</sup>

Free of impediments, thanks to this exodus and incarnation, he devoted his time and his efforts to giving this new society spiritual depth, professional competence and institutional solidity.<sup>22</sup>

He died forty years later, having dedicated his life unsparingly to infusing vigour into this new spiritual family. He was

<sup>20</sup> Without taking anything away from the significance of the step taken on June 24th 1682, when De La Salle left his family home to go and live with the teachers in a rented house, it has to be pointed out that this decision was forced upon him in the short term by a requirement that had nothing spiritual about it: the family home was a property that had to be shared among the heirs. As his sister Marie demanded her share, he had to sell the house and share the proceeds among the heirs.

<sup>21</sup> Blain I, 169; cf. BER 33; MAC 15; MAR 14, AEP 19. This passage comes from the "*Memoir on the Beginnings*", written by De La Salle in about 1694, and known today only from the quotations of the early biographers. Unlike Blain, the others say: "over a short period of time". Regarding this, one can read GALLEGRO I, 162, note 15.

<sup>22</sup> Campos I and AEP illustrate this abundantly.

comforted by the conviction that it was God who wanted and who had established this urgently needed work<sup>23</sup>, destined to be of such great service to the Church. At his death, a hundred or so Brothers, in 21 com-

munities in France (including Avignon, a Pontifical State at the time) and Rome, continued his work, following the path he had traced out for them, and calling him with veneration their Father and Founder.<sup>24</sup>

## A WORK FOR THE POOR: THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS<sup>25</sup>

In a famous passage, De La Salle asks the Brothers to reflect on the extent to which the children of the artisans and the poor are abandoned to their own devices, and on the unfortunate consequences of this. He then continues: "God has had the goodness to remedy so great a misfortune by the establishment of the Christian Schools, where the teaching is offered free of charge and entirely for the glory of God, where children are kept all day and learn reading, writing

disposed towards the instruction of young people and the retired life, were lacking in it themselves through a lack of opportunity. The said M. De La Salle, seeing that the candidates were increasing in number, as were also requests for their presence in several towns of the Kingdom..." (CL 11,128)

*The Memoir on the Beginnings* gives a different version of these events. The fact that the two documents were intended for different sets of persons does not explain the differences entirely. *The Memoir on the Beginnings* reflects a spiritual approach in which a commitment (pursued through faith) in close touch with reality, leads subsequently to a clearer understanding of the same reality (and to new commitments in it). *The Rouen Memoir*, on the contrary, seems to reflect quite a different approach: the understanding (from the outside) of a certain reality leads to a commitment. As a consequence: in the first case, enlightenment occurs for the person who has already committed himself to a certain reality, and who is already in it; in the second case, it would seem that, as a result of the external perception of a certain reality, the person receives a call to commit himself to it. These two different interpretations imply also different conclusions.

<sup>23</sup> But not the only one and not the first. The Lasalian saga is like a star in a vast constellation of initiatives to promote the Christian education of the common people.

<sup>24</sup> The "De La Salle story" has been interpreted in a variety of ways. What is known as the "Rouen Memoir", submitted by the Brothers to the authorities of this town in 1720, has this to say: "The Institute was started in the year 1680 by M. De La Salle, canon of Rheims. He had such great compassion for the multitude of children of the artisans and the poor...that he conceived the plan to establish schools in which the children of the artisans and the poor would learn free of charge to read, write and arithmetic, and would receive a Christian education through catechism and other daily instructions, suitable for the formation of good Christians. For this purpose, he brought together a group of young unmarried men, most of whom, although well

<sup>25</sup> This is the name De La Salle and the Brothers give to the schools in which they work, and they call themselves Brothers of the Christian Schools. This expression was used as early as 1689 in the *Memoir on the Habit* ("this community is commonly called the Community of the Christian Schools..."), but it is older than that. The different biographers note that, in August 1683, De La Salle gave up his

and their religion. In these schools, the children are always kept busy so that they will be fit to start work when their parents so desire.

“Thank God that he has had the goodness to call upon you to procure such an important advantage for children. Be faithful and exact to do this without any payment, so that you can say with St Paul: “The source of my consolation is to announce the Gospel free of charge, at no cost to those who hear me”.<sup>26</sup>

This text not only indicates the normal clientele of the “Christian Schools”, but also lists some of their characteristics: their gratuity, curriculum, duration of schooling, their preparation of the pupils for the future. Understood in these terms and directed consequently, these schools were established by God in order to announce the Gospel.

### The pupils

In his writings, De La Salle uses the expression “the artisans and the poor” only five times to indicate the socio-economic origin of the majority of the pupils of the Christian Schools.<sup>27</sup> Most often – and we have already seen why – he simply calls them the “poor”. The sample of texts that follows does not claim to be exhaustive: “You are under the obligation of instructing the children of the poor”; “only the poor come to us”; “recognise Jesus under the poor rags of the children you have to teach...since you are engaged in instructing the poor”; “you have been called by Jesus Christ to teach the poor”; “Have you similar sentiments of

charity and tenderness towards the poor children whom you have to instruct?”; “It is your happiness to labour for the instruction of the poor”; “Your mission is very similar to that which St Norbert had in view when he founded his Order, namely, to teach the truths of the Gospel to the poor”; “By

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canonry. Blain I, 191 explains in ten points the reasoning that led to this decision. His 6th point reads as follows: “With all these steps bringing about its fall, the establishment of the Christian and gratuitous schools will be buried under its ruins, and there will be no point in thinking of resurrecting it”. On the preceding page, he records in the following words a recommendation from Fr Barré in answer to a consultation by De La Salle: “Divine Providence must be the only foundation on which the Christian Schools must be established”. Maillefer says nothing similar to this in a parallel passage, but he has already (and this seems premature) referred to the teachers as Brothers of the Christian Schools.

If the letter of June 20th 1682 (LA 111) served as a proof to the contrary (one sees that it speaks simply of “school teachers of our Community”), the expression “Christian Schools” could come into use later. In any case, it has already been proved that the “Christian Schools” of De La Salle were different from the Little Schools, the charity schools, parish schools, schools run by the writing masters. The difference was not sought for its own sake, but was the result of the fervent desire to serve effectively the children that came to the Brothers’ schools. In this sense, we can affirm that their originality was the reason for their success, but it attracted also the animosity of those who thought themselves hurt by them. Regarding the various categories of schools and teachers, see Henri BÉDEL, *Origins, Lasallian Studies 5*, p. 30.

<sup>26</sup> MR 194,1

<sup>27</sup> RC I, 4-5-6; MR 194,1 and 207,3.

your state you are required to teach the poor”; “Since it is your privilege to be employed in teaching, especially the poor”; “You know that your duty requires you to instruct the poor”; “you are in charge of the poor”; “It is your duty daily to instruct the poor...It is the poor whom God has confided to you, and to whom you are obliged to announce his word”; “Your ministry requires that you should devote yourself to the well-being of the poor, since it is your duty to instruct them”; “You are daily with the poor”; “You are successors to the apostles in their task of catechising and teaching the poor”; “Since the majority of your disciples are born poor”.<sup>28</sup>

In his writings, De La Salle never calls the pupils of the Christian Schools “indigent” or “destitute”. His statement that “the majority are born poor”, strictly speaking, is more exact than “only the poor come to us”. This explains the following obligation: “They shall manifest equal affection for all the pupils, more even for the poor than for the rich, because they are entrusted by the Institute much more with the former than with the latter”.<sup>29</sup> This is the explanation also for some of the persecution that De La Salle and the Brothers had to suffer because they did not close the doors of their schools to those who were not poor. Certain passages in the *Conduct of Schools* give the impression that some of the pupils came from quite well-off families.

The view that De La Salle and the Brothers had of these children was based on what others said or wrote, as well as on what they

saw themselves. Moreover, their view varied in depth, as can be seen from a rapid glance at some of De La Salle’s writings.

There are references to “disorder”: artisans and the poor love performances by mountebanks, clowns, tightrope-walkers, puppets...entertainment that respectable people consider indecent.<sup>30</sup> “Poor people who beg for alms during Holy Mass” break the third commandment of God; on the feast of St Martin, there is so much debauchery, because the poor have abused the solemnity which accompanies the great devotion people have to this saint.<sup>31</sup> RC 1,6 and MR 194 describe the disorder which is caused by the sons of artisans and the poor.

De La Salle does not seem to disagree with the social stratification of the day, with all its customs and practices. He finds it quite normal to write: “it would not be proper for a poor person to be dressed like a rich one” (could he, actually, sometimes?); “there are certain clothes...which almost everybody, except the poor can wear, although it seems more proper if artisans leave clothing made of broadcloth to persons whose rank is higher than theirs”.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> MF 80,3; 86,2; 96,3; 99,2; 101,3; 113,1; 132,2; 133,3; 143,2; 150,1; 153,3; 166,2; 173,1; 189,1; MR 200,1; 202,2.

<sup>29</sup> RC 7,14

<sup>30</sup> RB 154, 157

<sup>31</sup> DA 122; DC 188

<sup>32</sup> RB 60

Artisans and the poor are among those persons who can normally exempt themselves from observing the fasts prescribed by the Church: the former, because "their work is heavy", and the latter, because "they lack the necessary food" to have reasonable meals which would enable them to withstand fasting.<sup>33</sup>

Regarding education and religion, artisans and the poor "are usually little instructed", "most of them do not know their religion adequately"; salvation is something that, generally speaking, has little or no interest for the poor; the majority of them lack education.<sup>34</sup> In addition, earning their livelihood and that of their children occupies them all day long every day, most of the time away from home, and becomes for them a constant worry.<sup>35</sup>

Their ignorance and their absorbing occupations prevent them from instructing their children; their poverty makes it impossible for them to pay the teachers who could undertake this task for them. Even free schooling is not enough always to resolve the problem: the repugnance of the children (whom the parents idolise), the need to send them out to work as soon as possible, the fascination of earning some quick money, however little, are sufficient reasons for parents to withdraw children from school, even if they are threatened with the loss of their share of parish alms.<sup>36</sup>

The state of the children of the artisans and the poor deserves to be called "abandonment": "abandoned and very badly brought up from their earliest years"; "aban-

doned to themselves"; "abandoned almost necessarily"; "they are like poor orphans abandoned to themselves as far as the salvation of their souls is concerned". As a result, they live "on their own, going wherever they please, until it becomes possible to send them off to work".<sup>37</sup>

"The results of this condition are regrettable. These unfortunate children, accustomed to an idle life for many years, have great difficulty when the time comes for them to go to work. In addition, by associating with bad companions, they learn to commit many sins, which, later on, it is very difficult for them to stop committing, because of the deeply-rooted bad habits they have contracted over a long period of time", and which, as the Rule said, "are overcome...scarcely ever entirely, no matter what care may be taken to destroy them, whether by frequent instructions or the use of the sacraments".<sup>38</sup>

And so, with faith, De La Salle and his Brothers enter this world, fully conscious

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<sup>33</sup> DB 118; cf. DA 158; DC 186; GA\* 374

<sup>34</sup> RC 1,4; MR 193,2; CE 186-187 (the 1706 manuscript adds that sometimes they have no religion); *Rouen Memoir* CL 11,28

<sup>35</sup> RC 1,4; MR 194,1 and 193,2; *Rouen Memoir* *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Quotations in the two preceding notes. CE 186-187

<sup>37</sup> RC 1,6; *Rouen Memoir* 1c; MR 194,1; MD 37,3; CE 187 tell us that "the children of the poor do only what they want"

<sup>38</sup> MR 194,1; RC 1,6

of the wounds it bears. Following the example of many saints, they see in the poor “members of Jesus Christ”, “treasures of the Church...because they resemble Jesus Christ more closely”, “images of Jesus Christ”, or “living images of Jesus Christ, our Divine Master”;<sup>39</sup> or “Jesus Christ himself”, who accepts as being done to himself the good we do to the poor. The Brothers are called to recognise “Jesus Christ in the poor rags of the children you have to instruct: adore him in them”; to “look upon them as images of Jesus Christ”; to “honour Jesus Christ in their person”.<sup>40</sup>

This view, which faith alone can give, leads us to “honour the poor”, to “love them” with “sentiments of charity and tenderness”, to make ourselves similar to them, and to prefer them to the rich.<sup>41</sup>

Faith and charity stimulates action sustained by hope, so that the poor may become what they are called to be. It is of little importance if the only thanks we often receive is insults and persecution, for in this way we share the condition of the incarnate Word. The commitment to accomplish fully God’s work will produce good results, regarding both the social advancement of the pupils and their salvation.<sup>42</sup>

### Gratuitous schools

At the end of 1689, following a dispute with the parish priest of St Sulpice, in Paris, regarding the religious habit of the Brothers, De La Salle drew up a document defending the autonomy of his community regarding internal matters. This document,

which was written for the attention of certain members of the Paris clergy, contains the oldest description of the new community intended for outsiders. We know this document as the *Memoir on the Habit*. In one of the first paragraphs it affirms: “The members of this community keep schools<sup>43</sup> gratuitously, in towns only”<sup>44</sup>.

The Brothers’ Rule begins with the following words: “The Institute of the Broth-

<sup>39</sup> Master (maître) means also Lord or patron.

<sup>40</sup> MF 80,3; 96,3; 133,e; 150,1; 154,1; 173,1; 192,2;

<sup>41</sup> MF 80,3; 86,3; 96,3; 101,3; 133,3; 143,2; 150,1; 166,2; 173,1; 179,1; 189,1 RC 7,14

<sup>42</sup> MF 86,3; 120,3; 155,3; MR 194,1; 207; 208; CE 187: “how important it is for an artisan to know how to read and write, since even if he is not very intelligent, if knows how to read and write, he can do everything”.

<sup>43</sup> Others before me have found it difficult to translate “tenir les écoles gratuites”; “tenir les écoles gratuitement”; “tenir les écoles par association”. The form used varies and is not fixed. For example:

a) Common Rules and Constitutions, Rome, 1947: “tenir les écoles gratuitement” (keep schools gratuitously) on page 3 and 31, but “tenir ensemble et par association les écoles gratuites” (to keep together and by association gratuitous schools) on page 205.  
b) GALLEGO 2: the same variations on pages 138, 149, 725, but “maintain schools by association” on page 682.

c) The AEP translation has even greater inconsistencies, with “regir las escuelas gratuitamente”, “dar clase gratuitamente”, “dirigir la escuela gratuitamente” simply on pages 206-207.

Because of this, I have included (in the Spanish original) the original French expression, at least when dealing with the time of De La Salle.

<sup>44</sup> MH 3

ers of the Christian Schools is a Society in which profession is made of keeping schools gratuitously". Later on, the same principle is restated: "The Brothers shall everywhere keep schools gratuitously; this is essential to the Institute", and the Rule specifies that text books will be supplied to pupils at cost price, ink will be free, and that the Brothers will not receive either from the pupils or their parents any money or presents, however small, on any day or occasion whatever.<sup>45</sup>

In the meditation for December 31st, the Founder invites the Brothers to examine their consciences regarding the following: "Have you received anything from your pupils? You know that this is by no means allowed. If you fall into these faults, your school would no longer be a free school... your teaching must be gratuitous; this is essential for your Institute".<sup>46</sup>

In its turn, the *Rouen Memoir*, which begins by speaking about the beginnings ("Monsieur de La Salle ...conceived a plan to establish schools in which the children of the poor and artisans would be instructed free of charge...), goes on to say that the "Brothers bind themselves by vow to keep schools by association and gratuitously, not accepting either money or presents from the parents of the pupils".<sup>47</sup>

These texts, written for the Brothers and for outsiders, made the position clear regarding gratuity both for the Brothers, and the persons or institutions which had recourse to their services. This last point was very relevant, because De La Salle almost never

took the initiative to open a Christian School. Almost always, he restricted himself to providing Brothers when requested to do so by parish priests, bishops, civil authorities or charitable associations.

In the course of time, these schools multiplied, but not at a spectacular rate. Following the foundations in Rheims (1679, 1680) and Rethel (1682), the schools in Guise and Laon, which depended on Adrien Nyel, were added in 1685. There followed long years of crisis and consolidation of the community. De La Salle accepted new works in Paris only after 1688. In 1699, however, there began a period of expansion, with the Brothers settling as far North as the Channel, and as far South as the Mediterranean: Chartres (1699), Calais (1700), Avignon and Troyes (1703), Darnétal, Rouen and Dijon (1705), Marseille (1706), Mende and Alès (1707), Grenoble and St Denis (1708), Moulins (1709), Versailles and Boulogne (1710), Les Vans (1711).<sup>48</sup> In 1719, the Brothers had one or several gratuitous schools in 21 towns in France. In addition, from 1709 onwards, Brother Gabriel Drolin was in charge of a pontifical school in Rome.

There were also other places where the Brothers had schools, but which did not survive long. This was the case in Château Porcien, Valréas, Mâcon, and perhaps Brest.

<sup>45</sup> RC 1,1; 7, 1.10.11

<sup>46</sup> MF 92,3

<sup>47</sup> CL 11, 128-129

<sup>48</sup> Dates taken from GALLEGO I, 606-612.

They no longer existed by the time the Founder died. Immediately after 1719, the Brothers took over schools in Saint Omer (1720), Auxonne and Nogent le Rotrou (1723). In addition to schools for children, there are two other gratuitous works opened by the Brothers in response to the educational needs of working class people, which deserve special mention.

The first of these was the Sunday School or Christian Academy which, at the request of the parish priest of St Sulpice, began functioning in about 1700 in the novitiate house in Paris. Young people, who were already working, would spend a couple of hours on Sunday afternoon learning reading and writing and, if they had already mastered these, arithmetic and technical drawing. All received also religious instruction. This school, which had up to 200 students, closed its doors in 1704, a loss that Paris felt for a long time.<sup>49</sup>

The other work came into existence earlier. In about 1686, at the request of the Duc de Mazarin, De La Salle began a training scheme in Rheims for teachers destined for rural areas, where there were no Brothers. A few years later, this initiative was described in the *Memoir on the Habit*, in the following terms: "Schoolmasters are trained there for rural areas, in a house separated from the community and called a seminary. Those who are trained there remain only a few years until they are completely trained in piety and professionally.

"Their clothing is no different from what is worn normally in the world, except that

it is black or at least dark brown, and they look different from other lay people only because they wear a rabat and their hair is shorter.

"They are taught to sing, read and write perfectly, they have free accommodation, meals and laundry, and a job is found for them as clerics<sup>50</sup> in some village or small town; and once they take up employment, they have no further contact with the community except what courtesy demands. They do, however, return for retreats"<sup>51</sup>.

After a very successful beginning, this seminary – the first teacher training college for lay people in the history of education, unless proved otherwise – closed down at some uncertain date, possibly in 1691, through a lack of candidates or support. Started up again in Paris in about 1699, it once again produced excellent results under the competent direction of Brother Nicolas Vuyart. A mistaken decision on his part in 1704 led to the closure of the seminary. The third attempt (1709-1712) was linked from beginning to end with the sad "Clément Affair", and was unfortunately the last.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> GALLEGO I, 319, 372-374; BLAIN I, 389-390; BLAIN 2, 10, 302; MAR 205-208; MAC 81-83, 99

<sup>50</sup> Teachers and assistants of the parish priest.

<sup>51</sup> MH 4-6

<sup>52</sup> GALLEGO I, 196-198, 219, 231, 313-315, 432-436, 468-472, 477-480, who refers to the sources and, in this case, criticises them. See also Yves POUTET: *Une institution franco-canadienne...* in CL 48, 310-325. The Institute had to wait a further century before undertaking a similar project: in 1829, it was asked to run the teacher training college in Rouen.



Contemporaries had no doubt at all about the real gratuity of these schools.<sup>53</sup> Those who suffered most from their existence – the writing masters and the teachers of the Little Schools – based their complaints rather on what they considered to be excessive gratuity in the Brothers' schools: De La Salle and his Brothers accepted everyone as non-fee paying pupils, without checking who could pay and who could not. The Guilds considered this to be unfair competition, and used this to justify their attacks against the Brothers' community, especially in Paris, but also in other towns. Blain states unequivocally that the "vested interests and jealousy of the profession mobilised against the Brothers the mercenary teachers who saw with resentment that others, through pure charity, did much better the work they themselves did through self-interest".<sup>54</sup>

The dispute ended up in the law courts on more than one occasion. In 1690, the teachers of the Little Schools obtained a favourable judgment from the precentor Claude Joly, but De La Salle won his appeal to the Parlement. They renewed their attacks in 1698 with no greater success.<sup>55</sup>

Everything became more difficult for the new Institute after 1704. The parish priest of St Sulpice, under whose jurisdiction most of the Brothers in Paris worked, no longer looked on De La Salle with favour. Other parish priests in the capital preferred not to confront the Guilds. Without their support, De La Salle had no legal protection. His enemies knew this and became more bold. The teachers of the Little Schools went to the

precentor with their accusations, and the writing masters to the Prefect of Police. To the usual accusation (that of accepting pupils who could pay), there was now added that of extending the curriculum to subjects not allowed in charity schools (and they were right, if we think of the Sunday School). In both courts, the plaintiffs won their case without any difficulty. The appeals made by De La Salle served only to drag out the case for two years, and to no purpose. At the beginning of 1706, a judgment from the Parlement of Paris, condemned him on all counts, and with him the Brothers. He lost the right to make others teach, and to establish communities for whatever purpose and under whatever name. In addition he was fined and had to pay costs. The parish priest uttered some threats which changed nothing. It was only when the Brothers, tired of all this chicanery, carried out their threat to withdraw from the schools, that he recovered some of his

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<sup>53</sup> When the teachers of the Little Schools, during the 1698 trial, insinuated that the Brothers made their pupils pay or received something from them, they condemned themselves, because De La Salle challenged them to quote a single case where this had happened, and in this way called their bluff.

<sup>54</sup> BLAIN 1, 70

<sup>55</sup> But in the transaction between the Precentor and the parish priests of Paris in 1699, it was established that in charity schools only the really poor pupils, recognised as such by the parish priests and listed on the relevant register, would be accepted. De La Salle was always unhappy, and with good reason, about these restrictions. Regarding these trials, one can read GALLEGRO 1, 228-230 and 308-309.

former pugnacity and faced up to the teachers. Even if the the arrangement which resulted did not satisfy the Founder entirely – because the doors of the charity school would no longer be open to all – at least it enabled the poor to return to school. However, only those who could produce a certificate from the parish could attend parish schools.<sup>56</sup>

The difficulties encountered by De La Salle and the Brothers in Paris were the worst. In other places, their opponents were more accommodating or weaker, and the new schools settled down more quickly to a peaceful existence, although there were always some problems. It can be said, therefore, that, even though he was not entirely safe from further attacks, De La Salle had finally won his victory by making people accept the principle – or at least the fact – of the complete gratuity of his schools. The question will come up again from time to time in the course of the history of his Institute, and we shall return to it as the need arises. However, even now we can establish a number of points: 1° that the Lasalian decision to admit all pupils free of charge comes from a realistic view of the concrete situation of the day; 2° that it is fully in agreement with the evangelical message of the gratuity of Redemption; 3° that it contributed, however modestly, to the democratisation of schools.

In addition to his work for the working classes, and almost as one of its consequences, De La Salle found himself involved in providing a service for the young

people of a different economic and social level.

The first instance of this occurred in Paris in 1698. At the request of the archbishop, De La Salle agreed to provide accommodation in the novitiate at la “Grand’Maison” for 50 or so<sup>57</sup> young Catholic Irish nobles, whose families had followed King James II into exile in France. According to the biographers, De La Salle himself took responsibility for the formation of these young people, helped by a Brother. They tell us that the King and the archbishop visited the house to make sure that the young men were being well educated and had appropriate accommodation, and that during their visit they warmly congratulated the Founder. They add that, in a short time, the pupils were ready to fulfil honourably the duties that awaited them.<sup>58</sup> They do not say how long this formation lasted. Nor do they explain how the extra expenses were met - the ordinary budget could not have covered them. We have to suppose that the royal palace or persons close to it played a decisive role in this matter.

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. GALLEGO 1, 374-376 and 408-413, which refers to the sources. POUTET 2, 122-130: opposition of the Guilds to the Brothers of Rouen, Chartres, Dijon and Avignon.

<sup>57</sup> This is what the first biographers affirmed, and so it has always been repeated. At present, there are those who doubt the accuracy of this figure which appears high

<sup>58</sup> BLAIN 1, 367-369; MAC 86-87; MAR 130-132; GALLEGO 1, 310-311.

The second was centred on St Yon and continued developing till the French Revolution. In the middle of 1705, De La Salle brought the novices to the outskirts of Rouen. Convinced by the insistent suggestions of friends and the need for a source of income for the novitiate, he accepted into the house a group of boarders, sons of bourgeois families, mostly involved in commerce. In addition to accommodation, the young men were given instruction much more advanced than that of the gratuitous schools. The success achieved with the first group of clients attracted others. Some parents had difficult children and they entrusted their re-education to the Brothers. The house served also as a place of confinement for persons detained by "lettre de cachet". None of the three groups was composed of the poor, in the economic or general sense of the term: the fees were paid by the families or the State. In any case, these were categories of persons not catered for by the educational structures in force at the time.<sup>59</sup>

### **Demanding schools adapted to needs**

#### *Time*

In the Christian Schools, "the children are under the supervision of the teachers from morning till night", they are "kept together all day long...and are always occupied". School work occupies three hours in the morning, from eight till eleven, and three and a half in the afternoon, from half past one to five. The daily timetable includes Mass, catechism, prayers, hymns, reflections.<sup>60</sup> There are no recreations.

A normal week has five days of class: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. If one of these days is a feastday, there is class on Thursday. Sundays and holydays of obligation are also well-filled: High Mass in the morning and catechism and vespers in the afternoon.

The school year is very long, lasting from October 1st to August 31st. The month of

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<sup>59</sup> Is it possible to know how many boarders there were at St Yon? In a letter included in BLAIN 2, 275 (LI 120), sent from St Yon between May 26th and June 13th 1718, De La Salle is indicated as the only confessor for 50 persons. So, if all the boarders were "confessable" – and there is no guarantee they all were – they would be fewer than 50, because in the same house there were also Brothers, novices (apparently few) and aspirants (not many). Cf. *The Letters of De La Salle*.

The same biographer gives other information also. 1° During the last two days of the Founder's life, there were about 80 persons living at St Yon, almost all of whom had De La Salle as their confessor (BLAIN 2, 169). 2° A few years later, when Blain was writing his biography, there were usually more than a hundred persons living at St Yon. In this number he included by name all the different groups present in the house: the three categories of boarders, the novices, the Serving Brothers, the Brothers who worked for the Institute as a whole. And after all that, he added that the number of persons at St Yon had increased by two-thirds since the death of the Founder (BLAIN 2, 33f).

For its part, the Italian edition of the Letters, in its commentary on letter 120, speaks of almost 300 boarders (*Le Lettere*, Roma, Città Nuova, 1993, p.360). My inclination, however, is to think that such a high number could have been reached only a long time after the death of the Founder.

<sup>60</sup> RC 27,17, 24-26; CL 11,129.

September is a holiday. In addition, there is a break from Holy Thursday to Easter Sunday, and very few other days are free.

With a timetable such as this, the Thursday break and the September holiday were not much of a comfort for the teachers. During the holidays, the Brothers made an 8-day annual retreat. Their journey to the retreat and back to community was done on foot and could take a number of days. When a Brother was changed (he travelled on foot and without luggage), it was quite possible for him to begin the new school year without having recovered from the fatigue of the previous one.

### *Curriculum*

The Rule gives a summary of it, and the *Conduct of Schools* provides the details. The Brothers teach their pupils reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic. Their main task, however, is to teach them their prayers, the commandments of God and of the Church, the Holy Mass, the catechism, the duties of a Christian, the maxims of the Gospel.<sup>61</sup>

In response to the real and concrete needs of their pupils, and unlike the current practice of the age, the Brothers began the teaching of reading in the mother tongue<sup>62</sup>. When they could read well in their own language, the children learned to read Latin, with the help of the psalter. Later they learned to read Gothic script<sup>63</sup>, and the highest level they reached was the reading of manuscripts.

When the pupil reached the point where Latin reading was taught – or before, if he was 12 years old and it was feared he would

not stay much longer at school – he was taught writing, beginning with the round hand, and then going on to the bastard or italic. The spread of the art of writing, made accessible to everyone, did not fail to cause great consternation at the end of the 17th century.

Parallel with the teaching of writing – one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon – there were courses in the rudiments of arithmetic, which were basically the 4 mathematical operations.<sup>64</sup> The exercises used the monetary system of the time: one livre was worth 20 sols, and one sol 12 deniers. Not much time was spent on this: only half an hour on Tuesday and Friday afternoon.

Spelling was linked with writing through copying exercises, composition and dictation on practical cases connected with the crafts or on the teaching of catechism.

All this knowledge, elementary, but relevant, is not what is most important: the “first and principal concern” of the teachers is the religious formation of their pu-

<sup>61</sup> RC 7, 4-5; CL 11,129

<sup>62</sup> BLAIN I, 375f; AEP 218f. [English trans. 63f]

<sup>63</sup> As can be found in many editions of RB, beginning with the first: CL 19 (but the use of these characters in works of a similar nature is much older. Cf. CL 48). They were called also “courtesy script”.

<sup>64</sup> The 1706 manuscript of the *Conduct of Schools* offers an even more extensive programme: The Inspector will put into the 5th Order of arithmetic, pupils who, having completely mastered division, “can learn the rule of three, integral factors and fractions” (CE 270).

pils. The means to achieve this are not lacking: half an hour of catechism every day - which becomes an hour on the eve of holidays, and an hour and a half on Sundays and feasts; Mass every school day; on Sundays and feasts, Mass in the morning and the liturgical office in the evening; morning and evening prayers; daily reflection; examination of conscience at the end of the day; recalling the presence of God at the hour. In addition, there was a form of permanent intercession: the pupils took turns to recite the rosary in a place set aside in the school for this purpose. Prayers were rehearsed during lunch; passages from pious reading books, sentences from the Bible or other pious books were used in writing exercises; summaries of the catechism were used as composition and spelling exercises...The Lasallian school was permeated with the teaching and practice of Christianity.<sup>65</sup>

### *Organisation*

There were also other characteristics which distinguished these schools which were so adapted to the needs of their clientele.

Generally speaking, the sons of the artisans and the poor could not devote many years to their schooling. The years they spent in school, therefore, had to be fully exploited. As a result, the approach adopted ensured that every pupil was constantly working: each pupil had a specific task to accomplish, adapted to the standard he had reached, under the direction of a teacher who

had to supervise simultaneously a large number of pupils, all involved in different activities (the classes taught by the Brothers were usually very large, too large, in fact). So many different details required organisation that could plan for all possible contingencies. Each class was divided up into homogeneous sub-groups. Pupils were asked to collaborate, and were given as many responsibilities as possible for the service of their companions. A harmonious equilibrium was established between incentive and punishment. The promotion of pupils to a higher level was frequent and well organised. And silence was much observed!

Well-behaved groups and the uninterrupted, silent and carefully graded work were the characteristics which struck most forcibly the occasional or permanent witnesses of how the Brothers' schools functioned.

### *Schools preparing pupils for life*

By bringing all these different factors together, De La Salle offered an intensive form of schooling to the children of the artisans and the poor. It was such that it made it possible for them to lead a simple

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<sup>65</sup> The *Conduct of Schools* notes, among other things: "The second book that will be used in the Christian Schools will be a book of Christian instruction" (p.33). The book of *Christian Politeness*, used for reading Gothic script "contains all the duties of children towards God and their parents, and the rules of civil and Christian propriety" (p.39-40). On Biblical maxims, CE46; on catechism summaries, CE 73-74.

hardworking life, which would give them a place in society and in the family of the children of God.

The desire to be of service to people who would have to earn their livelihood by working, and who would have no other opportunity of being instructed,<sup>66</sup> conferred on this schooling an eminently practical character. Reading and writing have as their content what the pupil will need in his everyday life. The teaching of catechism uses the text adopted by the diocese, and so prepares the ground for the catechetical teaching given by the parish; and this teaching is reinforced by reading exercises and composition. Reading is used also to teach good manners. Arithmetic trains pupils to use all operations necessary for current commercial transactions. Spelling and composition familiarise the pupils with the various levels of language an artisan is expected to use. The Christian Schools do not wish to change the social class of the pupils, but to enable them to live with dignity as craftsmen or workmen.

To learn to live with dignity, because from the very outset the dignity of the pupil was recognised. Pupils in a Brothers' school found themselves in a school that was demanding, but which was there to help them. All attention was really focused on them. Everything was organised to help them to make progress, and they were able to see the progress they were making. Frequent changes of "Lessons" showed them they could surpass themselves, and that their efforts were recognised and bore fruit. The "Registers" that the teachers had to fill in

and keep up to date bear witness to a very scrupulous attention to the individual pupil. The different "offices" entrusted to the pupils highlighted and developed their ability to shoulder responsibilities and to render service. The treatment the pupil received from the teacher was permeated with respect and love. And even the punishments he earned for himself – and some were corporal – were administered to him in an atmosphere of great respect and only with a view to his advancement.

As a result of such treatment, the artisans and the poor could be led to believe in a God of love and hope. The mystery of salvation explained to them in catechism and other forms of instruction, and celebrated in prayer and the liturgy, they could experience personally "from morning till night" in the fraternal company of their companions and under the fraternal guidance of their teacher.<sup>67</sup>

If we take the text of Meditation 194, we can see the full extent of the meaning of the expression "to proclaim the Gospel": for these children of the artisans and the poor, and for their parents, the "Good News" is

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<sup>66</sup> And if there is a rich pupil in the gratuitous schools who is following the studies, he must not be treated in a way that is detrimental to the poor who make up the vast majority. BLAIN I, 375.

<sup>67</sup> AEP 200-244 [47-90]. The educational service of his Institute obliged De La Salle to write a great deal. Everything that he wrote has not been preserved. For the best-known works, see for example, GALLEGO 2.

that the children spend their mornings and afternoons at school (and not all day in the streets); that in these schools they are looked after (instead of being left to their own devices); that they are permanently occupied (and not given to vagrancy); that they acquire knowledge useful for their lives as workers and Christians (instead of learning to commit a multitude of sins); that they adopt habits which will make them do their job well when their parents send them off to work (so that it is not too difficult for them to become accustomed to working). Proclaiming the Gospel is all that, it is not only teaching catechism. It is all that, an integral part of one's life, and not simply a memorised concept. These are the "such great advantages" that God offers the children through the ministrations of the teachers. This is what makes teachers followers of St Paul – who preached the Gospel free of charge – when they do so with dedication and disinterestedness.

### *Schools run by professionals*

The educational vocation of De La Salle was awakened by persons who were already involved with schools. Adrien Nyel is a fine example of a Christian layman, totally dedicated to his work as a teacher. It was De La Salle, however, who was the first to succeed in establishing a stable community of men, consecrated to God for the service of Christian Schools for the working class, and with no other ambition. And he himself quickly realised, he had to promote it from

within, and devote to it all his talents and all his time.<sup>68</sup>

The Community was called the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and defined itself as "a society in which profession is made of keeping schools gratuitously". From the Lasallian point of view, this profession includes and unifies at least two aspects: the first, pedagogical and catechetical work in the service of the poor; and the second, the evangelisation of this work so that it can be pursued as a ministry. The community is the place where the Brother receives his pedagogical formation, and where his work is evangelised. The exercise of this profession, and the formation for it, take up the whole day and every day.

It is hardly necessary to speak of the pedagogical formation of the Brothers: begun in the novitiate and continued without a break in the form of ongoing formation, its overall results were very positive, even though the means used were modest. The public never ceased to admire the devotedness and methods of the Brothers.

Less known, but more worthy of admiration, is the spiritual nourishment that De La Salle offered his teachers. It was so rich, that they failed to appreciate it fully. The entire life of these Christian teachers had to be motivated by the faith they wished to

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<sup>68</sup> Strictly speaking, De La Salle does not limit his activities to schools. His biographers emphasise his ability to bring about the conversion of heretics or sinners, as well as his skill as a spiritual director.

communicate, and by the zeal to do so. The fact that they were Christian teachers encompassed their whole life, requiring them to witness to the transforming power of the Gospel which must also transform the lives of their disciples. Their zeal was the ardent desire to see these disciples become truly the sons of God, and citizens of the Kingdom to which God called them.

For those who saw things in this way and lived accordingly, gratuitous primary schools for the service of the poor, with all their limitations and their poverty, with all those things that could inspire disgust and repugnance, with all that was thankless and exhausting about them, were sacramental places, that is, places which were signs of the mediation and effective presence of God the Saviour.<sup>69</sup>

Two Lasallian texts illustrate what we mean. In the meditation for Christmas Day, De La Salle begins by pointing out that the poor – the shepherds – recognise the poor and humble child as their Saviour. He then goes on to say: “Nothing so attracts souls to God as the poverty and humility of those who try to lead them to him...Rest assured that, so long as you have a sincere love for poverty and for all that is humiliating, you will produce fruit in souls; that the angels of God will make you known and will inspire parents to send you their children to teach; that by your instructions you will touch the hearts of these poor boys, and that the majority of them will become good Christians”. The situation of the Brother is that of the poor and humble Jesus in the

manger, and thanks to his resemblance to Jesus, he represents and exercises the same ministry of salvation, as the same paragraph goes on to affirm: “But if, on the contrary, you do not resemble Christ at his birth by these two outstanding virtues, you will be little known and little employed; you will be neither loved nor appreciated by the poor, and you will never be for them a saviour, as your profession requires, for you can attract them to God only in so far as you resemble Jesus at his birth”.<sup>70</sup>

In the meditation for the feast of the Epiphany, we are shown the faith of the Magi: they arrived in Bethlehem in search of a king, and yet they recognised him in the unregal-looking child, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a stable manger, and being suckled by his mother. They prostrated themselves before him, venerated him as their king, and adored him as their God. It was faith that had deeply penetrated their mind that had led them there. “You should learn to recognise Jesus beneath the poor

<sup>69</sup> AEP illustrates this perfectly. All that remains is to recommend it to the reader.

<sup>70</sup> MF 86,3. I think that not enough attention has been given to this Meditation, in which “poor” is understood to mean “without importance”, and since the whole meditation is said to have constituted a talk given by De La Salle “to the community of St Yvon in the emotional context of the birth of Christ” (*Lasallian Themes* 2, article on Poverty). In addition to “poor” and “poverty”, De La Salle uses also in this meditation “abjection” and “abject”, the strength of which should be assessed in terms of the age and not according to the criteria of today.



rags of the children you have to teach. Adore him in their person. Cherish poverty and honour the poor, after the example of the Magi, for poverty should be amiable in your eyes since you are engaged in instructing the poor. Faith should lead you to acquit yourself of this task with zeal and affection, since the poor are the members of Christ. By this means, our Divine Saviour will take pleasure in being with you, and you will find him, for he always loved poverty and the poor".<sup>71</sup> These are the poor seen with the eyes of faith, and they constitute for the Brother a sacrament of Jesus Christ. They are in the manger, they are kings, they are

Jesus. It would be difficult to express in stronger terms the dignity of the poor.

The first text presented the eminent dignity of teachers. The two texts express forcefully how the teaching relationship is where, practically speaking, for both pupils and teachers, their Redemption takes place, where they enter into God's universal and eternal Plan of Salvation. The meeting in school between the poor teachers and the children of the artisans and the poor, becomes a sign and the means for everyone to meet God.

### 3. THE VOW OF TEACHING GRATUITOUSLY

These professional exponents of Christian education for the working class reached a point when they made gratuitous teaching the object of a vow which characterised them. In what follows, we shall limit ourselves to describing the birth of this vow with its curious origin and its turbulent history. We may have to return to some of the things we have already said.

#### DURING THE LIFE OF THE FOUNDER

##### **Gratuity in the *Rule* and other writings**

The writings of De La Salle, as we have already seen, contain a certain number of allusions to the gratuity of schools, but they say little about vows, and nothing about a vow of teaching gratuitously.

From 1681 onwards, De La Salle lived with a number of teachers. The group took "the form of a community". There exists only indirect information about the internal

life of the community. The first document contemporary with the facts described, that has come down to us, is the *Memoir on the Habit*, written in the period 1689-90. In the space of eight years, the community had forged an identity for itself of which it was clearly conscious: "This community calls itself normally the community of the Christian Schools and at present is established and

<sup>71</sup> MF 96,3

founded only on Providence. Its members observe a rule, they are dependent in all things, have no property and they live a life of total uniformity.

“Its members conduct schools gratuitously in towns only, and they teach catechism every day even on Sundays and feast days”.

Membership of the community is shown by association with this group of men (and acceptance by it), a group raised up and sustained by divine Providence, a group in which everything is shared, in which all live in a strict and regulated uniformity and exercise a precise social and ecclesial profession. The external sign of this membership is a “strange” habit, which is neither clerical nor secular. There is no mention of vows.

In 1694, in circumstances which will be described later, De La Salle submitted a text of the Rule to the Brothers’ Assembly which approved it. No copy of the 1694 Rule has survived, but the 1705 text must be very similar.<sup>73</sup> Certain definitions from it found their way into the 1718 Rule. The ones that follow have already been quoted: “The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a Society in which the profession is made<sup>74</sup> of keeping schools gratuitously”; “The Brothers shall everywhere keep schools gratuitously; this is essential to their Institute”.<sup>75</sup> The economic aspect of gratuity is expressed in few lines, but clearly: “They shall not receive, either from the pupils or from their parents, any money or presents, however small, on any day or occasion whatever”.<sup>76</sup>

The whole Rule speaks of a Society with a clearly defined identity, solicitous to evangelise the life of its members and to train them professionally, and with very strong internal bonds. It illustrates and implements the affirmation: “Its members observe a rule, they are dependent in all things, have no property, and they live a life of total uniformity”; or “the exercises of the community and the employment in schools require the whole man”.<sup>77</sup> The Rule shows how this Society lives, describes in detail each and every day, its focus on Christian schools for the working class, its “profession to keep schools gratuitously”.

<sup>73</sup> Complete text in CL 25

<sup>74</sup> “To make profession” here does not mean to make vows, but to follow a profession, a status, a commitment one has made. An interesting comparison can be made between MH 3 and RC 1,1. In the first, “Teaching gratuitously” constitutes the Brothers’ work, employment; in the second, it is the profession they pursue. It is quite legitimate to make this comparison. The Brother “professes” a “craft, profession”. This does not seem to correspond with an affirmation in Gallego 2,11 (“The religious professes his state”).

<sup>75</sup> RC 1,1; 7,1: In the 1705 version, this second text comes immediately before article 11, which is more logical. The chapter begins as follows: “The Brothers will keep schools in all the houses of the Institute except in the house of the novitiate” (CL 25,34), a proof that there was a difference between “school house” and “novitiate house”.

<sup>76</sup> RC 7,11 “not even a pin”, specifies the 1705 Rule. The 1718 Rule leaves out this detail.

<sup>77</sup> MH 2,10. The version I give of paragraph 10 (in Spanish) may be linguistically incorrect, but to translate “demandant un homme tout entier” (require a

But in the 1705 version of the Rule, the word “vow” does not appear. In its eyes, all the Brothers are equal, equal in everything and, in concrete terms, in the “profession of keeping schools gratuitously”. It is only in the 1718 Rule that a difference is established (beyond the grave!) in the suffrages, according as the deceased Brother had made perpetual or triennial vows, or none at all.<sup>78</sup> It contained also the formulas for the renewal of vows. This equality in everyday life, without reference to vows, is a constant feature of De La Salle’s writings. This takes nothing away from the commitment made, which remains valid, even if it becomes necessary to “live on bread alone”.

The 1718 Rule includes the “ten commandments proper to the Brothers” which were already present in the Collection of Small Treatises. The third commandment stipulates: “With ardent zeal your strength employ, in teaching gratis, youth, with joy”<sup>79</sup>.

There are a few allusions to gratuity in the Letters. On August 28th 1705, De La Salle wrote as follows to Brother Gabriel Drolin in Rome: “I don’t like these Saturday morning offerings of money<sup>80</sup> received from the students. Even though you don’t benefit from them, they somehow don’t fit in with our schools”. On November 26th 1706, he writes to him again (Drolin does not yet have a papal school) and asks him: “But does no Italian say anything about the gratuity of your school? Doesn’t that fact draw public attention to you? Doesn’t anyone ask you what you live on? Who enables

you to run a school free of charge like that?” Towards the end of his life, he wrote to an unnamed person at St Denis: “Permit me to say say, Sir, that you were clearly ill-informed when you were told...that I sent teachers into towns and villages to teach children. It is true that I have begun to train Brothers to run schools gratuitously, but I gave up directing them myself a long time ago”<sup>81</sup>.

The longest texts regarding this subject are in the Meditations. They are not numerous, but very dense. Some of them have already been quoted, but we cannot discard them. De La Salle wrote them or revised them during the last years of his life.

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whole man) by “exigent un hombre entero y verdadero” or “un hombre cabal”, seems to me to change the idea. De La Salle means that community exercises (not only the prayers) and school work require the whole Brother, without leaving him the possibility to devote himself to other things, especially, to a clerical career.

<sup>78</sup> RC 23,7, 10-14. The difference had already been established in the “Practice of the Daily Regulation” in the 1713 version. (CL 25, 84-86).

<sup>79</sup> RC 16,8; R 5, CL 15,5.

<sup>80</sup> These “quadrins” (offerings) were the five “quattrini” (small coins) paid by the pupils. Brother Drolin handed them over to the “maestro del rione”, which enabled him to run an annexe for his school.

<sup>81</sup> LA 18,7; 25,6; LI 117, 1-2. There is another textual allusion, if we want: on February 11th 1705, De La Salle tells Gabriel Drolin to send his letters to him via Avignon, addressed to “My Dear Brother Albert, in the gratuitous schools, near St Symphorien, for Monsieur De la Salle” (LA 16,2).

The children of the artisans and the poor often live abandoned and this has disastrous consequences: "God has had the goodness to remedy so great a misfortune by the establishment of the Christian Schools, where the teaching is offered free of charge and entirely for the glory of God, where children are kept all day and learn reading, writing and their religion. In these schools the children are always kept busy, so that when their parents want them to go to work, they are prepared for employment. Thank God that he has had the goodness to call upon you to procure such an important advantage for children. Be faithful and exact to do this without any payment, so that you can say with St Paul: "The source of my consolation is to announce the Gospel free of charge, without it costing anything to those who hear me".<sup>82</sup>

MR 207 often uses the verb "to instruct" or its derivatives, and associates it with "gratuity". After recalling that St Paul found all his consolation in his preaching of the Gospel, he says to the Brothers: "Oh, what glory is yours to have this kind of identity with that chosen instrument! With joy, then, say as he does, that the greatest cause of your consolation in this life is to announce the Gospel free of charge, without it costing anything those who hear it. It is indeed a great honour for you to teach your disciples the truths of the Gospel solely for the love of God".<sup>83</sup>

The Meditation for the feast of St Cajetan offers a compact summary: "It is impossible for you to push disinterestedness too far

in your employment, for you are in charge of the poor. Instruct them by your example. Teach them to love poverty by practising it unselfishly as far as God may require. You know, moreover, that you are held to teach gratuitously, and to live on bread alone rather than receive any retribution. Be on your guard, therefore, never to accept anything either from the pupils or from their parents".<sup>84</sup>

The Meditation for December 31st proposes a sort of examination of conscience on regularity: "We may fail in regularity either in the house, outside, or in the school". The third point asks: "Have you received

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<sup>82</sup> MR 194,1. In the second point the word "instruct" appears.

<sup>83</sup> MR 207,2. There are three other uses of the word "instruct" in the same point, and two others in the third. In the latter, the Brothers' schools seem to be especially linked with the artisans and the poor. A comparison between the two texts quoted could be interesting. The similarities and the differences are revealing.

<sup>84</sup> MF 153,2. In the second point, the regularity and disinterestedness of the Brother are added as being of benefit to the children: "They are the two means by which to achieve great results in the work for souls. By regularity of life 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".

Is this a disguised quotation – perhaps not so disguised – from the formula of the vows? The texts as a whole suggest rather that the vows specify and reinforce what the Community expects and demands from all its members, with or without vows.

anything from your pupils?”, and he cuts off any chance of escape by saying: “You know that this is by no means allowed. If you fall into such faults, your school will no longer be a free school...and your teaching must be gratuitous; this is essential for your Institute”.<sup>85</sup> Gratuity is not a question of vows, but of regularity, the same for everyone.

### The vows

Fairly soon, however, De La Salle and some Brothers began to bind themselves by a temporary vow of obedience, which they renewed, if they wished, every year.<sup>86</sup> It was a private vow which added nothing to the Rule nor retracted anything from it. The gratuity of teaching was a matter of Rule and was part of something in which all the Brothers were equal.

November 21st 1691 was a decisive date in the history of the Community. Among the various means employed to overcome a crisis that was particularly acute, long-lasting and widespread, and which threatened to destroy the work, De La Salle and the two Brothers whom he thought most worthy of trust, pronounced what we now call the “heroic vow”.<sup>87</sup> It was a vow of “association and union”, whose purpose was to consolidate the establishment of the Society. The means which the contracting parties obliged themselves to employ were “we promise to do, unanimously and with common consent, all that we will think, in conscience and without any human consideration, to be for the greatest good of the said

Society”. This will be the practical way of consecrating “all our power and all our efforts” in this undertaking. They do not draw back at the prospect of a situation in which “there remained only three of us in the said Society and we were obliged to beg for alms and to live on bread alone”. The vow has no time-limit: the three together and individually commit themselves to the project till its accomplishment or till their death made it impossible.<sup>88</sup> The project was the

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<sup>85</sup> MF 92,1,3. In the first part of the third point, the word “instruct” appears twice. Have they taken care to ensure their disciples have been instructed in their religion? Have they not read works that are different from those read by the children they are charged to instruct? Practically every sentence in the meditation refers to an article of the Rule.

<sup>86</sup> MAURICE AUGUSTE: *Les Vœux des Frères*...CL 2 12-36; cf. CL 11, 49. GALLEGO 1, 183-186; Luke SALM: *Lasallian Themes* 2, article on the “Vows”. 1686 is considered to be the most probable year for the making of the first (annual? Triennial?) vows of obedience. If it is difficult to follow Blain in his choice of date (1684), how can we accept that the Brothers made vows of obedience, stability in the Society and teaching gratuitously? (BLAIN I,236)

<sup>87</sup> See the appendix following this chapter.

<sup>88</sup> I understand “entière consommation” (total consummation) as “complete accomplishment”, which seems to describe the act more accurately than “total extinction”, as it has been translated sometimes. According to the *Lasallian Vocabulary*, the Founder uses the word “consummation” 6 times in his writings: five of the times express clearly the idea of “perfection”, “crowning”, and the sixth, the “consummation of the centuries”: Jesus present in the Eucharist until the consummation of the centuries, which also is a crowning.

establishment of the “Society of the Christian Schools”;<sup>89</sup> this was the same society that, almost two years before, the *Memoir on the Habit* had called the “Community of the Christian Schools”, which was founded solely on Providence, and whose members were employed in teaching gratuitously in towns, and teaching catechism.

The vow was secret and concerned no one else but them, and the three knew clearly what they had committed themselves to without any need of further explanation. In the years that followed, their efforts and the action of God’s grace brought about the consolidation of the Society, which enabled the three associates of 1691 and ten other Brothers to pronounce perpetual vows of association, stability and obedience on the feast of the Most Blessed Trinity, June 16th 1694. The formula they adopted on this occasion<sup>90</sup> has been justifiably venerated ever since in the Institute, and has served as a model for all those that have been used subsequently.<sup>91</sup>

It began by the expression of total consecration to the Most Blessed Trinity; it continued with a paragraph in which were specified the vows of association, stability and obedience; and concluded with a summary which recalled these vows and stated the duration of the commitment (in this case, for life). These were vows which had their

<sup>89</sup> The word “Society” appears five times in the formula. As there is no doubt about the authenticity of the text, nor about its Lasallian paternity, it is useful to bear this mind when reading CL 11, 51, note 4.

<sup>90</sup> For the text, see the appendix at the end of the chapter. In the Generalate Archives one can find:

1° The autograph formula used by De La Salle on June 6th 1694 (Autograph letters, frame 21).

2° A copy-book containing the 13 formulas of the same day (BJ 543/1 dossier 1).

3° In the same copy-book, 23 other formulas of perpetual vows pronounced between May 25th 1695 and June 7th 1705.

4° Autograph formulas of triennial vows (September 25th 1716) and perpetual vows (September 29th 1717) of Brother Irénée (BJ 504 dossier 3).

5° Formula of renewal of vows (May 23rd 1717) signed by Brother Barthélemy and 16 other Brothers, members of the General Chapter which had just been held. (Missing: Brother François) (BJ 504 dossier 5).

6° Another formula of renewal (June 12th 1718) signed by the Holy Founder, Brother Barthélemy and six other Brothers (BJ 504 dossier 9).

7° The formulas of renewal of vows of School and Serving Brothers, included at the end of RC, (BO 751/3 dossier 5).

8° After the death of the Founder, but before the Bull of Approbation, the formula of renewal of vows (May 23rd 1723), signed by Brother Timothée and 5 other Brothers (referred to by CL 3,23. The change of place and classification in the archives lost me, hence the lack of reference).

<sup>91</sup> With variants. The most important before 1725 are: 1° Those who make their vows after June 6th 1694 do not name each of the other Brothers and limit themselves to the general statement: “I promise and vow to unite myself and live in society with the Brothers who have associated themselves ...”.

2° Two individual formulas and one collective one (the renewal formula of the Serving Brothers) omit more or less completely the “to keep together and by association gratuitous schools”.

3° None of the formulas after 1705 (in the 11-year period up to 1716, vows were made but we do not have the formulas) includes the section which speaks of “begging for alms and living on bread alone”.

origin in the everyday life of this Community, integrated fully in the real world, and not inspired by some general theory of religious life.

The body of the formula consists of a long sentence which begins with the mention of the vows of association and stability (“to unite myself and live in society”) and concludes with the vow of obedience (“obedience to the body...and to the Superiors”). The sentence states the following:

1. The REASON for such a stable and compact association, which it specifies in terms of two possibilities: (a) “to conduct together and by association gratuitous schools”, wherever this may be, and even if they had “to live on bread alone” in order to do so; and (b) “or to do in the said Society whatever I shall be assigned, either by the body...or by the Superiors”.

2. But the REASON for the obedience is also given: the Brother does not choose what he does, nor where, nor how: it is the Society of the Christian Schools which chooses, as a body, or through its Superiors.

We can say, therefore, that whatever a Brother does, or wherever he does it, he remains associated with the other members of the Society, and remains united with them in the degree that, in what he does or where he does it, he remains obedient to the body of the Society and to its Superiors. In other words, obedience to the body of the Society and to its Superiors is a sign that he is and remains associated with the other associates.<sup>92</sup> The Society in question is that of

the Christian Schools, whose members are associated to keep gratuitous schools. Even if certain members of this Society do other things, all contribute to the existence and work of a Society totally dedicated to gratuitous Christian education for the working class.

### The obligations of the vows

From 1694 onwards, an increasing number of Brothers bound themselves by vow to the Institute. They needed to know clearly to what they were committing themselves. The earliest explanation we know of “the obligations of the vows of the Brothers of the Christian Schools” is to be found in the *Collection*.<sup>93</sup> We can make the following observations:

\* If there are three vows, their obligations are spread over four articles: the first refers more directly to association; the second and the third to stability, which includes the Society and the schools; and the fourth specifies who must be obeyed.

\* If the formula of vows speaks of gratuitous schools, the explanation omits “gratuitous”: schools are referred to twice, but there is no mention of gratuity.

\* This explanation had a long life, even after the Bull of Approbation made another explanation necessary. In the *Collection*, it

<sup>92</sup> This presentation of the formula of vows is barely grammatical. To appreciate its spiritual dimension, see, for example, AEP 287-305 [137-150].

<sup>93</sup> R 2.4. CL 15, 4-5. For the text, see the appendix at the end of this chapter.

was replaced only in 1783, but even then, the 1811, 1819 and 1823 editions returned to the 1711 text.

\* Even stranger: “to beg for alms and live on bread alone”, an expression which, at the beginning of the Institute, referred to a distinct possibility, was retained in all the editions of the *Collection* up to and including 1886, while it never appeared in the Rule, and disappeared from the formula of vows after 1705, or at least before 1716.

However, at some time, the Brothers began to realise that their formula of vows implied gratuitous teaching. The oldest evidence for this that we have at present, is the explanation written on the back of Brother Irénée’s formula of perpetual vows (September 29th 1717), written in his hand.<sup>94</sup> In charge of the formation of the novices at St Yon, and subsequently and simultaneously Assistant to the Superior General, Brother Irénée had a great influence on the Institute. His explanation deserves some attention.

The title “The obligations of the vows of obedience, stability and keeping gratuitous schools by association” is expanded in four paragraphs: “By the vow of obedience, one promises to obey...”; “By the vow of association with the Brothers who have associated themselves...”; “By the vow of teaching children gratuitously, one promises ...” “By the vow of stability...”. If we analyse the text, we find that it has a clear affinity with the *Collection*. The differences are no less evident. The efforts of the author to obviate any temptation to indulge in casu-

istry reveal a certain embarrassment in his attempts to remain faithful to what he has received and the desire to be clear and precise.

According to the title of the text, there are three vows, but the main body of explanation mentions four, each with its respective obligations (the *Collection* is less peremptory). When the vow of association is mentioned, the total dedication of the Institute to gratuitous schools is specified: all the Brothers are associated to support it either by teaching, or by serving those who teach. The perception of this solidarity is not lacking in importance.

The greatest novelty lies in this vow to teach gratuitously. On the one hand, it appears as an aspect of association. The preceding paragraph explains the “vow of association with the Brothers who have associated themselves to keep gratuitous schools”: this idea will have great importance in the centuries to come. On the other hand, it is concerned with more than gratuity: the first article speaks of the necessity of teaching “carefully”.

This last aspect seems to indicate that the whole paragraph is a gloss on the third commandment of the Institute: careful and gratuitous teaching for all pupils, without distinction between rich and poor. This is what

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<sup>94</sup> For the text, see the appendix at the end of this chapter. The original is in the Generalate Archives (BJ 504 dossier 3). Text and commentary in CL 2,62-72 and CL 3, 20-21.



the Institute had done in the decades since its establishment, and what it explained in its legislation. In what the master of novices of St Yon writes <sup>95</sup>, there is no trace of any kind of embarrassment at the presence of fee-paying boarders in the same house. In his eyes, there was no contradiction between this fact and the profession the Brothers made of “teaching gratuitously, which is essential for the Institute”, and which he (and very probably other Brothers with him) considered to be the object of the vows pronounced by the Brothers.

### IN THE PROCESS TO OBTAIN THE BULL OF APPROBATION

After the death of De La Salle, the Brothers began the process of obtaining official recognition for the Institute from the King and from the Pope. Negotiations speeded up when Brother Timothée became Superior General in August 1720.

The Memoir mentioned earlier was one of the elements in the process. Written by the Brothers between October 1720 and February 1721 <sup>97</sup>, it was addressed to the civil authorities of Rouen. It speaks of the vows of the Brothers in the following terms:

“(The Brothers) commit themselves by vow to obedience, stability and to keeping schools gratuitously and by association, and do not accept money or presents from the parents of the pupils... <sup>98</sup>

Because of the vow of teaching gratuitously, when Brothers are asked to come to a small town, a sum of about 200 livres per Brother per year must be allocated to them”.

The explanation does not include the phrase “to beg for alms and to live on bread alone”, which does not figure either in Brother Irenée’s vow formula, nor in those that follow. <sup>96</sup>

A detail which is significant: if the date that is generally attributed to this text is correct (between September 29th 1717 and October 1718), its author had ample time to discuss it with the Founder himself.

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<sup>95</sup> It is not absolutely sure that he was master of novices when he wrote this text, but it is most likely. One of two documents dated June 1718 names him as Master, and the other as Director of novices (GA, CC 200/1 dossier 1 and BJ 504 dossier 9. Letter LI 14, not very flattering, refers to him. The explanation itself would make more sense if its author had the task of instructing others regarding this matter, something which was expected of a Master of novices (cf. Rule, 1726 edition, chapter 17, last paragraph).

<sup>96</sup> Rather than a lack of courage, the suppression was inspired probably by prudence, as a measure to avoid having the Institute considered as a new mendicant Order (cf. RIGAUT 2, 114, note 4).

<sup>97</sup> *Rouen Memoir*: text and dating in CL 11, 124-131. CL 2, 103.

<sup>98</sup> A confession. I have not seen the original, nor a photocopy of the document. The two transcriptions mentioned in the previous note have no comma after “stability”: obedience, stability in keeping schools...”. On the other hand, CL 11,191. with the obvious intention of correcting, gives: “obedience, stability (and) keeping schools...”.

If we take this letter literally, we understand from it that the Brothers make vows and that gratuitous teaching is an obligation in virtue of one of them. Compared with the language used by the Founder, this text reveals two novelties. In the Memoir, the vow to teach gratuitously appears in a sentence which, limiting itself to pointing out one of its consequences, leaves one to suppose that everyone was already aware of its existence and of what it entailed. If we take Brother Irenée's "explanation", the formula "to keep schools by association and gratuitously" leads us to distinguish between two vows: keeping schools by association, and teaching gratuitously. Gratuity is understood in terms of "not receiving money or presents from the parents of the pupils". This being so, the upkeep of the Brothers required the founders of schools to guarantee a minimum allowance, without extracting it from the parents of the pupils. Not receiving anything from the parents was already in the Rule, which forebade also receiving anything from the pupils themselves. From the expression: "I vow to unite myself and live in Society with...to keep schools gratuitously" there was a shift to the point where three vows were now distinguished: stability, keeping schools by association, teaching gratuitously.

In line with all preceding documents, this Memoir extends gratuity to all pupils without exception. It considers it to be an integral element of the desire to serve the poor which inspired De La Salle from the very beginning of his work. The text begins by

speaking of De La Salle's compassion for the children of the artisans and the poor; it mentions the establishment of the schools in which these children would learn the first rudiments and receive a Christian education; finally it describes how some young men joined De La Salle and consecrated themselves entirely to their care, that is, it describes the foundation of the Institute. This was an Institute which "proved to be so useful in the Kingdom, that (the Brothers) were invited to numerous towns, being already established in 22 towns of the Kingdom, and in addition to the novitiate house of St Yon".<sup>99</sup> It is not difficult to see similarities with the first chapter of the Rule.

The *Rouen Memoir* enables us to gauge the tone of the first documents submitted in Paris and Rome with a view to obtaining the recognition of the Institute. What follows is a summary of the negotiations which took place with the Holy See. We shall pay special attention to the vicissitudes of the vow of gratuity.<sup>100</sup>

The Brothers took the first step in 1721, putting their trust in the friendship and supposed influence in Rome of Cardinal Gaston

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<sup>99</sup> Boarders are mentioned also. One cannot accommodate them in school buildings without the express permission of the Superior, but one can in the novitiate house or in another house set aside for this purpose.

<sup>100</sup> Detailed history in CL 11, with all the documentation and bibliography. On the vows, see also CL 2, 106-130. All that is said in these pages comes from these two sources.

de Rohan, and in his secretary at the conclave, Canon Jean Vivant. This first step, which was intended to be a short-cut, immediately became bogged down in the bureaucracy of the Eternal City.

In 1722, normal channels were followed and, before August 8th of that same year, the negotiator Joseph Digne submitted a properly drafted petition to the Datary and a dossier which included:

a) An introduction which spoke of the compassion of John Baptist de La Salle for the children of the artisans and the poor, and of the foundation "for the glory of God and the service of the poor"<sup>101</sup> of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, already established in many dioceses in France;

b) The "Constitutions" according to which, it was assured, the Brothers have lived and continue to live. They were now submitted for approval and endorsement by the Holy See. There were 18 articles, of which the following are of particular interest to us:

1° That, founded under the protection of the Most Holy Child Jesus and the patronage of St Joseph, the Brothers must above all take care to instruct children, especially the poor, in all that is necessary for them to lead honest and Christian lives;

5° That the said Brothers teach children gratuitously and do not receive money or presents offered by the pupils or their parents.

6° That they always keep the schools by association, and there must always be at least 2 in each school.

9° That the vows of the Brothers are chastity, poverty, obedience, stability in the said Institute, and teaching the poor gratuitously. These vows should be simple, dispensation from which is reserved to the Sovereign Pontiff.

17° That the Brothers not only teach children reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic, but they also put Christian and evangelical precepts into their hearts; that they teach them catechism for half an hour on non-feastdays, for an hour and a half on Sundays and holydays of obligation; and that on these same days they take them to church to assist at Mass and at evening offices; that they teach them how to say morning and evening prayers, and inculcate into them the commandments of God, the precepts of the Church, and the other things necessary for salvation".

c) The "petition" and the "clauses". In these are requested the approbation of the Institute and the Rules, the ratification of the goods already acquired by the Institute and those it will acquire, and all the privileges it desires.

d) A "summary" in large handwriting at the bottom of the page. Often, this is the only thing read by the examiners involved, and so it includes items that will impress them most. Here also, Digne mentions five vows which he calls "simple".

This Petition was not the invention of the Rome intermediary. He simply gave it a

<sup>101</sup> "Ad Dei laudem et pauperum levamen".

form that made it more acceptable to the Curia, but the contents were supplied by his correspondent in Paris<sup>102</sup>, who himself had received them from the Brothers. In the final analysis, the Petition expresses the will of the Brothers.

When we examine the document called the "Constitutions", we see that, while the 5th, in accordance with the Rule, maintains the universal character of gratuity, the 9th designates the fifth vow as being "to teach the poor gratuitously". This restriction which, announced already by the phrase "especially the poor" in the 1st Constitution, appears here for the first time, and will cause a great many problems for the Brothers in the centuries to come. The 6th Constitution consecrates "keeping schools together and by association" but this is not given as a vow of association. With time, that too would have its consequences. Constitution 17 repeats what is said in RC 7, 4-5-6, even if it forgets that catechism lasts an hour on the eve of holidays.

From the Datory, our Petition was passed on to the Sacred Congregation of the Council, whose zealous secretary asked for a copy of the Constitutions. Later, it was realised that what he wanted was the certification of these Constitutions by the bishops who knew the Brothers. The Superiors of the Institute quickly took the matter in hand, and by the end of October they were able to send off to Rome the certifications and recommendations of various French prelates who attested that these were in fact the Rules to which the Brothers had been and continued to be

faithful. Together with these documents was included a copy of the 18 Constitutions of the Petition, with a few slight alterations. The 9th, however, included a significant modification: the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously had well and truly disappeared.<sup>103</sup> The modification could not have been made without the knowledge of the Brothers, but that is all we know.

The episcopal approbations are incorporated into the dossier, but the text of the Petition remains unchanged. The process could have gone forward, but it came to a standstill. There are some indications that the French ambassador was responsible for this halt.<sup>104</sup> It was only on July 28th 1724 that the dossier was passed on to Cardinal Lorenzo Corsini for his perusal. He was asked to make a report to the Congregation of the Council, and to add his own personal view.

Four months later,<sup>105</sup> on November 22nd, His Eminence considered that his work was completed. His report mentioned the four vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and stability; he praised them for being "sim-

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<sup>102</sup> "Banker at the Court of Rome" is his official title.

<sup>103</sup> Comparison of texts: CL 11, 172. See also 188-193.

<sup>104</sup> Explicitly in BLAIN 2, 191; cf. CL 11, 239-244.

<sup>105</sup> In the meantime, on September 28th, the Institute acquired its legal status in France through Letters Patent. This removed the obstacle which could have strengthened the opposition of the French ambassador.

ple”, and declared he could find no obstacle to the approbation of the Institute and of its Constitutions.

With this backing, the dossier was sent to the “Congressus”, or plenary meeting of the cardinals of the Congregation of the Council which was fixed for Saturday December 16th, 3.0 pm. The agenda was impossibly full: in addition to “major” matters, there were 140 “minor” matters awaiting the decision of the cardinals. Among these, the 123rd on the list, there was the matter of the “Brothers of the Christian Schools” (but not even named as such). There was no need to devote much time to them: the wish of the proposer, a gesture or a few words of recommendation from Cardinal de Polignac <sup>106</sup>, were enough to secure the approbation without any objections.

### AFTER THE BULL “IN APOSTOLICÆ DIGNITATIS SOLIO”

The Institute received the pontifical document with great joy, considering it as a confirmation of what was, and in the form in which it was. As far as the vows were concerned, it made the necessary changes, which it did not consider fundamental. The Bull, the Brothers thought, did nothing more than approve what was already done and practised in the Institute.

The formula of vows continued to say: “...and for this purpose, I...promise and vow to unite myself and live in society with...”, and to conclude in the following words: “Wherefore, I promise and vow poverty, chastity, obedience, stability in the said So-

Everything points to the fact that the cardinals did not know what they were approving. In any case, no one pointed out the discrepancy regarding the vows between the Petition and the rest of the dossier.

Under these conditions, the Petition was submitted for the signature of the Pope, “si placuerit”. On January 26th 1725, Benedict XIII wrote in the middle of the sheet: “Fiat ut petitur”, followed by the initials V.M., and a little lower down “Fiat V.M.” once again <sup>107</sup>. The Institute now had the papal approbation it wanted.

There remained only the office work of transcribing the Petition in the form of a Bull. The former mentioned 5 vows, so the latter approved 5 vows, “non obstantibus... contrariis quibuscumque”.

ciety and to teach gratuitously, conformably with the Bull of Approbation...” The concluding summary mentions the same vows with a slight change in the order, but maintains “teach gratuitously”, whereas the Bull says “to teach the poor gratuitously”: article 5 of the papal document does not limit gratuity.

<sup>106</sup> He was the new French ambassador to the Holy See, and a member of the new Congregation of the Council, and this was the first time he attended one of its meetings (Congressus).

<sup>107</sup> V.M. are the initials of his religious name as a Dominican: Vicente Maria.

The *Collection* keeps the previous text, without any modifications, on the obligations of the vows, limiting itself to adding the following: "The Holy See, by granting the Bull to the Society, has obliged the Brothers to make vows of poverty and chastity, whose obligations are indicated in the chapter of the Common Rule which deals with the obligations of the vows".

The Rule, printed for the first time in 1726, adds a section on the vows: the new chapter 17 begins with: "The Brothers of the Christian Schools make perpetual vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, stability in the said Institute, and of teaching gratuitously". It is not said that these are simple vows, and gratuity is not limited to the poor.

Chapter 18: "The obligations of vows", is also new. The obligations of the 5th vow occupy two paragraphs:

"By the vow of teaching children gratuitously, and keeping schools by association, one promises to take all possible care to teach the children well; to bring them up in a Christian manner; to put to good use all the time allocated to this subject; not to ask for nor accept any remuneration from their pupils or their parents, either in the form of presents, or for any other reason at all; and not to use the parents of pupils to do work, in the hope they will do it without asking payment for it.

"By the same vow, one promises again to keep schools by association with the Brothers assembled for this purpose, wherever one may be sent, or to do any other

thing the Superiors assign one to do, as is expressed in the formula of the vows."

The influence of Brother Irenée's Explanation on these paragraphs is very obvious. In his text, it was the vow of gratuity which came under the umbrella of association. After the Bull, it is association which is attached somewhat awkwardly to the vow of teaching gratuitously.

From a casuistical point of view, the Brothers had before them a number of different texts written under a variety of circumstances. They considered them all very valuable and they tried to keep them without changes, presuming they were identical. In reality, the Bull, the Formula of Vows, the Rule and the *Collection*, and especially these last two, transmitted messages that were not exactly identical. It was only half a century later that an attempt was made to unify them.<sup>108</sup>

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One could consider – but not in absolute terms – that the foundation process of the Institute began with the meeting between John Baptist de La Salle and Adrien Nyel in 1679, and ended with the 1726 edition of the Common Rules. The year 1679 was open to all possibilities: by 1726, all, or almost all, the "yesses" and "noes", essential for the new Institute had been pronounced. "Yes"

<sup>108</sup> The complete text can be found in an appendix at the end of this chapter.

to working class schools, to gratuity, to catechesis in school, to association, to the lay state, to towns; "yes" to the training of lay teachers, to boarding schools; "yes" to novitiates, to ongoing spiritual and professional formation, to autonomous government; "yes" to working in schools, all day long and all one's life; "yes" to faith, to the saving work of the Church, through loyalty to the Pope and dependence on bishops; "yes" to the cohesion of a solidly-structured body.

"No" to the clerical state, to Latin, to refuge; "no" to the countryside and to the isolation of individuals; "no" to clerical dependence, and to parish or diocesan fragmentation; "no" to the separation of school and catechesis, to the discrimination between rich and poor; "no" to teaching as a part-time or temporary occupation, while waiting for a more worthy or better paid one.

The "new company" came into existence in the course of the brilliant but war-mongering reign of Louis XIV and of the turbulent Regency. In 1726, Louis XV, "King of France and Navarre", is barely an adolescent. The cold and the hunger of 1684-85, of 1692-94 and of 1709 were past history, as were also the euphoria and the disenchantment that accompanied John Law's System. The Lasallian Congregation had to contend with incomprehension, misunderstanding, tension and real persecution, in which were involved ecclesiastical authorities, magistrates, the police and the Guilds. To the ex-

ternal difficulties were added internal problems: jealousy, inconstancy, impulsiveness, narrow-mindedness, lack of virtue, deaths, illness, juvenile inexperience.

In 1726, all was not finished, but the Institute could consider itself to be well established. It seemed to be safe. It was clear about its spirit and its mission. It had the means to nourish the first and to develop the second. It proved its vitality and its cohesion when its Founder disappeared. It had obtained a legal status and ecclesiastical approbation. The thousands of children rescued each day and gratuitously from the streets were a proof of how effective total consecration to procure the glory of God could be in this world. The experience of these poor Brothers showed also, for the good of the Church, that the centuries' old task of providing poor and abandoned children with a Christian education could be dedicated to the glory of God. Seeking God's glory was possible through the competent and effective accomplishment of secular work.

Thus equipped, the Brothers of the Christian schools were in a position to render a useful service to the poor of all times, through Christian education; and, more immediately, to become the only body of people dedicated durably and exclusively to the education of working class boys in France during the period of the Enlightenment.

## APPENDICES

**1. Formula of the Heroic Vow** (BLAIN I, 313)

Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, prostrate with profound respect before your infinite and adorable majesty, we consecrate ourselves entirely to you to bring about, with all our power and all our efforts, the establishment of the Society of the Christian Schools, in the manner which will seem to us to be the most pleasing to you and the most beneficial for the said Society.

And for this purpose, I...We from now on and for always, till the last survivor or till the entire completion of the establishment of the said Society, make vows of association and union to bring about and maintain the said establishment, without any possibility of dispensation, even if there remained only the three of us in the said Society and we were obliged to beg for alms and to live on bread alone.

In view of which, we promise to do, unanimously and with common consent, all that we will think, in conscience and without any human consideration, to be for the greatest good of the said Society.

Done this 21st of November, day of the Presentation of the Most Blessed Virgin, 1691.

In virtue of which we have signed.

**2. Formula of the perpetual vows of June 6 th 1694** (Autograph of De La Salle, Generalate Archives)

Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, prostrate with the most profound respect before your infinite and adorable majesty, I consecrate myself entirely to you, to bring about your glory as far as I am able and you will require of me.

And for this purpose, I, John Baptist de La Salle, priest, promise and vow to unite myself and to live in society with Brothers Nicolas Vuyart, Gabriel Drolin, Jean Partois, Gabriel Charles Rasigade, Jean Henry, Jacques Compain, Jean Jacquot, Jean Louis de Marcheville, Michel Barthélemy Jacquinet, Edme Leguillon, Gilles Pierre et Claude Roussel, to conduct together and by association gratuitous schools, wherever this may be, even if I were obliged, in order to do so, to beg for alms and live on bread alone, or to do in the said society whatever I shall be assigned either by the body of the Society or by the Superiors who will direct it.

For this purpose, I promise and vow obedience to the body of this Society and to the Superiors, which vows of association and of stability in the said Society and of obedience I promise to keep inviolably all my lifetime.

In virtue of which I have signed.

Done at Vaugirard this Sixth of June, day of the feast of the Most Holy Trinity in the year 1694.

De La Salle



**3. The obligation of the vows of the Brothers of the Christian Schools:** Collection, 1711 edition.

“The vows oblige one to do four things:

1° To keep schools by association with those who have associated themselves with the Society and with those who will associate themselves later, wherever one may be sent, or to do any other thing that one may be assigned to do by the Superiors.

2° To remain stable in the said Society during all the time to which one has committed oneself, without being able to leave of one’s own accord, for any reason whatsoever.

3° If it happens that there is a lack of everything in the Society, never to leave it for this reason, but rather to resolve to beg and to live on bread alone, so as not to abandon the said Society, nor the schools.

4° To obey, in the first place the Superior of the Society who has been elected, and those who will be elected in the future. Secondly, the particular Directors who are or will be appointed by the Superior of the Society. Thirdly, the body of this Society, whether the body is represented by several Superiors or others, assembled in its name. One is obliged to obey all the persons mentioned above under pain of mortal sin, every time they command in virtue of the vows.

By the above vows, one promises all the above mentioned things under pain of mortal sin. From this it follows that, having made these vows, one cannot, during all the

time for which one has made vows, either leave, or to wish to leave totally of one’s own accord from the Society, or to wish to make oneself sent away, for any reason whatsoever, without violating one’s vows and committing a mortal sin and sacrilege”

**4. Brother Irenée’s Explanation** (Original document in the Generalate Archives. Edited text with commentary in CL 2 and CL 3).

“The obligations of the vows of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

What one is obliged to do by the vows of obedience and stability, and to keep schools gratuitously by association.

*By the vow of obedience*, one promises to obey:

1° The Superior of the Society and the one or those who will be Superior in the future.

2° The particular Directors who have been or will be appointed by the Superior of the Society.

3° The body of this Society, whether the body is represented by several, whether Directors or others, in its name. One is obliged to obey all those above under pain of mortal sin, when they command in virtue of the vows.

4° To be submissive to and united with the Brothers Inspectors or head teachers of schools, in accordance with what is indicated in a chapter of the Common Rule of the Institute which deals with the Inspector of Schools.

*By the vow of association* with the Brothers who have associated themselves to keep gratuitous schools, one promises:

1° To keep gratuitous schools by association with the Brothers assembled for this purpose wherever one may be sent for this purpose.

2° To be employed by the Superiors in the service of the Brothers who will keep the gratuitous schools, as is expressed in the formula of vows.

*By the vow of teaching children gratuitously*, one promises:

1° To take all the care possible to instruct children well, and to bring them up in a Christian manner, and to make full use of the time allocated to this subject, either in the house or in the school.

2° Not to demand nor to receive any remuneration either from the pupils or from the parents, either in the form of presents or for whatever other reason.

3° Not to employ pupils or their parents to do some work in the hope that they will do it without asking to be paid.

4° Not to buy goods from the parents of pupils, in the hope that they will sell them more cheaply than others.

*By the vow of stability*, one promises to remain stable in the said Society, for all the time for which one has made the vow and,

during this time, one cannot leave, nor wish to leave totally of one's own accord, nor wish to oblige others to send one away, for whatever reason, without violating one's vow".

### **5. Formula of perpetual vows for School Brothers** (Rules and Constitutions, 1726 edition, CL 25)

"Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, prostrate with the most profound respect before your infinite and adorable majesty, I consecrate myself entirely to you, to procure your glory as far as I am able and as you will require of me. And for this purpose, I...promise and vow to unite myself and live in Society with the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who are associated to keep together and by association gratuitous schools, wherever I shall be sent, or to do in the said Society whatever I shall be assigned, either by the body of this Society, or by the Superiors who have or will have the government thereof. For this purpose I promise and vow Poverty, Chastity, Obedience, Stability in the said Society, and to teach gratuitously, conformably with the Bull of Approbation of Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XIII, which vows of Stability and Obedience, whether to the body of the Society or to the Superiors of the Institute, as well as of Poverty, Chastity and teaching gratuitously, I promise to keep inviolably all my lifetime. In virtue of which I have signed".

**6. Formula of (perpetual) vows of Serving Brothers** (Rules and Constitutions, 1726 edition, CL 25)

Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, prostrate with the most profound respect before your infinite and adorable majesty, I consecrate myself entirely to you, to procure your glory as far as I am able and as you will require of me. And for this purpose, I...promise and vow to unite myself and live in Society with the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who are associated, to do in the Society whatever I am assigned, wherever I may be sent, either by the body of this Society, or by the Superiors who have and who will have the government thereof. For this purpose, I promise and vow Poverty, Chastity, Obedience, Stability in the said Society, conformably with the Bull of Approbation of our Holy Father the Pope Benedict XIII, which vows of Stability and Obedience, whether to the body of the Society, or to the Superiors of the Institute, as well as of Poverty and Chastity, I promise to keep inviolably for all my lifetime. In virtue of which I have signed”.

**7. The Obligation of the Vows** (Rules and Constitutions, 1726 edition, Ch.XVIII, CL 25). Chapter XVIII. The Obligation of the Vows.

1° The vow of poverty obliges one to divest oneself of all worldly goods and contains the promise made to God not to possess anything as one's own. Likewise, by virtue of this vow, one can no longer take

nor receive anything, whether to keep it or to use it, or to dispose of it in any manner whatsoever, without the permission of one's Superior.

2° The vow of chastity obliges one to renounce all the pleasures of the flesh, and to abstain from everything that is contrary to chastity, in thought, word, affections and actions.

3° By the vow of obedience, one promises to obey:

In the first place the Superior of the Society and the one or those who will be Superiors in the future.

Secondly, the particular Directors who have been or who will be appointed by the Brother Superior.

Thirdly, the body of the Society, whether this body is represented by several, either Directors or others, assembled in its name. One is obliged to obey all those above under pain of mortal sin, when they command in virtue of the vows.

Fourthly, one promises to be submissive to and united with the Brothers Inspectors, or the head teachers of schools, in accordance with what is written in chapter XI.

4° By the vow of stability, one promises to remain stable in the said Society for all the time for which one has made vows, and during this time, one cannot leave, nor wish to leave totally of one's own accord, nor oblige others to send one away, for whatever reason, without violating one's vow.

5° By the vow of teaching children gratuitously and keeping schools by association, one promises to take all the care possible to instruct children well, and to bring them up in a Christian manner; to make good use of all the time allocated to this subject; not to demand or receive any remuneration from the pupils or their parents, either in the form of presents, or for any other rea-

son whatsoever; not to employ the parents of pupils to do work, in the hope that they will do it without asking to be paid for it.

By the same vow, one promises also to keep schools by association with the Brothers assembled for this purpose, wherever one may be sent; or to do any other thing that one may be assigned to do by one's Superiors, as is expressed in the formula of vows.

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## CHAPTER 2

# THE CLOSING YEARS OF THE ANCIENT REGIME

### 1. THE 18th CENTURY

#### **A few major characteristics, especially in France**

After the bellicose reign of Louis XIV, Louis XV and Louis XVI ushered in a period of peace in France, a peace that was little disturbed by the Seven Years War and the help given to the Americans to win their independence. In both cases, battles took place outside the frontiers of France, and its territory was not invaded.

There was no doubt that climatic conditions were improving. Even if there were some very severe winters (1740, 1789), they occurred less frequently and their demographic impact was much less disastrous than in the previous century. The milder climate, together with other factors, contributed to agricultural progress in the country.

After the convulsions which accompanied the John Law experiment, there followed long years of monetary stability. The volume of internal and external trade increased, banks became more active and efficient, industry developed appreciably if not spectacularly, taking advantage of foreign technology and technicians. Paris became more and more the centre of the national economy; banks, industries and busi-

nesses were often linked by family ties; and the "captains of industry" were able to amass fabulous fortunes.

The contribution of the American colonies played an essential role in the development of trade, and, especially, of external trade: there was tobacco from Louisiana, and especially cotton and sugar from the West Indies. In 1763, France found the peace conditions imposed by England acceptable: it agreed to cede Canada ("a few acres of snow", as Voltaire called it), so long as it could retain Guadeloupe and Martinique. In Canada there were only native Indians and some whites, whereas in the West Indies, there was a working population of African slaves who were worth a fortune, whose upkeep cost practically nothing, and who had no rights.<sup>1</sup>

There was a political change too. If in the days of Louis XIV, one could say that the government revolved around the King, his two successors gave the impression that they were at the mercy of their ministers, or of their favourites. If under Louis XIV, deci-

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<sup>1</sup> Régine PÉRNAUD: *Histoire de la bourgeoisie en France*, vol. 2, p. 215-223.

sion-making functions were entrusted to the bourgeoisie, under Louis XV and Louis XVI, the nobles increased their power and took over once again the main posts in the government, and reserved for themselves the upper and middle ranks of the army.

Intellectual circles continued to be fascinated by "clear and distinct ideas". Reason, Science, Law, Nature, were the terms used to express great intellectual optimism. Nature was well made, according to Reason. It contained no errors. Natural behaviour obeyed constant Laws which Reason discovered, measured and expressed in formulas. This encompassed everything: the stars of the solar system were governed by Kepler's laws, the forces of gravity, by those of Newton; the electrostatic forces by the laws of Coulomb. It became possible even to measure something as intangible as the speed of light. There was a general certainty that everything would continue to progress: Science would eliminate Mystery. To God was left the task of being the Supreme Architect of the Universe: having set the world in motion, there was no need for him to concern himself about it. Thanks to natural laws, one should be able to explain not only physics and biology, but also human behaviour, economics and morality: an economy regulated perfectly by the laws of the market, and a morality freed totally of dogmas. "Clear and distinct ideas", "Numbers", "Laws", this was music to the ears of the bourgeoisie, a class that had its origins and development in the commercial and legal

context of the town. Poets were not prolific in the 18th century !

The work that epitomises this spirit is the *Encyclopaedia*, which sought to bring together all that reason had conquered up to that moment. Begun in 1751, it was completed in 1772, after many difficulties. In the matter of education there was an increasing demand for change. In his "Treatise on Studies", Charles Rollin took up the ideas of John Locke and Fénelon. His support for simultaneous teaching, and his preference for the mother tongue over Latin, reflected Lasallian practice.<sup>2</sup> Caradeuc de La Chalotais presented himself as the precursor of secular State education, or at least, of State education from which religious congregations were barred, because he considered them dangerous for the State. Jean Jacques Rousseau preached a return to nature. Educational thinking, in line with the interests of the times, proposed a type of education that was more useful; which gave more space to science, technology and civic instruction, and less to what was dogmatic, promoting a form of natural morality that was free of the dross of supposedly revealed truths.<sup>3</sup> In this context, the suppression of the Company of Jesus (1761-1763) was seen by the "philosophes" as a victory over the last great bastion of obscurantism.

<sup>2</sup> The "Prayer of the Teacher before School", which the Brothers knew well, would seem to come from this treatise.

<sup>3</sup> RIGAUT 2, p.416-426, 570-585.

## The poor

In this optimistic century, the word "happiness" represented the ideal of human life, a happiness which was easily identified with well-being and the sweetness of life. Reality showed, however, that this was reserved for only a few, and not always for those who deserved it.

A change in language when speaking of poverty, already begun earlier, became widespread in the 18th century. The concept of the "beggar" remained in force, with all the negative connotations that accompanied it: haughty, lazy, unproductive, insatiable. But this was precisely what the very rich were like, and it was said even that these roadside beggars were simply imitating, on a small scale, the example given by the rich on a grand scale. The "poor" person was something else: he was the rural (the majority) or town labourer, the producer of almost everything that society consumed or wasted, and of which he received only a small portion. He was the peasant who cultivated the soil of another, suffering for every penny he earned, obliged to pay tithes and all kinds of taxes, responsible for a large family, and at the mercy of the vicissitudes of the climate. He was the craftsman or worker who had to face increasingly difficult working conditions, and who was more and more dependent on his employer. The poor person was also the woman or child obliged to work for a salary, a prey to legislation which punished working men's associations and their claims.<sup>4</sup>

This poverty was not a marginal phenomenon, and its disappearance could not be foreseen within a reasonable period of time. It could no longer be hidden in hospitals, and it could not be identified with the few who received charity from parishes. It was the permanent situation of the majority of the population, nine-tenths, according to Vauban's calculation. If we parody the "clear and distinct ideas" we arrive at the following equation: poverty + multitude = the people, the humble and long-suffering producer of the nation's riches.<sup>5</sup>

It is certain that salaries rose between the beginning and the end of the century, but the rise in prices was even greater: the buying power of money had dropped so much that fixed wages had lost 25% of their value.<sup>6</sup>

There were well-off people who found all this perfectly natural and desirable. A case in point was an Englishman, Bernard de Mandeville, who stated quite clearly in a work translated into French and widely read, that he would have been very happy to live in pagan Rome with all its slavery. Since

<sup>4</sup> Pierre LÉON: *Morcellement et émergence du monde ouvrier*, from the "Histoire économique et sociale de la France", vol. 2, p.651-689.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Ph. SASSIER, *op.cit.*, p. 125-197.

<sup>6</sup> Pierre LÉON, *op.cit.*, p. 665-672: Without changing the nature of things, there can be variation in the assessment: "It has been proved that in the 18th century, the wages of the workers increased by about 20%, while the overall increase in prices was 50%. This led to a considerable fall in the standard of living" (Régine PÉRNAUD, *op.cit.*, p.231).

this was not possible, "in a free nation where it was not allowed to have slaves, the surest form of riches consisted in having at one's disposal a multitude of poor workers...To make society happy and ensure that individuals feel at their ease... a great number of people need to be ignorant as well as poor". The consequences are inevitable: "Every hour that poor children devote to their books is an hour lost for society".<sup>7</sup> These views were supported by others, with Voltaire at their head. What could be more pleasant for rich people than this justification of their well-being which, to cap it all, was passed-off as benevolence on their part: the luxury of the rich provided work for the poor who, in this way, could earn what was necessary to satisfy their simple needs and, in their own way, be happy also.

Rousseau felt he could not remain silent in the face of such cynicism: "Luxury feeds a hundred poor people in our towns and kills a hundred thousand in our countrysides. The

money which passes through the hands of the rich to provide them with superfluities is not available for the subsistence of the labourer, who has no clothes because the rich need their lace; the kitchens must have their sauces, and so many sick people cannot have broth; we must have vegetables for our meals, that is why the country drinks only water; we need powder for our wigs, and that is why so many poor people have no bread".<sup>8</sup>

Naked peasants, starved sick people, poor people without bread, a country reduced to drinking only water: what Jean Jacques writes is not all rhetoric. Bossuet and many preachers after him had condemned the oppression of the poor by the rich, but without much success, in a century which was becoming dechristianised and full of so much bad example. When the flood tide of the Revolution destroyed the wealth of the nobles and ecclesiastics, there was a good reason or, at least, a good excuse for it.

## 2. THE LASALLIAN INSTITUTE FROM 1726 TO 1777

These fifty years are characterised by a steady expansion of the Institute under the direction of three successive Superior Generals. After the death of Brother Barthélemy on August 7th 1720, Brother Timothée (1682-1752) was elected Superior. After being in office for more than thirty years, he resigned during the Chapter he had called for the purpose of electing his successor. This decision proved to be opportune since

Brother Timothée died five months later. Brother Claude replaced him (1690-1775). For twenty years, he had been Director of

<sup>7</sup> Quotations taken from Ph. SASSIER, *op.cit.*, p.164 and 140. Later on, we shall see how Granet, a Toulon official, bases himself on these texts to condemn the work of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Cf. RIGAULT 2, p.430-432.

<sup>8</sup> Extract from Régine PÉRONOU, *op.cit.*, p.263.



novices at Avignon. Sixteen years later, he too resigned, on May 18th 1767, during the General Chapter. His advanced age and his poor state of health made it impossible for him to continue as Superior any longer. The following day, Brother Florence was elected (1725-1800). Ten years later, he asked to be relieved of his duties, and his request was accepted.

### Expansion of the Institute

When De La Salle handed over the government of the Institute to Brother Barthélemy, the Brothers had schools in 20 or so towns. Sixty years later, they had schools in more than a hundred. Outside France, they had houses in the Papal States (Rome and Ferrara), in Switzerland (Estavayer), and had just taken over the Collège St Victor in Fort Royal, in Martinique.

Expansion did not take place at a steady rate: hardly noticeable up till 1727, it then speeded up spectacularly over the next 23 years – 68 foundations between 1728 and 1750 – and then it slowed down noticeably in the third quarter of the 18th century – 25 foundations between 1751 and 1777.<sup>9</sup>

There does not seem to have been any pre-established plan in the mind of the Superiors to extend the Institute to all parts of France: new foundations were made in response to requests, to the extent that Brothers were available and the towns asking for them met their minimum requirements. What usually happened was that the aims of existing Lasallian schools and the way they functioned would come to the notice

of some bishop, parish priest or leading citizen. They would see the advantage of having such schools and would try to have one in their own area. To bring this about, they would contact, as a last resort, the Superior General, who resided first at St Yon and then at Paris. They would obtain the authorisation of the local authorities<sup>10</sup>, including letters patent, and find the necessary funds. One or several Brothers, authorised to act in the name of the Institute, would sign the contract with the representatives of the population. Shortly after, the new teachers would begin their work. This was the pattern followed in dozens of cases, with some variation of details.

The service which the Brothers offered and which they committed themselves to provide, was always the same, with some reservations which we will see later. The schools were completely gratuitous, with at least two contiguous classrooms, offering programmes of study and methods proper to the Institute, as defined in the Rule and in the Conduct of the Christian Schools.

### For the service of the poor Requests for Brothers

The ecclesiastical and civil authorities who asked the Brothers to come, the pious

<sup>9</sup> Figures given by Br Pedro M. Gu. in his *Three centuries of Lasallian Identity*, p. 80-83. Even if the figures are not completely correct, they are sufficiently so not to invalidate the tendency indicated.

<sup>10</sup> At Nantes, the omission of this precaution caused problems later on. It was not perhaps the only case.

persons who provided property whose income would contribute to their upkeep, the bureaucrats who, in the name of the King, authorised the schools, all had in mind the school education of the poor. A quick glance at some archival material will serve to illustrate this.

At Bollène, in the Papal State of Avignon, a priest who was already involved in the education of poor girls, requested and obtained the opening of a Brothers' school for poor boys<sup>11</sup>. At Arles, "two noble citizens of the town, moved by reasons of charity, resolved to procure for the poor children of their town the invaluable benefit of a Christian education"<sup>12</sup>. The bishop of Mirepoix wished to have Brothers in his diocese after having seen their work in the parish schools of St Sulpice in Paris<sup>13</sup>. Cardinal Raniero d'Elci, who obtained Brothers for Ferrara in 1741, requested them because he had seen them at work in Avignon, and knew that the poor of his Legation would be well looked after by them<sup>14</sup>. Already during the life of De La Salle, the town of Le Puy had asked the Brothers to come to provide the boys of the indigent class with a service similar to that provided for girls by the Ladies of Instruction. It obtained them in 1741<sup>15</sup>. In the same way, the town authorities of Bordeaux, at the request of their archbishop, asked Brothers to come and to do what they had done in the parish of St Sulpice. In a letter to the Intendant, the bishop of Dax had words of praise for them: "Nothing is more effective for the instruction of the children of the common

people, who are the large majority of the population, in morality and religion, than the establishment of these good Brothers". For his part, Brother Claude, the Superior General, approved this desire to entrust to them "the education of the poor youth" of the town, and added that the work done by the Brothers, while great in the eyes of God, was insignificant and contemptible in the eyes of men<sup>16</sup>. In the case of Castres, a letter written by the bishop began with a description of the disorder caused by the children, and then went on to propose a solution: to call for the Brothers in whose schools rich and poor children sat side-by-side, because the schools were gratuitous<sup>17</sup>. When the town council of Chalabre accepted a bequest from a pious person for the poor, it realised that the majority of the children did

<sup>11</sup> Br THÉODOSE de JÉSUS, *Historique de la Province Méridionale*, part 1, p. 124f (GA, CJ 501/1, dossier 1; cf. CK 552/1, dossier 5).

<sup>12</sup> *Historique*, p. 206

<sup>13</sup> *Idem*, p. 226

<sup>14</sup> *Idem*, p. 219: More detailed treatment in Br EDGARDO, *Nota storica sulla prima fondazione di Ferrara*, RL, 1957, N°4.

<sup>15</sup> *Historique*, p. 242-243.

<sup>16</sup> *Historique*, part 2, p. 30-33, (GA, CJ 501/1, dossier 2).

<sup>17</sup> *Idem*, p. 95. We need to understand that when a foundation contract indicates that children of any condition can be admitted to the school, it means that the school is open to the poor, because it is they who lack one, and who can now frequent it because it is gratuitous. But there are many cases also in which priority for the poor is explicitly indicated.

not attend school because they could not afford the monthly payment of 40 sols demanded by the teacher<sup>18</sup>. The prelate who wished the Brothers to come to Aurillac hoped to remedy in this way the evil engendered by idleness and ignorance among the children of the working classes who did not attend school<sup>19</sup>.

Lasallian schools were established in St Malo thanks to an anonymous pious donor inspired by zeal for the education of the poor.<sup>20</sup> The town of Brest used the bequest of a naval officer to establish a community of the "St Yon" Brothers who taught young persons and the children of the poorer classes<sup>21</sup>. In 1762, a lady from Amiens wished to contribute, for the glory of God and as far as her possibilities allowed, to the welfare of the children of the artisans and the poor, by providing them with the education they lacked. As a consequence, she funded a third class in the Brothers' school, in which the two existing classes were overflowing with pupils of the same social class<sup>22</sup>. Auxonne asked for Brothers to teach reading, writing and counting to the poor of the town<sup>23</sup>. Even if the poor of the parish of St Michel in Dijon did not actually write the request for Brothers which was made in their name, the foundation contracts do not forget to stipulate that it is Brothers that are wanted to teach the poor from the various parishes of the town<sup>24</sup>. At Dole also, it was realised that the poor were not receiving any education, and so the authorities wished to found a school<sup>25</sup>. Cardinal de Bissy realised that the majority of chil-

dren in Meaux, and especially in the suburbs, were not being instructed because their parents could not afford it, and so he sent for the Brothers<sup>26</sup>. In Nancy, the contract dated February 10th 1751 stipulated in great detail, in article 2, that the Brothers were to admit into their 3 schools all the poor of the town and suburbs who applied, and only if there were empty places were they to admit better-off pupils, always preferring the more vulnerable to the more important. And if subsequently, more poor pupils applied, they were to be accepted and the richer ones were to be sent away, a procedure that was to be repeated as often as required<sup>27</sup>.

Sometimes, this priority which was so explicitly given to the poor led to the complete exclusion of the others. In 1750, Cardinal de La Rochefoucauld forbade the Brothers of Bourges from admitting into their schools pupils who did not have a certificate from their respective parish priests confirming their poverty<sup>28</sup>. More fre-

<sup>18</sup> *Idem*, p. 124-125

<sup>19</sup> *Idem*, p. 142

<sup>20</sup> "Les établissements des FEC en Bretagne et en Anjou avant la Révolution", anonymous manuscript, p. 292 (GA, CJ/502, dossier 1).

<sup>21</sup> *Idem*, p. 325; cf. CK 552/2, dossier 2.

<sup>22</sup> GA, CK 551/1, dossier 10

<sup>23</sup> GA, CK 551/2, dossier 11; dossier 13 says: "from the town and from the farms".

<sup>24</sup> GA, CK 554, dossiers 7 and 8.

<sup>25</sup> GA, CK 554, dossier 10

<sup>26</sup> GA, CK 562/1, dossier 13

<sup>27</sup> GA, CK 563/1, dossier 3.

<sup>28</sup> GA, CK 552/1, dossier 12.

quently, such action was undertaken by teachers' guilds or by the civil authorities.

### The service they actually gave

Praise for the Brothers' work came in two forms. It came in written form from the more cultured social circles, and in a more practical form from its direct beneficiaries.

The bishop of Mirepoix affirmed that the Brothers rendered a service by the Christian education they gave children, and especially the poor<sup>29</sup>. In 1759, the members of the Court of Nîmes certified that the establishment of the Brothers appeared to them infinitely advantageous for the education of children, and especially of the poor who could not attend private schools. This testimonial was supported by ecclesiastical dignitaries, town authorities and important neighbours<sup>30</sup>. A document with many signatures to convince the authorities of the need for a suitable building for the Brothers' boarding school in Marseilles gave the assurance that "the poor children who attended the Christian schools of this town made continual and considerable progress" thanks to the constant care lavished on them by the Brothers<sup>31</sup>. A lady from Rheims who gave the Brothers some land, did so "in consideration of the great fruit that the Brothers of the Christian Schools produced especially in Rheims, through the gratuitous instruction of poor children"<sup>32</sup>. In 1742, during the negotiations to establish the Brothers in Montpellier, the archdeacon received a letter from a canon of Arles, who said: "I think that this work is most essential and

can produce marvellous fruit: we have proof of this here every day. They have been here less than two years and our young children are almost completely changed: reading, writing, arithmetic, exercises of piety...in a word, I cannot praise them enough"<sup>33</sup>. The town council of Montauban evaluated as follows the result of bringing two Brothers to the suburbs of Villenouvelle: "The progress that this establishment has produced at Villenouvelle has been so noticeable, that in a very short space of time, we have seen, that the children entrusted to the care of the Brothers in charge of this new school, have been completely changed. The children have learnt to read and write very quickly, but what is most interesting, is that the Brothers take great pains to teach them the Catholic religion, to give them a taste

<sup>29</sup> *Historique*, part 1, p. 230. In 1757, the date of this document, the Brothers already had a small boarding school at Mirepoix..

<sup>30</sup> *Historique*, part 2, p. 16. A ruling made by the town authorities in 1770, asks parents who can pay for the education of their children not to send them to the gratuitous schools, because their children would take the places of the children who cannot pay. In the same document, the Brother Director is asked to keep a register of the children not admitted through lack of space, so that when places became free, parents could be notified by order of presentation (*Historique*, p.18). Worth noting is the word "private" used to indicate paying schools.

<sup>31</sup> *Historique*, part 2, p. 56; (cf. GA, CK 562/1, dossier 10).

<sup>32</sup> GA, CK 565, dossier 5, N°1.

<sup>33</sup> Br TEMPIER, *Notice historique...Montpellier*, 1853, ms., p.11, (GA, CK 562/3, dossier 3).

for virtue and a horror for vice, to inspire them with good morals and, in a word, to give them a good and holy education". As a result, the town decided to ask for more Brothers so as to extend their service<sup>34</sup>. Individuals or bodies who, having noted the first fruits of a Brothers' school, wished to contribute to its expansion, so that it could admit the masses of children who applied, expressed themselves in much the same way.

Praise from poorer classes comes mainly in the form of acceptance of the service offered. At a time when there was no legislation to impose compulsory education, the schools entrusted to the Institute were very often full. Chronicles describing the beginnings of various works, even if generally written some time after the event, cannot be lying when they repeat with boring insistence that, shortly after the arrival of the Brothers, the classrooms were no longer big enough to hold the great number of children who came flocking to their doors.

The regulation of the town council of Nîmes specifies that there will be two classes for learning to read, with a maximum of a hundred pupils in each, and three classes for writing. The first two of these cannot have more than 80 pupils, and the third, not more than 90 – even if there are people waiting outside!<sup>35</sup> Cardinal Elci who received two Brothers in Ferrara in 1741, asked for two more the following year and obtained them, so that the great number of candidates that applied could be admitted<sup>36</sup>. In Amiens, the two classes for the sons of the artisans and

the poor proved insufficient. A third was opened when a benefactress provided the necessary funds. In Auxonne, 250 pupils are crowded into 3 classes. The town refused to provide funds to enable another Brother to come to alleviate the situation<sup>37</sup>. In Brest, there were 500 pupils taught in four or five classes, and there were more than 150 on the waiting list<sup>38</sup>. In Mende, the classes were overcrowded because they attracted children not only from the town but also from the diocese<sup>39</sup>. In the parish of St Roch in Paris, a contract dated March 12th 1776, stipulated that the school, which had two classes for 150 pupils, would have three classes for 250.<sup>40</sup> At St Germain en Laye, three Brothers taught more than 300 pupils<sup>41</sup>. And so on.

A statistical table drawn up in 1779, shortly after the period that concerns us, although imperfect, corroborates this impression of overcrowded schools. Fewer than a dozen communities (or "houses", as they were called in those days), had the privilege of having an average of 50 pupils per class: those that had an average of 70 were legion. Among these, there were 16 com-

<sup>34</sup> Délibération du 10 mai 1744, copy in the GA, CK 562/2, dossier 12.

<sup>35</sup> See note 30.

<sup>36</sup> Br EDGARDO, *op.cit.*

<sup>37</sup> GA, CK 551/2, dossier 11 (1774.).

<sup>38</sup> GA, CK 552/2, dossier 8 (1768).

<sup>39</sup> GA, CK 562/2, dossier 4 (1763).

<sup>40</sup> GA, CK 564, dossier 8.

<sup>41</sup> GA, CK 567, dossier 5.

munities with 2 classes, 27 with between 3 and 5 classes, and 15 with between 6 and 13 classes. Quite often, the average number of pupils per class went into three figures: 100 at Nîmes and Fontainebleau, 102 at Cherbourg and Grenoble, 110 at Rouen, Bordeaux and Bourges, 111 at Chartres, 114 at Metz, 118 at St Omer, 120 at Lunéville, 124 and 147 in the 2 schools at Versailles<sup>42</sup>. Under such conditions, what did the teachers do? And how? What results did they obtain? Not everything is clear, but the fact of surviving was already something! What is not in doubt, however, is that those who attended these schools felt they were more fortunate than those who did not.

### **The clientele of the Brothers**

To what social category did this clientele really belong? The numbers involved lead one to suppose that the majority of the children came from the poorer classes. There is much explicit evidence which confirms this. Terms such as "the poor", "artisans", "poor people", "the indigent" were commonly used to describe the pupils and their families; and they appear also in episcopal documents, town council deliberations, in wills, and in royal authorisations. One could add that these people were not interested in Latin, and even though this may not have been true in all cases<sup>43</sup>, it was in the vast majority, and this strengthens the impression that the Brothers dedicated themselves to the poorer classes.

This is borne out by the geographical location of the school. In small towns there

was not much choice, but in large agglomerations, the location of the school was significant. If the Brothers worked in densely populated parishes, or if their schools were in districts well away from the town centre, they were certainly in contact with the lower social classes. This is true of all towns. If in addition, there is mention of the suburbs or the "lower part" of town, there can be no doubt. The fact that in smaller towns, the Brothers had one community only, but ran a number of schools that were distant from one another, confirms the idea that they went to where the poorer people were, which was generally on the outskirts of the town. However, we need to study the matter in greater detail in order to draw some more important conclusions.

On the other hand, we know that the Brothers, following the example of the

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<sup>42</sup> GA, CF 352, dossier 6. If we exclude from this table the boarding schools at Maréville, Marseilles and St Yon (for which the number of classes is not indicated), and the houses at Aurillac, Fort Royal and Pont St Esprit (for which the number of pupils is not given), the total adds up to 30,550 pupils, in 403 classes, and an average of almost 76 pupils per class.

<sup>43</sup> The documents indicate that sometimes the authorities of a town called the Brothers and dismissed the teachers, who had been paid up to that time, at least in part, from public funds, but maintained the allocation for the Latin teacher. There was nothing, at least in theory, to prevent certain children from learning their first rudiments free of charge in a Brothers' school, and then going on to pursue more advanced studies by the Latin they needed from a private tutor.

Founder, were loath to discriminate on the basis of economic factors, and refused to pry into the financial situation of families, but they insisted on ensuring that their schools were gratuitous for everybody. We have already seen, and will see again, the intervention of authorities, associations and corporations, not only to insist that the Brothers gave priority to the poor – which was in accordance with the aims of the Institute – but that they restricted their teaching solely to them.

Even supposing that establishments were provided with all the necessary resources, it is clear that there were poor children who did not attend Lasallian schools. One of the reasons for this was, perhaps, that, even if schools were completely gratuitous, parents still had to pay for books and writing materials, for example. The Brothers provided ink free of charge, but the quills, quill-sharpener (penknives) and paper had to be provided by the pupils. It was possible for some pupils to receive school books as a reward, but this happened rarely, and they did not receive these books at the beginning of the school year. The praise that was given to the Brothers of the Auxonne community for providing books, paper and quills free of charge to many of their poor pupils<sup>44</sup>, was perhaps deserved by other schools also, but schools able to do this were a minority. The care of clothing, the contribution to heating costs, the unwillingness of certain families to ask for help so as not to disturb others, put themselves at a disadvantage, or to avoid a possible refusal...must also have resulted,

unintentionally on the part of the Brothers, in the exclusion of certain poor pupils.

Sometimes, poorer parents deprived their children of schooling by sending them out to work. When life became difficult, any work was welcome that could bring some money into the house: the present devoured the resources of the future. Sometimes the ignorance of parents, who never went to school themselves, led them to consider sending their children to school a complete waste of time.

But among the causes for the exclusion of certain poor pupils we should not forget human sin and the taste of success. Persons who, thanks to the instruction received at school, were able to improve their situation in life, were eager to obtain for their own children the same means of personal progress. The accessibility of schools to all who applied, may have meant that some schools gave preference to better-off pupils and to those who appreciated education, because they had already experienced its advantages. This, of course, meant the exclusion of poorer pupils. Sin, for its part, could reside in quite different hearts: in the hearts of the Brothers, certainly, making them prefer to deal with pupils who offered them greater academic satisfaction or the possibility of some fringe benefits, despite the very clear indications of the Rule. And when the founders reserved the right to admit a certain number of pupils of their

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<sup>44</sup> GA, CK 551/1, dossier 12.

choice, friendship carried more weight than poverty, when it came to being admitted to the school <sup>45</sup>.

This dark side, and what we shall say about the boarding schools, does not cancel out the service the Brothers rendered the poor. It does serve, however, to put this service into a realistic context, not free of some ambiguity, and provide any rectification or purification that may be necessary, and also to ask pardon. Even with these blemishes, the Institute of the Brothers continued to wish to serve the poor effectively.

### The curriculum

The basic programme is known: reading in the mother tongue and in Latin, writing, spelling, counting, religious instruction. All this was indicated in the *Rule* and in the *Conduct of Schools*, and was also specified in numerous minutes of town council deliberations, in foundation contracts, and royal authorisations. Local requirements and the passage of time led to the need for changes in the curriculum.

At Montauban, a document testifies that the Brothers had a school in the suburbs and educated children from all social backgrounds. They taught them, among other things, the mathematical principles necessary for the crafts and professions, and double entry bookkeeping "an infinitely useful science in commerce" <sup>46</sup>. In 1753, the Marquise de Lassey funded a drawing teacher who worked with the community and took care of the children of the parish of St Sulpice in Paris <sup>47</sup>. The contract between the

Institute and the authorities of Cahors stipulated that one of the five Brothers opening the school would teach the principles of architecture and planimetry, and the sixth who was due to come a few months later, would teach mathematics, geometry and whatever follows these treatises, as well as drawing <sup>48</sup>. At Castres, the mathematics course was described in detail: Arabic numerals, Roman numerals, the four operations, the rule of three, calculation of interest, rules of proportional division, square roots, the principles of practical geometry. The local authorities reserved the right to include bookkeeping <sup>49</sup>. In the school at St Malo, the curriculum included geography, accounting, navigation and surveying, if we are to believe the author of the memoir <sup>50</sup>. Mathematics and hydrography were taught at Vannes. There was a commerce class at Boulogne sur Mer. The basic curriculum was extended probably in other gratuitous schools also. In boarding schools it clearly was.

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<sup>45</sup> This can be seen in the study by Harvey CHISICK, "*L'éducation élémentaire dans un contexte urbain sous l'Ancien Régime: Amiens aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*". Printed separately from the Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de Picardie, 1980-1981.

<sup>46</sup> GA, CK 562/2, dossier 12. At the date of this document (1774), the Brothers had been teaching in the town for 2 years.

<sup>47</sup> GA, CK 564, dossier 6.

<sup>48</sup> GA, CK 553/1, dossier 4; cf. Historique, part 2, p. 82-84.

<sup>49</sup> GA, CK 553/2, dossier 6; cf. Historique, part 2, p. 97.

<sup>50</sup> "*Les établissements...en Bretagne et en Anjou*", p. 294.



Everywhere, it was recognised that in addition to teaching an academic course, the Brothers were able to bring about a change in the behaviour of their pupils, resulting in what was variously called piety, good habits, religion. The attention of religious and civil authorities and people in general was drawn to the visible results of this change: instead of disorder there was now order. They saw the difference between the former gangs of street children and the long lines of these same children being taken to Mass each day, supervised by these new teachers. They saw also the contrast between noisy idleness and the silent activity of the school, morning and afternoon. A quotation from a contemporary can probably sum up what we have been saying, even if the style is somewhat ponderous: "There is nothing more advantageous and more necessary for the good order of a town and the well-being of its inhabitants than the instruction of children, which we see clearly and which our experience demonstrates to us, given in this Christian school, established especially in order to teach children good morals and piety, a fruitful source of peace and public happiness". It was in these words that the author, the parish priest of St Malo, asked the town authorities for new and more suitable premises for the school <sup>51</sup>.

### **Service rendered under difficult conditions**

The approval of the authorities and of the population, the increasing expansion of the work, the good results obtained and ac-

knowledged, cannot make us forget the obstacles the Brothers encountered. Without over-dramatising, without calling every Brother a hero, nor each of his opponents petty and self-serving, it is useful to spend a little time on the external difficulties encountered by the Brothers in the 18th century (the Age of the Enlightenment).

### **Opposition from other teachers**

Although it never became extremely serious, the opposition of the other teachers made itself felt regularly over the course of years. The most frequent reason for their complaints was that the Brothers did not restrict their work exclusively to the poor for whose service they were asked to come to the town, but instead they admitted also pupils who could pay. In the documents they presented to the court, they did not restrict themselves to explaining the financial loss this meant to them, but they went so far as to accuse the Brothers of being unfaithful to the aims of their Institute, concentrating more on the better off than the poor; of admitting so many pupils that it was impossible for them to look after them all; and of attracting, above all, the rich, so as to be able to earn more money by selling them school materials. The Brothers normally replied that their Institute had to devote itself not only to the poor, but also to the artisans in general, and rejected all accusa-

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<sup>51</sup> GA, CK 567, dossier 6, copy from the town archives of St Malo. Adequate premises implied 3 classrooms capable of holding 100 children each.

tions of greed. The accusations of one side, and the defence of the other, phrased in the inevitable courtroom language, tried to show at the same time the guilt of their opponents and their own innocence. It is difficult to form a clear idea of what actually happened from these documents. The outcome of the various trials was varied.

In 1731, the writing masters of Chartres presented a memorandum to the bishop against the Brothers. The reasons were as follows: the Brothers admitted rich and poor, had too many pupils, did not furnish the termly lists of pupils in the manner required, received gifts from their pupils, and begged for alms<sup>52</sup>. The writing masters of Dijon complained to the town council in 1728, 1730, 1734, 1762 and 1785, but it is impossible to know what they achieved by this<sup>53</sup>. Those of Paris, recalling the court decisions of 1699 and 1704, accused the Brothers of the parish of St Sulpice of not furnishing on time and in the correct form the lists of their pupils, and of admitting children who were not really poor into their schools<sup>54</sup>. In 1763, the writing masters of Rouen obtained permission to have affixed on the door of the schools dependent on the hospital, and directed by the Brothers, the following sign: GRATUITOUS SCHOOLS FOR THE POOR, so as to dispel any doubt as to who was authorised to attend. In 1766, at the request of some private teachers, the Parliament of Paris issued a decree against the Brothers of Abbeville, forbidding them to admit pupils who did not present a certificate of poverty, issued by their respective

parish priests or town authorities. Encouraged by this outcome, the private teachers of Amiens lodged a complaint with the town authorities the same year, and also in 1790<sup>55</sup>.

One cannot deny that, wherever the Brothers established themselves, the gratuitous schools absorbed some of the clientele who used to attend paying schools. They also introduced a factor that upset the existing economic and social balance. One cannot dismiss a priori the fact that sometimes what they did was very close to being unjust. But it would still have to be demonstrated. It is understandable that those who were or who felt they were hurt should have appealed to the public authorities to defend their position.

### Opposition from certain "philosophes"

For very different motives, certain representatives of the Enlightenment, or persons simply imbued with its ideas, considered the knowledge that the Brothers diffused among the working classes to be against the general interest.

De l'Averdy was of this opinion: his report on St Germain en Laye spoke of three Brothers who taught more than 300 pupils, sons of vineyard owners and other peasants,

<sup>52</sup> GA, CK 553/2, dossier 9.

<sup>53</sup> GA, CK 554, dossier 8.

<sup>54</sup> GA, CK 564, dossier 5 (1739).

<sup>55</sup> Harvey CHISICK, *op.cit.*, p. 41; GA, CK 551/1, dossier 10. In 1790, the answer they received was to wait and see what happened, because the Institute of the Brothers could be suppressed (and in fact was) by the laws suppressing religious Orders and similar bodies.

and that their relatively long studies kept them away from the occupations befitting their social status and that of their parents<sup>56</sup>.

The Brothers had been working in the port of Brest since 1740, with great abnegation and success. In 1762, the decision was made to ask for two more Brothers to meet the great needs of the local population. The town authorities asked the Intendant of Brittany, Le Bret, for permission to include the cost of these Brothers in the town budget. His answer was clear. "I see no reason why the ordinary financial burden of the community of Brest should be increased by 400 francs per year, by bringing to Brest, as you propose, two St Yon Brothers to teach children, in addition to the four already established in this town, and for whose upkeep the community pays 800 francs. Brest has many other more essential reasons for spending money. It seems to me that this expenditure can be regarded as being useless and, what is more, contrary to the principal aim that should be pursued in Brest regarding the children who frequent charitable schools. It would be much more appropriate to make them cabin boys and sailors than to divert them from this path by teaching them the way to embrace some other state, in which they are certainly much less needed". As a consequence, he advised them to shelve their plans from which, even in the best of cases, "there would result no advantage"<sup>57</sup>. Twelve years later, faced with a request to increase the pay of the Brothers, the Intendant Dupleix replied: "On principle, the Brothers of the Christian Schools

should never have been allowed to come to a town such as Brest, where there is less need for instructed people, at least among the working classes, than for sailors and workers, whose occupation has absolutely no need of a knowledge of writing. In fact, it is noticeable that this class of man has greatly decreased in number in Brest since the opportunities for learning have multiplied. A sailor or a worker who begins giving his son some education, no longer wishes him to become a sailor or a workman like himself. I believe that these reasons are sufficient to refuse this establishment an increase in its allowance, which would enable to make further progress. In any case, the community of Brest has many more useful and important projects than this one on which to spend its money"<sup>58</sup>. These prejudices and fears were of secondary importance but they were widespread. Years previously, in 1754, the parish priest of St Malo had tried to refute them in an appeal to the town council: "It is an illusion to think that because they learn to read and write they seek to rise above their rank. How many

<sup>56</sup> Typed copy in GA, CK 567, dossier 5 (August 26th 1763). At the time, great importance was attached to the "state" of each person.

<sup>57</sup> GA, CK 552/2, dossier 3, document 19, copied from the town archives of Brest. We are certain that a Brother Gervais taught writing (calligraphy) in the Naval Officers' school to the cadets of the Writers' Corps. Perhaps Brother Agathon taught mathematics in the same school to the Aspirants and Officers of the Battle Corps.

<sup>58</sup> GA, CK, 552/2, dossier 10, document 136. Copied from the Departmental archives of Ille et Vilaine.

there are who, having received the same teaching, have never yet tried to rise higher! For nine years now, the Brothers have taught in this Christian school with marvellous results. Have we seen any regrettable changes? Far from being short of sailors and cabin boys, we have to refuse a number every day". And with a theology in which there are too many certainties, he concluded: "He who established states of life will always be able to fill them sufficiently with persons to fulfil their obligations"<sup>59</sup>.

The most radical attack on the work of the Brothers came from Granet, a highly placed official in Toulon. The attack was contained in a report which he prepared for his hierarchical superior in 1764. His first complaint was that the Brothers had introduced and spread gratuitous teaching, making education accessible to all states and conditions. This was the source of all kinds of evil, a view expressed by the most illustrious statesmen from the Roman Tacitus to the English Mandeville. He then quoted Mandeville, savouring, one can suppose, every word: "In a free nation, in which it is not allowed to have slaves, the surest form of riches consists in having at one's disposal a multitude of poor workers. It is an inexhaustible breeding ground for the navy and the army. To make society happy and ensure that individuals feel at their ease, a great number of people need to be ignorant as well as poor. Knowledge increases and multiplies our desires, and less a person wants, the more easily he satisfies his needs. The prosperity and happiness of a State requires that

the knowledge of the working poor does not go beyond their occupation and, regarding the things of this world, it never extends beyond their vocation. Reading, writing, counting are skills absolutely necessary for those who need them for their work, but quite pernicious for poor people who, not gaining their living by these arts, are obliged to work six days a week. Few children make progress at school before they reach the age at which they would be capable of doing some useful work. And so every hour that poor children devote to their books is an hour lost for society. It is less tiring to go to school than to work. The longer children continue to live this easy kind of life, the less suitable they will be to work as they should" (extract from "The Fable of the Bees").

Granet condemned also the ease with which Brothers settled in - they cost little and were prepared to go anywhere. He complained also that "the spread of these Brothers was frightening by its rapidity". Giving free rein to his imagination, or basing himself on half-understood information, he described the Brothers as follows: "Founded in France at the beginning of the century, they have spread to the rest of Europe: they have three houses in Rome, two in Milan, two in Bologna, and have just been asked to come to Madrid". He complains about the people who bequeathed property to them, instead of leaving it to the hospitals, "reserving for useless and dangerous in-

<sup>59</sup> GA, CK 567, dossier 6.

struction, what they held back from those in misery and need". Commenting on what La Chalotais wrote, he saw the same thing happening in the port of Toulon as La Chalotais had condemned in the ports of Brest and St Malo: "Ships are short of cabin boys and they lack the steady supply of young workers who, trained from a very early age by doing light work, grow in strength, perseverance and the attachment necessary for a service that is as hard as it is essential. Local village children, whom parents used to supply, are now being sent to the schools which increase their numbers at the expense of the ships"

He did not believe that the gratuity was genuine either. The Brothers "demand from their pupils remuneration, which they call a "voluntary contribution", and which they receive through a third party, thinking that by doing this they are not breaking the Rules, which forbid them to receive directly any salary from their pupils". After saying they were not qualified to give religious teaching, as they had renounced a clerical career, Granet praised, albeit half-heartedly, the methods used by the Brothers: "as for the methods of these Brothers, one cannot deny their effectiveness, given the number of pupils among whom they have the skill to impose order and silence. They teach large groups, but without disorder". But even in this they are not as effective as one might think, and it would cost little to find someone who could do better. Consequently, he advised his superior to rid himself of them rather than establish them permanently in

Toulon, and to replace them by teachers taken from the "order of citizens"<sup>60</sup>.

### Financial restrictions

One has the feeling, however, that what really characterised the daily life of the Brothers was not the occasional attacks on them, but their poverty.

It is easy to understand the reasons for it and to notice signs of a lack of money. Foundation contracts always fixed the remuneration of the members of the community. Funds came almost always from one of two sources: income from capital given by a benefactor, or from public funds. Neither of these two sources was "elastic": capital generally came from a will, at a fixed rate, so that the same amount of money was given year after year, and the best one could hope for was that it would not decrease. Town administrators were often short of money and submerged by demands. They tried therefore to be even-handed. Increasing the allowance of the Brothers, or giving them occasional help, presupposed permission

<sup>60</sup> GA, CK 568, dossier 1. Copied from the town archives of Toulon. Granet's Report is at least 100 pages long. The copy we have contains only the case against the Brothers and does not seem entirely accurate, but it is more complete than the one in the *Historique*, part 2, p.366-368. The chronological proximity of some of these documents catches the eye: the letter from Le Brest is dated 1762; La CHALOTAIS, "*Essai sur l'éducation nationale*" and the *Report of De l'Averdy* are both dated 1763; Granet's Report is dated 1764. The Brothers stayed in Toulon up to the French Revolution.

from superiors, which made negotiations long and uncertain as far as the outcome was concerned.

The situation grew worse as the century wore on and inflation rose slowly but persistently. This was why the conditions imposed by the Institute when it accepted to take on an educational establishment had to change also. In his own days, De La Salle was able to sign contracts which guaranteed less (and much less sometimes) than 200 livres a year per Brother. The authors of the *Rouen Memoir* were no longer satisfied with this sum. The 1751 General Chapter increased its financial requirements: "In future, Brothers will not be sent to towns and parishes unless the annual allowance for each Brother is 250 livres". In the case of a new building, as in Vannes, the founders were asked to provide in addition 2,000 livres for furniture, plus school equipment.<sup>61</sup>

We saw earlier that after 1751 there was a marked decrease in the number of new foundations. One might be led to think that the foundations after 1751 were all well provided for financially, and that it was only the earlier ones that were harassed by difficulties. This was by no means true, given the current inflation, and in any case, it would not have been particularly consoling for them, because most of them were in the most difficult areas. 250 livres were now insufficient for the Brothers, and the Institute found it necessary to ask for considerably higher sums.

Everything would have been simple if the increases asked for were granted quickly. Sometimes they were, but most often, requests were met by hedging, negotiations were dragged out, and, at times, requests were refused. In the second half of the century, especially after 1770, a great number of requests were made by the Superiors of the Institute and Directors for an increase in the allowance of the Brothers, made necessary by the continual increase in the price of basic goods. The persistence of these requests illustrates the difficulty there was to have them granted. The financial difficulty of many communities is well documented everywhere, from Rome to Brittany, from Provence to Normandy.

The Brothers tried to alleviate these financial difficulties in a variety of ways, none of which were without their disadvantages. Maintaining gratuitous teaching, obtaining enough to live on, and protecting the regularity of the community made so many simultaneous demands on the Brothers that it was not easy to respond to them at the same time and completely. Various ways of begging for alms were devised, part of the community house was rented out, Brothers kept vigil over the dead, they raised poultry, they grew vegetables, they took in boarders. Some of the things they did drew down upon them the official displeasure of the Superiors and of General Chapters.

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<sup>61</sup> Chapter register A, p. 53, GA, CC 200/1, dos. 1.

Years before, the 1734 Chapter, having declared that the raising of rabbits and pigeons in community led to the cancellation of many exercises, especially that of catechism, decided that none of these activities would be allowed in school communities<sup>62</sup>. Half a century later, Brother Agathon had to appeal to the common sense of Directors regarding gardens: "To have school Brothers work in the garden on a regular basis, or do other manual work during the exercises or study periods, or even during recreations, is less profitable than buying vegetables in the market. Also sometimes, it is during this work that the Brothers contract incurable diseases". Worse even, was to put the pupils to work in the garden instead of keeping them in class!<sup>63</sup>.

Finding help from outside the community, either from the authorities or from possible benefactors, almost always fell to the Director. When he went out, he left the Brothers all alone; if the Brothers were in class, he could not help them and the pupils made less progress; if they were in the community house, he was not there to encourage their efforts to be regular and to prepare themselves professionally. As a result, the Brothers lost the spirit of their state and were no longer equal to their task. In the final analysis, it was always the poor who suffered the consequences.

The proliferation of boarding schools was a source of worry for the 1745 General Chapter: "Taking into account the undesirable effects and disorder caused by the presence of boarders in school communities, and

aware that a number of Directors admit them despite the fact that it is forbidden by the Rule<sup>64</sup>, the General Chapter has thought it opportune to recall expressly that it is forbidden to admit any more in the future, and to enjoin all those who have some to begin immediately to send them away, so that by the next holidays there will be none left in our school communities, and only in the houses intended for this purpose"<sup>65</sup>.

The next Chapter, the one held in 1751 and already mentioned, realised that the decision had not produced the desired effects and restated it more categorically: "Regarding the complaints that have been made in connection with the non-implementation of article 4 of the 5th session of the 1745 Chapter concerning boarders, it has been decided that in the future there will be boarders only at St Yon, Marseilles, Mirepoix, Die, Montpellier, St-Omer, Montargis, Angers and Mareville, but that

<sup>62</sup> Chapter register A, p. 34.

<sup>63</sup> "Avertissements" for Directors, p. 23, and "Avertissements" for the Brothers, point 15. The two documents are dated October 4th 1787. Copies in GA, CC 255/1, dossier 26, and CC 200/2, dossier 11.

<sup>64</sup> "It will not be permitted either for school houses to admit boarders" (1726 Rule, chap. XIV, art. 13). In the 1718 manuscript, the text was longer: "It will not be permitted either for school houses to admit boarders. They may be admitted to the novitiate house or to houses set aside for this purpose, when the Brother Superior, with the advice of the Assistants, considers this appropriate, but they will not be taught the Latin language" CL 25, p. 59.

<sup>65</sup> Chapter register A, p. 41-42.

the Superior General may open others when he finds this opportune or circumstances require it”<sup>66</sup>.

But this is not the end of it, if we are to believe Brother Lucard. He maintains that, after his election in 1767, Brother Florence, helped by Brother Assistant Exupère, had to close 25 boarding departments which had opened in ordinary schools to help the Brothers keep body and soul together, without violating gratuity<sup>67</sup>.

Poverty, the contempt of certain philosophes, and disputes with teachers’ associations, were not the sum total of the Brothers’ difficulties. To these we have to add the opposition they encountered from certain sections of the population and from the authorities in Protestant areas. There were also health problems due to overwork or to insalubrious premises (Aigues Mortes, for example), and difficulties brought about by living and working in buildings that were inadequate or dangerous because of their age<sup>68</sup>.

We can add also that, in 1771, in order to escape the interference of the archbishop of Rouen in the running of the Institute, the Superior General and his Assistants<sup>69</sup> moved to Paris and took up residence – a

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allowance of the Brothers was insufficient, that Brothers Florence and Agathon were fighting vigorously to preserve gratuity and to obtain a worthy remuneration for the Brothers. He does not give his sources. Similar evidence in dossier 7.

Independently from these documents, there exists fairly explicit information on certain boarding schools which do not appear on the official list. Agde had one in 1766, but not in 1770. In 1790, the local authorities asked the Superior to reopen it, but he refused, giving as his reason the lack of Brothers (*Historique*, part 1, p. 325-331). At Condrieu, there were 20 boarders in 1760, but none by 1771 (*Historique*, part 2, p. 27). Bordeaux asked for a boarding school, but the request was denied in 1778 (*Idem*, p.46). In 1763-64, the corporations of Grammar Teachers and Writing Masters obtained the closure of the boarding school at Bourges, which had been opened on the authority of the local bishop (GA, CK 552/1, dossier 12). The foundation contract of Dole, dated December 28th 1746, envisaged a novitiate and a boarding school (GA, CK 554, dossier 10). It is certain that the novitiate was established, but there is no information about a boarding school. The statistical table drawn up in 1779, has a tentative “P” (boarding) besides the name of Valence. Doubt about its existence is removed by a manuscript “*Historique*” (GA, NC 887, dossier 2, p. 35): the Brothers had few boarders “to raise some money”. The boarding schools of Nantes and Rheims, missing from the 1751 list, could not have existed without some kind of official authorisation from the superiors of the Institute.

<sup>66</sup> In Grenoble (1776), a part of the St Laurent school collapsed and there were some fatalities. In Brest, one of the classes had to be closed because it threatened to collapse. A part of the daily life of the Brest community was to cross the bay to reach the school in Recouvrance. At Nancy, the Revolutionary officers in charge of drawing up the inventory (1790), noted that the Brothers’ house was poor, badly ventilated, inadequate, etc.

<sup>69</sup> The “Regime”, the term used up till 1966.

<sup>66</sup> *Idem*, p.53. Montargis lasted a little longer. (RIGAULT 2, p. 392). Die has only 2 Brothers in 1779, 1787 and 1789, and this excludes the idea of a boarding school.

<sup>67</sup> GA, CF 362, dossier 4: Autograph letter dated September 22nd 1882, to “Dear Colleague”. He adds that two other schools had been closed because the



most uncomfortable residence in a part of the house belonging to the Brothers who taught in the schools of St Sulpice. It was a precarious and very provisional arrangement. At the same time, doubts had arisen both outside and inside the Institute regarding the real significance of the vows, and the solidity and stability of the Congregation.

After recalling at great length the difficulties which accumulated at the end of this period, Georges Rigault had good reason to write as follows: "We have to admit that we have just passed through a most barren period, a sort of desert, in which happy encounters and times of repose were far and

few between. The Brothers had to bear the whole burden of the day and the heat, moving forward – like a heroic caravan – across a grey and dismal plain. How much harshness and disdain there was for any compassionate soul, be it priest, bishop or good citizen, who came to their aid! There were times of anguish, distress. There would have been times of discouragement too, had the sons of St John Baptist de La Salle let their faith grow dim, and turned their eyes away from the "star" which guided them"<sup>70</sup>.

It was in this context that the Institute elected a Superior General that was out of the ordinary.

### 3. THE GENERALATE OF BROTHER AGATHON

The 1777 General Chapter was exceptional. This was not because of its date: the previous one had been held 10 years before and, according to the Bull of Approbation, its convocation was obligatory. It was exceptional rather because of its content, its importance and its influence.

The fact that it was held in Rheims - not a complete novelty, since the 1745 one had been held there too - was due to a number of circumstances: the Brothers had no house in Paris which could accommodate it, and St Yon was unsuitable because of the proximity of the archbishop of Rouen. Rheims offered sufficient possibilities and was easy of access. Moreover, the cradle of the Institute was a valuable symbol for a Chapter

which had to consider some fundamental questions as it came to the end of its first one hundred years. The convocation circular of May 20th, announced one of the worrying topics: the Chapter would strive "to establish solid unity of thinking regarding the extent of the obligations imposed on us by the vows".

With great clear-mindedness, Brother Florence drew up a number of documents. Regarding vows, he consulted the Sorbonne. To improve the government of the Institute, he obtained permission from the Holy See to increase the number of Brother Assistants from 2 to 4. He decided where the new

<sup>70</sup> RIGAUULT 2, p. 393.

generalate would be. As soon as the Chapter met, he handed in his resignation. He was only 52 years old and had no serious health problems, but the situations he had to face had convinced him that he needed to hand over the reins of government to someone else.

The Assembly did not balk at the challenges it faced. It appointed Brother Agathon (1731-1798) as the new Superior, gave him 3 Assistants, leaving him the option to add a fourth one if necessary. A wide-ranging examination of the situation of the Institute revealed a strong determination to put its internal life in order, and face the future from a strong and sure position. Boarding schools were explicitly designated as a source of funding for the general needs of the Institute, that is, the financial support of the General Government, formation and especially the old and sick Brothers. As a way of improving formation, further expansion was slowed down, and it was decided "not to receive or accept any new establishments for at least ten years, unless there was absolutely no choice" (decision XXII).

To open a new boarding school, the Superior would need the agreement of his Council, and would have to consult the Directors of the three largest communities in each District (decision LXXXVII) <sup>71</sup>. The number of decisions taken and the diversity of topics indicated a will to set the Congregation onto clearly defined paths, to be followed in serried ranks. Any deviation or hesitation would be overcome with determination. A definitive version of the Rule

of Government <sup>72</sup> was produced for all the Brothers in positions of responsibility.

For years to come, and even for a good part of the 19th century, the 1777 General Chapter was a necessary point of reference. While it would be wrong to attribute to it the role of refounding the Institute, we have to say that it had the merit of giving it a new impetus and decisiveness at a difficult moment. It was as if a force, which was in danger of becoming dispersed, had succeeded in regaining its concentration, and had resumed its path with a new clarity.

### **Brother Agathon's style of government**

Brother Agathon did not disappoint the trust placed in him. A rapid glance at his style of government reveals immediately great depth and a breadth, and steadiness of approach. He did not accept routine: he was a man of clear and broad vision, zealous and enlightened. He was inventive and had the gift of communicating his dynamism to others. He was a pilot who had won the trust of his crew by being close to them, by his expertise and by his total commitment to the undertaking.

He did not hesitate to introduce the novelties he felt were needed. Important circulars appeared in printed and even re-

<sup>71</sup> The Chapter listed also the houses which belonged to each of the 3 Provinces (Western, Eastern and Southern Provinces), which had their provincial houses in St Yon, Maréville and Avignon, respectively.

<sup>72</sup> Manuscript copy, endorsed by all the members of the General Chapter (GA. BO 776/1, dossier 8).

vised form. The Generalate moved to Melun in 1780, and the new premises were equipped and organised with sufficient comfort to make it possible to work effectively and with concentration, without unnecessary disturbances. In accordance with Chapter decisions, the geographical expansion of the Institute slowed down, in order to consolidate the formation of its members. Brothers who showed talent and promise were withdrawn provisionally from class to undertake studies full time. Regarding the thorny question of financial support for the Brothers working in gratuitous schools, his opinion is clear: the mission exercised by these Brothers is important and demands from them total dedication. Consequently, they must be able to do their work without being harassed by other worries, and remaining faithful to the characteristics by which their Congregation was identified. The people, the authorities and the Brothers themselves had to understand this clearly and act upon it.

Brother Agathon was also the first Superior General after De La Salle to be a writer. What he wrote was abundant and varied: circulars for specific occasions, Notes (addressed either to all the Brothers or to Directors), Instructive Letters on the vows, a famous circular on prize-givings, the highly praised, and deservedly so, "Explanation of the Twelve Virtues of a Good Teacher", spiritual treatises added to a new edition of the Collection. He did not have the time to publish a completely re-worked version of the *Conduct of Schools* which

would have been accompanied by an important Conduct of Boarding Schools. Writing, for the Superior, was not a matter of self-indulgence, but of furnishing his Brothers with doctrine that was trustworthy, up to date and stimulating, based on theologians and canon lawyers of recognised authority, or on respected educational experts. He provided a sort of ongoing formation which was all the more necessary given the brevity of initial formation. The word "deposit" that occurs often in his writings, shows clearly the conscientious approach the Superior brought to the exercise of his authority: the doctrine, practice and history of the Institute constitute a deposit that has been transmitted to us by our predecessors. It is a precious gift which had already proved its worth and which continues to nourish us. Our duty is to transmit it in its integrity to our successors as a guarantee that the Institute will continue to exist and to produce the fruit that can be expected of it.

Brother Agathon's leadership was not only energetic: whatever action he took was also permeated with intense love. The recently elected Superior who, with an almost disconcerting sincerity, affirmed in one of his first circulars: "While I have to admit, and I do so, my very dear Brothers, that you could have given yourselves a more worthy and more capable leader, I cannot hide from you that no one could be attached to you with greater tenderness than I am"<sup>73</sup>, was

<sup>73</sup> Circular dated February 28th 1778 (GA, CD 260/1, dossier 9).

able to end his life reaping the benefits of the seeds of love he had sown. In his retirement in Tours, a year before his death, when the turmoil of the Revolution had given way to a period of tranquillity, he wrote a now famous letter to Brother Frumence, the Vicar General, in which he told him that, in many places, the people wanted the Brothers to return, and that some of them were now back at work, and he added: "A great number continue to teach, much to the pleasure of good people, and remain attached to me"<sup>74</sup>.

### Lasallian educational establishments

Documents in archives give a fairly accurate idea of the numerical expansion of Lasallian schools during the generalate of Brother Agathon<sup>75</sup>.

The statistics drawn up in 1779, and already mentioned, show that there were about 700 Brothers at the time. There were perhaps more than 32,000 pupils, spread over 420 classes.

In the years that followed, the Brothers withdrew from Caen (but not before 1783) and Metz (at the end of 1784 or the beginning of 1785)<sup>76</sup>. Despite the decision to slow down expansion, in the same period, the Institute took charge of gratuitous schools in 8 towns, opened a boarding school, and located the central services in its new house in Melun<sup>77</sup>.

two sentences may be significant. One old Italian version, no doubt the work of Br Regolo, ends the paragraph with a strange addition: "remain attached and submissive to me" (GA, CK 576, dossier 9, sheet 97).

<sup>75</sup> I base myself on three sources of information:

1° A "State of the Order of the Brothers of the Christian Schools", apparently drawn up at Mirepoix, on August 24th 1779. The introduction declares that the Institute "is composed this year, 1779, of 114 houses, 760 Religious Brothers, and 30,999 pupils or boarders, in 420 public and gratuitous classes", figures which do not correspond exactly with what is shown in the table. For each house, it gives the date of foundation, the number of Brothers, classes and pupils. It furnishes the most information, but it is not complete and contains some errors of some importance (GA, CF 352, dossier 6).

2° A "Table of houses", drawn up by Brother Salomon to share out the costs of the 1787 General Chapter held at Melun. He indicates the number of Brothers in each community except that of Melun (GA, CL 602/2, dossier 2).

3° A list of the houses of the Institute in 1789, also in Brother Salomon's handwriting. For each house, he gives the date of foundation (except in the case of 4) and the number of Brothers (except in the case of Ferrara, Montpellier and St Louis at Versailles): (GA, CL 602/2, dossier 7). Georges Rigault refers a number of times to statistics drawn up in 1790, but these have not yet been discovered in the Generalate archives.

<sup>76</sup> In Metz, they could not survive on what they were paid. The same seems to have been true of Caen. The 1779 statistics include the houses in Apt and Cannes, closed at the end of 1776 and beginning of 1777, because the local authorities had suppressed the allowances of the Brothers (even though later, they had to pay lay teachers even more).

<sup>77</sup> The gratuitous schools of Chalabre, Pont St Esprit, Aurillac, Commercy, Montdidier, Langres, Bayeux, Toulouse. There is mention also of a gratuitous school in Melun supported by the Generalate, and a boarding school near Carcassonne in the

<sup>74</sup> Original autograph copy (GA, CD 255/1, dossier 22). Text and commentary in RIGAUULT 3, p. 359-364. The presence of the word "attached" in the

In 1787, the Superior's secretary listed 113 houses with a total of 831 Brothers, but omitted the Generalate. If we include it, the total comes to 114 houses and 850 Brothers. According to the 1789 list, the Institute had 116 houses and some 890 Brothers <sup>78</sup>.

### Boarding schools

We have already referred rapidly to the circumstances surrounding the creation and development of this institution which originated at St Yon in the days of the Founder - if we do not count the boarding school for the Irish at the Grand'Maison. At the close of the 18th century, it is possible to gain an overall view of these boarding schools <sup>79</sup>.

How many boarders were there? According to the 1779 statistics, there were 250 boarders at St Yon, but it is possible that there were many more <sup>80</sup>. There were about 60 at St Omer and 80 at Rheims <sup>81</sup>. At Maréville there could not have been 1,304, as was indicated by the statistics, but not many fewer either <sup>82</sup>. At Nantes there was room for only 70 <sup>83</sup>. In Martinique, boarders and dayboys together numbered 50 in 1774 but, 13 years later, the figure had risen to 140 <sup>84</sup>. At Angers, there were about 240 in 1778 <sup>85</sup>, and Marseilles had 104 in 1779, and 282 in 1790 <sup>86</sup>. At Mirepoix and Montpellier no distinction was made between boarders and dayboys: perhaps they had lessons together. If we say that a third of these were boarders, it would mean that there were 40 boarders at Mirepoix and about 160 at Montpellier. In 1787, the Mirepoix boarders (30 free boarders and a

"Domaine Charlemagne". The foundations of Arras and Honfleur which are mentioned in RIGAULT 2, p. 515-519, were not made in the 18th century (GA, NC 393, dossier 1, and 573, dossier 10). Regarding Arras, Rigault himself makes the correction (RIGAULT 3, p. 121, Note 2).

<sup>78</sup> The exact total is 865, but this figure does not include the Brothers at Ferrara (5 in 1779, 6 in 1787), Montpellier (12 in both those years), St Louis in Versailles (4 in 1779 and 5 in 1787). By extrapolation, we arrive at a total of 890.

<sup>79</sup> More detailed information can be found in RIGAULT 2, p. 523-569.

<sup>80</sup> Up to more than 500? (RIGAULT 2, p. 539). His affirmation that the 1779 table indicated 320 cannot be checked. Currently available copies definitely say 250.

<sup>81</sup> RIGAULT 2, p. 541-542.

<sup>82</sup> RIGAULT 2, p. 547, text and notes. On December 29th 1778, Brother Salomon, at the time bursar at Maréville, wrote to his sister Rosalie to send her the season's greetings and to share some of his worries: "what is involved is providing for the annual needs of a house with at least 220 persons...for there are 60 Brothers, either professed or novices, 112 custodial boarders...and 40 or so free boarders. In addition, there are the workmen, the servants, etc. (GA. Letter from Br Salomon, frame 21).

<sup>83</sup> RIGAULT 2, p. 550.

<sup>84</sup> RIGAULT 2, p. 553-554. But he speaks of 5 Brothers, whereas the 1787 list mentions 14, and that of 1782, 12. A 1790 prospectus gives the names of 9 Brothers with their respective responsibilities. All teach. The number could be higher if there were some serving Brothers (GA, CK 578 B, dossier 6).

<sup>85</sup> RIGAULT 2, p. 557.

<sup>86</sup> RIGAULT 2, p. 560. Despite everything, Brother Guillaume de Jésus affirmed in his Memoirs that the Marseilles boarding school had 165 boarders, and given the detailed description he provides, it would be difficult to go beyond this figure. We know, in any case, that each boarder had his own room (GA, CK 562/1, dossier 6).

few incarcerated by order of the Parlement of Toulouse) were moved to the "Domaine Charlemagne" near Carcassonne<sup>87</sup>.

If we accept that the more or less clandestine boarders of Valence are a case which is not repeated elsewhere, then, on the eve of the French Revolution, the total number of paying pupils could not have been more than 2,000, and perhaps even lower, that is, they constituted hardly 7% of the pupils taught by the Brothers. At St Yon, Maréville and Mirepoix, a proportion of the pupils were in legal custody, because they were delinquents or insane.

The curriculum of the free boarders was broader than that offered in ordinary schools. At St Yon, for example, the curriculum, which was not perhaps exhaustive, included "commerce, finance, military art, architecture, mathematics, in a word, all that a young man can learn, except Latin". The Marseilles prospectus goes into details: "Pupils are taught to read French, Latin and manuscripts, spelling through the principles of grammar, handwriting, arithmetic, foreign exchange rates, double entry bookkeeping and geography. If parents so wish, their children can be taught "the rudiments of geometry and algebra, some figure and landscape drawing, civil architecture, navigation". By paying teachers from outside the school, the pupils can have music, dancing, fencing and foreign language lessons<sup>88</sup>. Regarding other subjects, the information is not reliable<sup>89</sup>.

And permeating everything, there was religious instruction. In boarding schools,

in addition to teaching the normal programme, the Brothers laid great stress on confession (to the point of forcing children to go), set up pious confraternities in honour of Our Lady, as at St Yon and Marseilles, and they organised retreats.

As we have already seen, some of these "extras" were offered also in non-boarding schools. They were a response to perceived needs, and are an indication of the abilities of the Brothers. They were also included in their formation. The creation of specialised studies for some Brothers and the insistence on them, demonstrates the will of the Institute to be ready to respond to new educational needs which were above the basic level.

### Gratuitous schools

The vast majority of the establishments were gratuitous schools, open, as far as the Brothers were concerned, to all and sundry, and offered the working classes the Christian education indicated in the Rule. These schools were well patronised<sup>90</sup>. Often they

<sup>87</sup> RIGAULT 2, p. 563-568.

<sup>88</sup> GA, CK 562/1, dossier 6.

<sup>89</sup> Did he go so far as to teach differential calculus? The library at Marseilles contained some works on this subject (cf. RIGAULT 2, p. 561), but this is not conclusive proof. It is usually said to have been taught at St Yon (cf. Othmar WÜRTH, *John Baptist de La Salle and Special Education*, p. 51). The exercise books of the pupils and teachers, which can be consulted in the Generalate archives, contain no evidence of this specialisation.

<sup>90</sup> More than 140 pupils in each class at Bourges in 1781 (GA, CK 552/1, dossier 12). In 1787, Pope

had to face financial difficulties made worse by the economic situation of the times. They offered a fixed elementary programme of studies which could be adapted where necessary. There is no need to describe it once more, but perhaps some aspects deserve closer attention.

In the first place, there was the awareness that these were public schools. Directed by the Brothers in accordance with the organisational structure and pedagogical practice proper to their Institute, they constituted a service offered by society to its children, at least, to the most needy among them. This was understood so clearly by everybody in the schools and outside them, that it was hardly ever stated explicitly. It was said, however, when the need arose. For example, in 1785, the Brothers in Dijon defended themselves against the claims of the writing masters, by showing, with varying degrees of skill, that their school was public and that it was not in their power to admit some children and refuse entry to others. But more important than its application in this or that case, was the principle itself, which indicated the area in which the Institute felt it was on its home territory.

In the second place, there was the question of gratuity. It cannot be denied that there were infractions on the part of the Brothers. In addition to accusations from outsiders, the measures and recommendations of the authorities of the Congregation prove this. The 1777 General Chapter begged Directors "to refuse clearly, and make the Brothers of their house refuse, all presents, re-

munerations and any free services at all from the parents of the pupils and from the pupils they instructed", and recognised that the use of tobacco could lead to the violation of the vow of poverty and that of teaching gratuitously, and that it restricted the freedom of the Brothers in their relations with their pupils, and that everything possible should be done to banish it (decisions 55,5° and 70).

All these human failings, even supposing they were numerous, did not detract from the principle. But, what was new in the time of Brother Agathon (and certainly earlier, but we have no date for it) was a fact that attacked the principle itself, or at least the way in which it was understood. Given the economic needs of the time, the just claims of the Brothers and the usefulness of their work, certain town authorities devised an intermediate solution: the poor would continue to be taught gratuitously, and the richer ones would make a small contribution. All this would take place without the Brothers being involved, so that they would not lose their freedom regarding their

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Pius VI, authorised the opening of a third class in Rome. In the two that already existed, there were more than 200 pupils, and many more were waiting to be admitted, but there was no room (CK 575/1, dossier 12). The Brothers came to Toulouse in 1789. The contract stipulated that in the lower classes, there would not be more than 90 pupils, and not more than 70 in the others, in order to preserve the health of the Brothers (!), but at the beginning there were a 100 or so in each class (*Historique*, part 2, p.161-162). And there is the list.

pupils. The tax paid by the better-off families would be so minimal that it could not be considered as payment for teaching. The Brothers' allowance would remain the same, and would not depend in any way on the sum paid by certain families. It would all

be a kind of tax, and no one could refuse the authorities the right to impose taxes.

This arrangement focussed attention on the question of gratuity for a long time. Discussion about practice made it necessary to reconsider the doctrine.

## THE PRACTICE OF GRATUITY IN SCHOOL

### **A typical case: Boulogne sur Mer**

The court case brought against the Institute by the town of Boulogne sur Mer regarding gratuity in school was typical of the situation, both by the arguments put forward, and by the legal precedent set by the solution of the judge. We have enough documentation to be able to speak of the case in some detail, as the case deserves.<sup>91</sup>

#### *The problem and the solution proposed by the town authorities*

Some time before August 14th 1780, Brother Maur, the Director, presented a memorandum to the municipal authorities – no doubt on instructions from the Superior General or an Assistant – in which he summarised the previous requests made, and asked for a definitive answer: the Brothers had been suffering from restrictions for many years. The Government of the Institute had helped them, but this was not normal procedure, and there was a debt that had to be settled. The 220 livres allowance<sup>92</sup> each Brother received was not enough to buy food and live decently. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the Brothers made the pupils pay, and this was seen

and known by teachers. The Congregation could not tolerate this infraction of the Rule of absolute gratuity, nor the precarious life lived by the Brothers. As a consequence, and with some regret, because the Institute recognised the good will and the friendly attitude of the town authorities, the Superiors would have to withdraw some Brothers from Boulogne, leaving there only the number that could live decently, but with the frugality they had always shown, on the money the community was currently receiving. There would be no more paying of school fees: the Brothers had always considered such a practice a burden on their ministry and a violation of their Constitutions. The memorandum did not close the door on negotiation. It stated that the number of Brothers should be increased and not decreased, mentioning that one class had 140 pupils and another 120, and that the Brothers would accept an agreement which, without detriment to absolute gratuity, would give them an allowance of 300 livres each,

<sup>91</sup> Several copies in the GA, CF 362, dossiers 11,12,13 and 16.

<sup>92</sup> It is the same in the manuscript copies (RIGAUT 2, p. 493 says 200).



instead of the 400 now being asked for when new foundations were made.

In its deliberations of August 14th<sup>93</sup>, the town authorities were unanimous in recognising that “far from accepting the proposal to decrease the current number of Brothers, who were 10 in number<sup>94</sup>, it would be desirable, on the contrary, to be able to increase it. Four commissioners had been appointed to give their advice as to what should be done in a matter of such importance”. Having been informed by word of mouth, the Director asked for written confirmation so that he could send it to his Superior. At the same time, he reminded the town authorities of the needs of the community and of the schools, which it was the town’s responsibility to attend to. If other Brothers came, the town would have to pay their travel expenses and the cost involved in joining the community.

The town authorities met again on August 28th. After hearing the views of the commission, it took the following decisions: 1° To ask the Regime to increase the number of Brothers to 11 (a Director, a Sub-Director in charge of the commerce class, 8 Brothers for the ordinary classes, and a serving Brother). 2° To allocate annually the sum of 300 livres per Brother, that is, a total of 3,300 livres. As the present allowance came only to 1,100 livres, it was the responsibility of the town to provide the remaining 2,200 livres. To raise this sum, the pupils of the commerce class would have to pay a sum fixed by the town authorities, the pu-

pils of the ordinary classes would each pay 6 livres (3 at the beginning of the school year, the other 3 at the beginning of Lent). The poor would be exempted from paying this contribution.

To avoid causing problems for the Brothers, and in order not to wound their conscience, the town authorities would provide pupils with school admission tickets. These would be free of charge for the poor, and in exchange for school fees for the others. In theory, the Brothers would not know who paid and who did not. Since what was demanded of the pupils was minimal, and demanded only from those who could pay, and since the Brothers were not involved at any point, the town authorities thought they had found a way of satisfying the needs of the community without delving into their own resources and, at the same time, of extending their educational service. The town council flattered itself that no one would find anything to object to in this arrangement<sup>95</sup>. This is what Brother Maur thought and said when he sent a copy of the council decision to the Superior.

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<sup>93</sup> August was the last month of the school year. The following year began on October 1st.

<sup>94</sup> Eight in the 1779 statistics, 9 in the 1787 and 1789 lists.

<sup>95</sup> “We flattered ourselves for some time that these arrangements, by providing for the needs of the Brothers without troubling the public, would not be objected to by anyone” (Copy in the GA, CK 552/1, dossier 10).

### The reaction of the Superiors

Brother Agathon had objections which he considered to be fundamental, and he was not prepared to compromise. He said so in a letter written at Caen on October 5th. The deliberations of the magistrates were the best proof of their zeal for the Christian education of children, and so it was very disagreeable to find oneself obliged to oppose their wishes and those of the Director. "Notwithstanding all the reasons that you put forward to justify the solution thought up by these Gentlemen to provide for the upkeep of the Brothers they need, I cannot allow this solution to be used, for one reason only: it is contrary to the gratuity of the schools. A similar solution was devised recently in a large town, where the town authorities thought they could find the necessary resources for two extra Brothers by imposing contributions of this kind. The decision which we adopted then, and which applies to the present case, was widely approved, and was approved also by the bishop who initially had supported the decision of the town authorities and had asked us to support them too. It is of little importance whether the tax is paid in the school or outside, or whether it is modest or considerable. What destroys gratuity is not the size of the tax, nor the way it is collected, but the tax itself. By the very fact that rich children would have to pay to be admitted to the schools, the schools would cease to be gratuitous. As a consequence, I cannot accept this solution, because, for the preser-

vation of our Institute, it is essential for us to continue to be inspired by its primitive spirit, and to depart from it would mean hastening its ruin and depriving the public of the good it has a right to expect from it. The intention of our wise and venerable Founder was that all children without distinction, rich and poor, should be admitted free of charge into our schools. And this has been the constant and universal practice up till now". Other problems had arisen in this other town where, without the knowledge of the Superiors, the condemned abuse had been introduced. Experience "has shown that the firmness with which we called for its suppression was justified".

And so, nothing has been said about the nine Brothers and the fees of the pupils. "If, with the resources at your disposal, you cannot keep as many teachers as are necessary to instruct the poor, you ought to concern yourselves solely with this latter class of child until you are in a position to extend schooling to the rich. As it is not our responsibility, and is not possible for us to distinguish the rich from the poor, the town authorities and the parish priests will have to give admission tickets to those they think ought to be admitted. You will then admit children till each class has the number of pupils indicated in the school prospectus. As soon as you know how many Brothers can stay with you, let me know so that I can make use of the rest. I hope you will not persist in trying to make us agree to the conditions proposed by your town, nor attempt to implement what you propose: what is

wrong in itself and could not be legitimately continued, should not be established”<sup>96</sup>.

Informed about the letter, the town authorities “thought they could overcome the repugnance of the Regime” for the contribution to be paid by the pupils, by submitting to them “representations which appeared unanswerable”. The Government of the Institute responded by referring to the judgment “of a doctor of the Sorbonne, according to which the Regime could not agree to these arrangements without going directly against its Institute, and without failing to uphold the principles on which it was founded”<sup>97</sup>.

### A private consultation

On October 22nd, the Superior wrote once more, this time from Angers, to the Director of Boulogne: “Not wishing to rely on my own knowledge, which some might doubt or despise, although I ought to know more about the way we live than outsiders who do not always judge, as far as we are concerned, according to the true principles of our profession, I have consulted a doctor of the Sorbonne on the matter. He is an ecclesiastical dignitary whose judgment is wellknown, and who is very well informed about the Institute”. The person in question was the Abbot of La Baume<sup>98</sup>.

In his reply, the abbot makes a distinction between the Rule and the Vow. The Rule is found in article 5 of the Bull: “That the said Brothers teach children gratuitously, and that they receive neither money nor presents, when offered by the pupils or their

parents”; and since the Brothers must be most concerned about instructing children, especially the poor, gratuity is an essential means if the Institute is to achieve its principal aim. Without gratuity, the poor were excluded from schools. To introduce remunerated teaching would be a transgression that would destroy the Institute. To save a situation in one place, one would deprive the world of the advantages which a ruined Institute would no longer be able to offer. The Superiors cannot burden their conscience with such a crime. The vow as such restricts the obligation to the poor (article 9° of the Bull) and of itself does not forbid receiving remuneration from those who are not poor. However, in this case, one would continue to break a very important rule of the Institute. Finally, it is impossible, in practice, to be just when accepting contributions, without violating the secrecy which every family has the right to have regarding its fortune. The fact that the town authorities, and not the school, collect the contributions is a short-sighted subterfuge: what one does through an intermediary, is as if one did it oneself. Consequently, towns which are considering using such a stratagem (and there were several) should not try

<sup>96</sup> GA, CK 362, dossier 11.

<sup>97</sup> GA, CK 552/1, dossier 10. (August 10th 1781 deliberation).

<sup>98</sup> GA, CF 362, dossier 11. The letter does not give the name of the Director, but it is specified a few days later, by the Superior’s secretary who, at that time, must have been Br Philippe de Jésus.

to circumvent this fundamental law of the Lasallian Congregation”<sup>99</sup>.

A few days later, it was the Superior’s secretary who wrote to the Director of Boulogne: “The Superiors never agree to any proposition which, even indirectly, infringes even slightly the gratuity of school...The letter from the Abbot of La Baume...shows how right we are to insist on this article”. After expressing the hope that Boulogne would find a way of keeping the existing classes, he reassured the Director: “As for the Society, it will never be short of work or of bread to give to the Brothers. It would even be a good thing for it to have a few who are free so that they can be trained, as the last Chapter recommended”. And he added: “You will be perhaps happy to learn that we are about to conclude negotiations with a view to opening a small establishment in Castelnaudary, with three or four Brothers, with an allowance of 400 livres each and, in addition, doctors’ and surgeons’ expenses and medicine costs in the case of sickness whose treatment is the responsibility of the town”<sup>100</sup>.

In the meantime, the school year had begun, and the town authorities had collected contributions for the first term from the pupils they thought could pay them. They did not think they could ensure the upkeep of all the Brothers in any other way. Not prepared to give way, the Superior asked the Director on February 14th 1781 to let him know which Brothers were free, so that he could send them to their new destination, and to tell the authorities not to

collect the contributions for the second term: “the benevolence which has always been shown to the Brothers in Boulogne had led us to make a decision – much against our will – to reduce their number, but you know that we cannot act in any other way without being unfaithful to our state”.

Brother Maur accomplished his sad mission as best he could. When he handed over the letter he had received to the town authorities, he informed them that only four Brothers would remain at Easter, two for the ordinary classes, one for the commerce class and a serving Brother. They would manage with the fixed allowance of 1,400 livres, without contributions from the pupils, and he asked the authorities not to collect anything for the second term<sup>101</sup>.

<sup>99</sup> GA, CF 362, dossier 11. See a long extract in an appendix at the end of this chapter. However, we can make a few comments now:

1° It is clear that the Boulogne case was not unique. One has to conclude almost inevitably that where such practices were introduced, the Brothers agreed to them, but I think they did so in good faith.

2° The Brothers considered the Bull of 1725 to be an essential reference.

3° We can see how problems arise, at least when legal precision is sought. They come from the difference in language relating to the vow of gratuity: formulation, obligation, explanations.

<sup>100</sup> Letter dated October 27th 1780 (GA, CF 362, dossier 11). It seems that the Castelnaudary foundation could not have been made in the 18th century. But in CJ 501/4, dossier 9, p. 50, it is mentioned as being founded in 1790 and as having 3 Brothers, 2 classes and 109 pupils. No source is given.

<sup>101</sup> *Idem.* 1,100 livres fixed income, plus 300 which the town gave for the commerce class. The figures vary from document to document.

But the town authorities did not want to drive the Brothers out. They did not accept the validity of the arguments used by Brother Agathon and the Abbot of La Baume: "As the motives for this decision did not appear solid, and there were many reasons for reversing it, we thought we could confidently rely on the judgment of the same Sorbonne. As a consequence, with a view to assuaging the concerns of the Regime, we suggested we should consult the Sorbonne together, and for this purpose, the town council members delivered a "Memorandum for consultation" to the Regime, intending to send it to the Sorbonne once the Regime had approved it".<sup>102</sup>

### Official consultation and final verdict

Although the Superior did not have the slightest doubt regarding the validity of his position, he agreed to this arbitration and informed the town authorities of it. He reminded them incidently, that "the establishment of the Brothers in Boulogne did not come about, and did not last for many years, by taxing the pupils. These taxes are of recent date, and our predecessors in the government of the Congregation have always protested against them"<sup>103</sup>.

The "Council of Conscience" examined the position of both parties. The explanation of the Boulogne authorities was as follows: each pupil would be given an admission ticket, free of charge to poor pupils, and for the price of 6 livres to better-off pupils. The Brothers would not know who paid and who did not. They added that the

vow of the Brothers consisted in teaching the poor gratuitously, and this vow would not be violated because the poor did not pay. Moreover, the remuneration of the Brothers was not increased nor diminished by what the rich paid. Everything came back to the right of the town to find the means it needed to attain its aims. The contribution was so small it could not be considered payment for teaching.

The Regime, for its part, maintained that gratuity had to be understood in its absolute sense, because it was in this way that the Institute could attain its true aim, which was the instruction of the poor and, in support of its position, it frequently quoted the Bull. It mentioned, for example, the practical problems that would arise in a school in which some paid and others did not, as well as the claims of the teachers who lived on what they received from the pupils. In addition, the Brothers had made vows in an Institute which was committed to teaching gratuitously. Any changes in this commitment could lead them – and this was confirmed by experience – to leave a Society

<sup>102</sup> GA, CK 552/1, dossier 10.

<sup>103</sup> Letter dated April 25th 1781 (GA, CF 362, dossier 11). He accepts the arbitration, but changes the procedure. Instead of a joint memorandum by the two parties, the Superior sent the arbitrators the two memoranda (that of the Regime and that of Boulogne), and enclosed a copy of the Rules of the Institute and of the Bull of Approbation. In this way, the Council of Conscience of the university, found itself involved in a trial, rather than in a normal case of consultation.

by which they would feel they had been deceived. Potential candidates would refuse to enter, and all this would bring about the ruin of the Institute. The Regime concluded by asking the theologians if it would be possible to accept a contribution paid to the municipality on a voluntary basis and not fixed. The question was accompanied by a negative opinion.

On May 4th 1781, the three Sorbonne doctors as a group declared in favour of the position of the Regime. Invoking the Bull, the explanation of the obligation of the vows contained in chapter XVIII of the Rule, the formula of vows and the practical problems connected with any kind of collection of funds from the pupils, the theologians declared that gratuity had to be understood in an absolute sense, without any derogation, and without even a suggestion to parents to make a voluntary contribution. The judgment was signed by Jolly, Gayée de Sansale and Asseline<sup>104</sup>.

On May 24th, the certified copy of the judgment was sent from Melun to the Director of Boulogne, who was to register it in the community log before passing it on to the town authorities. A letter from the Superior explained the reasons for his action, expressed the hope that their differences would be settled, and gave permission for the number of Brothers in the community to be reduced if the means were lacking to ensure the upkeep of the present members<sup>105</sup>.

The town council discussed the matter on August 10th. Without hiding their ob-

jections to what had happened, they were realistic enough to accept the verdict. There would not be fewer than nine Brothers. They would cost the town authorities 2,700 livres annually. From this the 1,200 livres they had already received would be deducted, as would any gifts or bequests they would subsequently receive. On the 16th, they wrote to the Intendant of Picardy to ask for his agreement to the decisions taken, and they received an affirmative reply from Amiens on the 24th. To lighten the financial burden of the town treasury, a Boulogne printer had recently bequeathed to the town a capital sum of 12,000 livres, interest from which would pay for two teachers. The actual cost to the town authorities was reduced to very little, and the benefits brought by the Brothers paid for these increases.

What happened subsequently can be attributed to the perennial tug-of-war of life<sup>106</sup>.

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<sup>104</sup> GA, EF 362, dossier 11. Because of the importance attached to it at the time, because similar situations arose subsequently, and because it throws light on the situation and on the mentality of the people involved, it was thought worthwhile to quote in full the text giving the decision, in an appendix at the end of this chapter.

<sup>105</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>106</sup> GA, CK 552/1, dossier 10. The official record of the municipal deliberation, dated August 10th 1781, enables us to date the other documents relative to the negotiation. In the same dossier, it is said that, in 1790, the Brothers ran gratuitous schools in various parts of the town, that 2 of them taught in the naval district, that the programme included

## The upkeep of the Brothers

Ensuring adequate upkeep for the Brothers was a problem that existed already in the time of the Founder. Brother Agathon often found himself in a similar situation. The increase in the price of things, the deterioration of buildings, the shortage of public and private funds in those difficult times, would, under normal circumstances, have been sufficient reason for this problem. If we add to these causes, the bad will of some authorities or sections of the public, and even the bad administration of communities, then the situation could rapidly become impossible.

In this situation, Brother Agathon looked for solutions both within and outside the Institute. Within the Institute, he tried to induce the Brothers to live in the modest conditions proper to their state, having what was necessary, but nothing superfluous. This subject appeared often in his circulars to the Directors or to all the Brothers, on the occasion of making vows, and on many other occasions. He called for poverty, but not for meanness. When Brothers asked for what they needed, the Director should give it to them without making them wait unduly. When they travelled or changed community, they needed to be given clothes that would enable them to look decent. He warned Directors frequently about useless expenses and debts.

His dealings with local authorities to obtain better living and working conditions became more and more difficult. After the 1781 agreement, the Director of Boulogne had to renew his request to the town authorities for funds. In 1783, the Brothers in Compiègne who, since 1772 "had been occupied in the work of giving gratuitous instruction to the poor children of the town", appealed to the town authorities for help, as they could no longer provide for their own needs with the few means at their disposal. In 1781, the Superior asked the authorities of Dole to increase the salaries of the Brothers or he would withdraw them. Five years later, he felt there was still a long way to go before he would obtain the necessary funds to increase the number of Brothers in this town <sup>107</sup>. The endless list of other cases proves to satiety that public authorities were not sparing in providing opportunities for the Brothers to practise poverty <sup>108</sup>.

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reading, writing and arithmetic. In 1791, 9 Brothers are mentioned, living on 1,200 livres from private gifts and an annual tax on the ships that entered the port, calculated to be 500 livres. They refused to take the Constitutional Oath, and were replaced by lay teachers. A separate list gives the names and some information about the 9 Brothers. If the 1791 figures are accurate, and if that is all they received, the remuneration was really low.

<sup>107</sup> GA, CD 260/1, dossier 15 (Compiègne) and CD 255/1, dossier 21 (Dole).

<sup>108</sup> RIGALT 2, p. 499-510.

## OFFICIAL TEACHING ON GRATUITY

These facts and many others convinced the Superior of the need to clarify the question of vows in the Institute. The stability of and in the Institute, fidelity to gratuitous teaching, the obligations of the vow of poverty, were all areas of concern. As the written works of the day did not clarify sufficiently all these questions, given some of the specific characteristics of the Institute, Brother Agathon undertook the task of informing the Brothers on these subjects. Basing himself on his reading, consultation and experience, he set himself the task of providing the Institute with a solid, clear, uniform and definitive body of doctrine – doctrine that was inevitably marked by the legalistic spirit of his times.

### The Collection

As the supply of previous editions (all called the 1711 edition) had run out, the Superior prepared an extensively revised new edition which appeared in 1783<sup>109</sup>. There were numerous additions, and certain “treatises” from the first edition were modified more or less substantially. In particular, the pages on the obligations of the votes were remodelled more or less completely on chapter XVIII of the Common Rules. The texts are identical in the section on the vow “of teaching gratuitously and keeping schools by association”.

There remained, however, the task of bringing this text into line with the Bull, which described the fifth vow as “teaching

the poor gratuitously”. The text, as well as the formula of vows that was used, described it as “teaching gratuitously”. To avoid suspicion, and probably to have telling arguments with which to confront ecclesiastical and civil authorities, the Regime consulted the Sorbonne once again.

The “Council of Conscience” thought it was quite clear that the formula of vows used by the Brothers gave the fifth vow a wider scope than the Bull did. It contained a greater good, which could be the matter of a vow. Moreover, the Constitutions and the constant practice of the Brothers attached great importance to absolute gratuity, on which the continued existence of the Institute depended inexorably. For this reason, the Council thought “that the vow made by the Brothers of the Christian Schools to teach gratuitously included without distinction as its object all pupils, rich and poor, so that the Brothers would be simultaneously unfaithful to their Constitutions, their Rule and their vow, if they accepted presents, even from the rich” (Judgment given on March 14th 1783, signed by the already known Jolly, Gayée de Sansale and Asseline)<sup>110</sup>.

<sup>109</sup> Introduction written and signed at St Yon “where we are on a visit”, on March 10th 1783. The book, entitled: “Treatise on the obligations of the Brothers of the Christian Schools”, was printed at Rouen the same year.

<sup>110</sup> GA, CF 362, dossier 10. The memorandum submitted by the Institute has not been preserved. The



### The first Instructive Letter

With the backing of such authorities, Brother Agathon set about writing his first "Instructive Letter", officially dated January 1st 1784<sup>111</sup>. His aim was to dissipate all doubts about the stability of the Institute, to forestall or correct negligence in teaching, to prevent any possible abuse regarding gratuity. These constitute the three parts of the circular (p.3).

The Brother who was negligent in his teaching (the subject of the second part) would go fundamentally:

1° against the spirit of his state, which the Bull and the Constitutions identified as the spirit of zeal which must be shown in the education of children, and especially of the poor;

2° against his most sacred duties to children, the poor being the ones who suffered most from this negligence (the rich could find other teachers);

3° against the pious intentions of the founders who invested considerable sums of money<sup>112</sup> to have Brothers who gave children a better education than they could receive at the hands of other teachers;

4° against their vow of teaching. The Superior saw two components in the fifth vow: to teach (and to teach well, if possible), and to do so gratuitously. Chapter XVIII supported what he had to say: "By the vow of teaching children...one promises to do everything one can to teach children well and to bring them up in a Christian manner, and to employ well all the time al-

located to this subject". Consequently, "the vow to teach children obliges us not to neglect anything in their instruction". Serious and habitual negligence would be a formal transgression of the vow to teach, "a sacrilegious transgression which, by its very nature, is a mortal sin"<sup>113</sup>.

Among the means recommended to ensure that instruction was effective, was the practice of humility, a virtue of our state. We have embraced our state because it is not popular in the world and has little scope for ambition. But it is a state that is necessary for the salvation of souls, especially of

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beginning of the answer is missing. The contents of the consultation can be deduced from the answer. In the language of the document, by the Rule is meant the articles included in the 1725 Bull, and by the Constitutions, the articles of the Common Rules of the Brothers.

<sup>111</sup> GA, CD 260, several copies. In a post scriptum, there is an exhortation from the bishop of Boulogne to the teachers and catechists, dated April 30th 1783. When it reached Brother Agathon, he had already written his circular. In 1785, the first "*Instructive Letter*" was published with the second in a single volume without the post scriptum. There now existed a homogeneous body of writing on the vows of the Brothers. There were more copies of this edition, which does not appear to have been reprinted. This is the edition quoted here.

<sup>112</sup> These "considerable expenses" do not cancel out what was said about the continual struggle of the Superiors and Directors to ensure that the Brothers had decent living conditions. When pleading a cause, arguments are used where they carry most weight.

<sup>113</sup> On page 53, a third aspect of the same vow seems to be suggested: to teach "principally the poor".

the poor. We are happy in it, honouring and imitating the humility of Jesus Christ, who said he was sent by his Father especially to announce the Gospel to the poor, and who wished the children to come to him. (Cf. MF 86).

The third part of the circular treats in detail gratuitous teaching. Having established that much of the esteem in which the "state" of the Brothers was held came from "the disinterestedness which we profess", the Superior developed his ideas in four long sections:

1° The obligation of gratuity could not be doubted. It was proved by the words of the Founder, royal approbation, the Bull, the purpose of the Institute ("our real aim is the instruction of the poor"), the intentions of the founders, the constant practice of the Institute, even before the Bull, and the vow itself. To violate gratuity, even supposing it was not the matter of a vow, would involve faults again the other vows.

2° The nature and scope of gratuity became clear if we referred to the 1781 judgment of the Sorbonne ("that none of the pupils or their parents pay anything to the teachers for the lessons they receive"), to article 5 of the Bull, and to numerous passages of the Common Rules. If some income accrued from the sale of school materials or from contributions for heating, it had to be all used for the benefit of the pupils. Accepting presents would make the Brothers run the risk of becoming identified with mercenary teachers and transgress their vow

of teaching, and of teaching principally the poor ("the principal purpose of our state").

3° Absolute gratuity made the Brothers irreproachable, maintained them in holy independence, and earned them a generous reward from God for the numerous unpleasant occurrences and difficulties that were inseparable from their state, and which they had to bear. Those were its advantages.

4° Objections against the gratuity of teaching (this is the longest section) were only pretexts. Serious and urgent need was a precious opportunity for the practice of poverty, and the zeal of the Superior did not leave such afflicted houses bereft of help. Profits from boarding schools were for the Institute and not for the Brothers who worked in them, and presents in boarding schools would have the same bad effects as those in ordinary schools. Permissions obtained from Superiors which were opposed to gratuity were invalid by their very nature. The insignificant nature of the present did not reduce the evil, which resided in the fact that it was a present, and not in its size. Roundabout or dissimulated ways, or recourse to Brothers who had not made the vow of poverty, were likewise not legitimate. There had to be discrimination also in the choice of confessors: members of mendicant Orders, for example, might not understand the obligations of the Brothers in this matter, and treat it lightly. But one could continue to accept the help of persons who helped the Brothers before they sent their children to their school, if there was

no doubt regarding the purity of their intentions, beforehand and now. For his part, the Superior promised to show more zeal (of which he had already given irrefutable proof) to put an end to abuses which may have crept in on the pretext of situations of extreme need.

The circular ended with a summary of the three main subjects it had treated. Regarding gratuity, he recalled that it was absolutely necessary in order to respond to our vocation, whose real purpose was the instruction of the poor. Fundamentally, on this depended the continued existence of the Institute. The Institute would decline if we ceased to teach with the disinterestedness which was recommended to us. On the other hand, if our teaching were always perfectly gratuitous, it would flourish and achieve the purpose for which it was founded. This gratuity was like a precious treasure which had been passed on to us from the origins of the Institute. It was our patrimony, our heritage, our treasure. Without it, we had nothing: with it, we had everything. Consequently, gratuity was indissolubly linked with the accomplishment of the aim of the Institute; it was inseparable from the deposit that we had to preserve and transmit without impoverishing it...

### **The second Instructive Letter**

To complete his explanation of the vows, and having in mind, in particular, the novices, young Brothers and others who needed further instruction, Brother Agathon sent them his second Instructive Letter, a year

later, on the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, with particular stress on the first of these vows. He recalled that, among the faults against poverty, receiving presents or other remunerations from pupils was at the same time a transgression against this vow and against that of teaching gratuitously. The most interesting part was where the Superior explained why the vow of poverty "suits our state perfectly".

"First reason: It makes us accomplish much more effectively the primary purpose of the Institute, that is, the instruction of the poor.

"1° By its very nature, it removes all the obstacles which could hinder the spread or preservation of the gratuitous schools, because it obliges us to have a very modest lifestyle. This makes it easier to obtain an upkeep allowance, as is our right, than if we were allowed to ask for whatever we liked, wealth that was beyond our just needs.

"2° By its nature also, the vow of poverty removes whatever might prove difficult regarding teaching the poor. What repugnance, what difficulties have to be overcome to do this work in a worthy fashion! The less help the poor have to obtain instruction, the greater the need to provide it for them. But when teachers have made a vow of poverty, and are faithful to it, they willingly undertake the task of teaching them. They love it, they take pleasure in it. The poor in most need become the object of their affection, and receive from them an education and instruction which easily com-

pensate for what they could not obtain elsewhere.

“3° When we practise poverty, by reason of having made the vow, we are in a better position to teach the poor the Christian virtues. Our lessons, confirmed by our example, will make their education more solid and durable.

“Second reason: The vow of poverty is a safeguard, a powerful brake, for the preservation of the gratuity of teaching. You know, my very dear Brothers, the basic reasons which led our Founder to forbid us strictly to accept any presents from our pupils. We are obliged, therefore to observe total and perfect gratuity in our teaching. The vow of poverty, by its nature, prevents the slightest infringement of it”.

The vow of chastity helps in the instruction of the poor. It frees the teacher from having to care for a family, and encourages the desire in the parents of pupils – especially the poor – to send their children to the school and to support the work of the teachers, “seeing that we give up the most legitimate pleasures to dedicate ourselves without reserve to work that is as difficult and as disheartening as instructing children and bringing them up well” <sup>114</sup>.

### The Twelve Virtues

A few weeks later, the Brothers received from their Superior the *Explanation of the twelve virtues of a good teacher* <sup>115</sup>. Written at the same time as the previous work, it is not surprising that some of the ideas are repeated.

Thanks to humility, the good teacher “works zealously to evangelise the poor, to instruct the ignorant... Humility makes him pleasant, obliging, helpful, approachable, especially for the poor”.

Inspired by zeal, the teacher “will find all his satisfaction and all his joy in instructing tirelessly, without distinction, without any individual preferences, all the children, whoever they are: ignorant, without ability, lacking in the gifts of nature, rich or poor, well or ill-disposed, Catholics or Protestants”.

There are some interesting paragraphs on generosity: “He makes a perfectly free sacrifice, a great sacrifice, because he has dedicated himself voluntarily to something that is essential for his neighbour, namely, the instruction of children, especially of poor children...In order to be in a better position to teach well, he consecrates himself to God in a state in which he gives up all worldly goods, by the vow of poverty; the most legitimate pleasures, by the vow of chastity; his own will, that is, he makes an offering of his person as a holocaust, by the vow of obedience. Although he procures for his

<sup>114</sup> The end of the letter does not fail to return to the theme of “the deposit received”, “which not only must we keep carefully for ourselves, but which we must also communicate without the least alteration to the Brothers who will come after us” (p. 280).

<sup>115</sup> “*Explanation of the twelve virtues of a good teacher, by Brother Agathon*”, without the name of the printer. At the end of the text, there appears “Melun, February 12th 1785”. There are several copies of this work in GA, xCD 256.

neighbour benefits of infinite importance, far from obtaining any temporal advantage, he glories in the most perfect disinterestedness. ...He would sin, if he kept for himself, or in order to give to others, the rewards he received for his pupils. In such as case, he would violate poverty which forbids such conduct. He would sin, finally, if he received presents from the pupils, if he kept back something from them, if he sought praise, applause, flattery”.

To acquire such generosity, the teacher “must esteem his work...always doing it gratuitously, and without any other motive except the benefit of his neighbour and the glory of God” .

There are echoes of the Founder’s teaching in sentences such as: “Religion teaches us to find riches in poverty”; “the contrary defects...are to prefer a wholly human satisfaction to an act of supernatural virtue, and the perfect accomplishment of the will of God; to be more eager to acquire external qualities or profane knowledge than a necessary knowledge of religion; to undertake more willingly teaching that flatters self-love than to form Jesus Christ in the hearts of pupils; to seek their friendship rather than correct their defects”.

These instructions were for persons who, it was supposed, were inspired by the spirit of faith.

### **A constant reminder**

These basic and systematic instructions were always accompanied, whether before

or after, by some considerations regarding the service of the poor, gratuitous teaching and the life of poverty. These same subjects were present likewise in daily reminders, all more or less urgent, sent to individuals or to groups of Brothers, which took the form of admonitions, warnings or celebrations.

### **The 1777 General Chapter**

Most of the Rule of Government, which the Chapter finalised, remained in manuscript form till the 19th century. Its opening words define the Institute as “an association or congregation, whose purpose is to work for its own perfection, and to instruct and to bring up children, and especially the poor, in a Christian manner, by keeping gratuitous schools” <sup>116</sup>.

Among the means in order to preserve piety and the desired conduct in the Institute, the Rule of Government mentioned poverty. In order that poverty may be perfect, the Brothers had to “remove from their Society all signs of interest. And so, they will not accept any retribution or any presents from pupils or parents, the schools having always to be gratuitous” <sup>117</sup>.

The documents which came very quickly into the hands of the Brothers were the

<sup>116</sup> GA, BO 776/1, dossier 8. Original manuscript of the Rule of Government.

<sup>117</sup> *Idem*, chapter V. art. 7.

printed decisions of the Chapter<sup>118</sup>. In them they read that "The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a Congregation which has as its aim the education of youth and especially of the poor. Consequently, zeal for Christian and civil education must be its spirit"<sup>119</sup>. The wish for transparency in accounting lies behind the decisions regarding the sale of school materials, and the money collected for heating<sup>120</sup>. Decisions LVII and LXXI, already quoted, concern directly gratuity.

### Circulars

Brother Agathon is the first Superior of whom a considerable number of manuscript and printed circulars have been preserved. Among these are those which each year gave the names of Brothers due to make vows, and recalled the conditions they had to satisfy in order to be admitted. There was frequent mention in them of maintaining a life-style appropriate for the modest state of the Brother of the Christian Schools.

In the face of the lack of resources experienced by many communities, the Superior warned Directors: "Not to take any steps, not to submit any memorandum, not to write any letters to anyone in order to obtain an increase in allowances, however urgent these may be, without having explained to us the reasons, and having previously sent to us draft copies of the requests which they believe they are obliged to make, so that we may authorise them, if necessary"<sup>121</sup>.

But circulars were not restricted to admonitions: they spoke also of reasons for

rejoicing. In the circular announcing to the communities of the North the death of Brother Zacharie at Toulon on July 16th 1783, he highlighted the fact that at his funeral there gathered "a prodigious crowd of people, who praised the Brothers very highly, recalling the great service that they rendered to poor children"<sup>122</sup>.

Some years previously, the Superiors had mentioned to the Brothers the high esteem Pope Pius VI had for the Rome community and for the Institute as a whole: "Hardly had he acceded to the papal throne, than he gave proof of it that is worthy of our gratitude, by the increase in the allowance that he granted them". The zeal of these Brothers had impressed the Pope while he was still the Treasurer of the Apostolic Chamber<sup>123</sup>.

<sup>118</sup> Decisions of the General Chapter. Held at Rheims in August 1777 (GA, CD 260/1, dossier 6). How many decisions? In Chapter Register B, the list reaches the figure of 91. The printed copy quoted here contains 92, but the circular dated October 20th 1777, adds one "which had been forgotten".

<sup>119</sup> *Idem*. III: this is the prospectus intended for postulants.

<sup>120</sup> *Idem*. XLV and LXVI: the burning topic of the day was heating.

<sup>121</sup> Circular dated February 16th 1783 (GA, CD 260/1, dossier 16).

<sup>122</sup> Circular dated August 1st 1783 (GA, CD 260/2, dossier 6).

<sup>123</sup> Circular dated February 20th 1778 (GA, CD 260/1, dossier 9). The remuneration of the Brothers at Ferrara had been increased also. In Rome, the Brothers lived in great poverty over long periods. (Cf. Rodolfo Meola, *La prima scuola lasalliana a Roma*, p. 58-59, 68-70)

Later, when he publicised the Pontifical Brief which granted an indulgence each time the Brothers used the invocation “Live Jesus in our hearts”, Brother Agathon invited them to see in this the desire of the Pope “to reward the gratuity of the work we do for the Christian instruction of poor children”<sup>124</sup>.

### **Observations on public prize-giving ceremonies held at the end of the school year**

An apparently insignificant practice gave rise to this long circular dated April 10th 1786 and written at Maréville “which we are visiting”<sup>125</sup>. What was initially a public demonstration of what had been learnt and done during the year, accompanied by a low-key distribution of prizes to deserving pupils, had degenerated in some places into a spectacular show of little profit to the children.

Among the reasons advanced by those who organised these events, we find the desire “to give a public demonstration of gratitude to the founders of the school, to pay tribute in praise to their zeal for instruction, and to demonstrate the result of their pious generosity, in the presence of a multitude of children who, without this help, would, for the most part, wallow in ignorance”. These reasons lost all their weight, however, in the light of the great number of abuses which accompanied these celebrations. The eloquence of the Superior fed on its own flames and grew more powerful as he enumerated the abuses and condemned them.

Generally speaking, “public prize-givings prevent teachers from fulfilling the principal duties of their state, which are to teach all their pupils on an equal basis, and to pay particular attention to those of them who need most instruction, either because they lack natural ability, or because of their poverty, which deprives them of any other source of education apart from charity schools, whose principal aim is the instruction of the children of the artisans and the poor”. The fact is that, even without being unjust, strictly speaking – it would be unjust to abandon or neglect idle, lower ability and unattractive children, or to despise the poor or children whose parents had disgusted the teachers – the special attention paid by the teacher to the “performers” would sicken their companions.

We have to bear in mind also those poor fathers and mothers who can send their children only to charity schools, and only for a short time, because they need their help. Through a lack of time, these children ben-

<sup>124</sup> In 1787, Brother Agathon published in one printed book of 102 pages the decisions of the General Chapter of that year, certain Notices for the attention of all the Brothers, and a few previous circulars. The Pontifical Brief, dated November 21st 1786, can be found on pages 67-68. The sentence quoted is on page 69 (GA, CC 200/2, dossier 11).

<sup>125</sup> “Observations of Brother Agathon, Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, on the public prize-givings which take place at the end of the school year, in the various houses of its congregation”. Several copies in GA, xCD 260. New edition in 1826, Paris, Moronval.

efit little from school. These parents will not be slow to complain, attributing the lack of progress of their children to the inadequate dedication of the teacher, who is more interested in those will be applauded and rewarded during the end-of-year celebrations. And if parents have the determination to send their children to school, depriving themselves of their help for a whole year, and they see, after so much effort, the laurels being awarded to other children who are less assiduous and hard-working, do they not have the right to complain or to withdraw their child from the school?

He takes another case: "A very poor father of a family, who sees that his child has not been chosen to receive a prize, persuades himself very easily that the reason for this is because he is poor, badly dressed, because he has no protector, because he is unable to give presents to teachers, while the rich, those who are the best dressed, who please more, in a word, the most cherished, carry off all the prizes. The Superior does not miss any opportunity to recall that "the purpose of the Christian and gratuitous schools...is to bring up in a Christian manner the children who frequent them". Having pointed out that there was just enough time to complete the school programme which the Brothers must follow, he concludes: "Moreover, of what use could it be to the children of the artisans and the poor, for whom the gratuitous schools were especially founded, to be able to make elegant compliments, give speeches, or recite some other eloquent piece, when these same children

are often ignorant of what it is essential for them to know, either about religion, or about the small things that are necessary for their state".

Apart from these and many other shortcomings which harm the pupils, there were the dangers which threatened the Brothers. For example, a young Brother who was much applauded at one of these occasions could finish by despising ordinary tasks, including teaching poor children, believing himself called to higher things.

At the end of some 40 pages devoted to the evils which occurred, Brother Agathon felt able "to hope that...one will find it quite appropriate for us to condemn public events, declamation, recitation of dialogues and high compliments, and to forbid our Brothers, as we do forbid them by this letter, to prepare their pupils for them". His complaint would be repeated by his successors for many years to come.

### **The 1787 General Chapter**

The 1787 General Chapter was the first one to be held at the Generalate in Melun. Many of its decisions simply repeated or reinforced those of 10 years before, as for example, regarding the sale of school materials (XXI), money collected for heating classrooms (XXII), the prohibition to receive presents, remuneration, or free services from the pupils or their parents (XXXI 5<sup>o</sup>), and the use of tobacco (LVII) <sup>126</sup>.

<sup>126</sup> "Decisions of the General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, held at Melun in the month of May 1787; and several circular letters...". Rouen (GA, CC 200/2, dossier 11).



The Institute felt that it was now back on the right track. The house at Melun was

ready for many more Chapters. In fact the first would be the last.

#### 4. THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

No one in the Institute seemed to have foreseen the Revolution of 1789. There was no sign of apprehension when the Estates General were called in May. Two months later, on July 14th, there was the fall of the Bastille. By August, the last month of class, there was an evident lack of security. Brother Agathon informed the whole Institute that the making of vows would be temporarily suspended, and he recommended that travel be restricted to journeys which were absolutely necessary <sup>127</sup>. These were prudent precautions while waiting for a return to normality: it was thought that the current difficulties would not last.

The sky became darker in 1790. Sweeping changes in the legal status of the Institute, and even its disappearance pure and simple, were seen and felt, in the Congregation and outside it, as a distinct possibility. "The perhaps ill-founded fear on the part of the Brothers of the Christian Schools that they would be included in the general suppression of the religious Orders, or that changes would be made in their vows, Constitutions and Regime, seem to have convinced them of the need to make them better known to the public". This led to the publication in that same year of a booklet entitled "General Idea of the Institute" <sup>128</sup>. In its pages, the Superior explained to the revolutionary authorities ("the public") the

nature and purpose of the Institute, its thrift, and the necessity and usefulness of the gratuitous schools (there were those who objected to them), and gave some details about the Angers boarding school. One of the prejudices that needed to be refuted was that of "looking upon the instruction of the artisans and the poor as useless and harmful to society" <sup>129</sup>.

The printed booklet described the Brothers as forming an association of about a thousand persons, distributed among 116 houses, 5 of which were outside French territory. Their purpose was "to keep gratuitous schools"; one of their vows was "to teach gratuitously" <sup>130</sup>. So that no doubt would remain, he stressed the fact that the Brothers were concerned solely with primary education, which they provided free of charge, and in towns only: this was their only purpose and they never deviated from

<sup>127</sup> Circular dated August 23rd 1789 (GA, CD 260/1, dossier 22).

<sup>128</sup> "General idea of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools", Angers (GA, CA 101.103/1, dossier 1). On February 13th, the Assembly had voted in favour of the suppression of religious Orders with solemn vows.

<sup>129</sup> "General idea...", p.2

<sup>130</sup> *Idem*, p.2-3. Outside French territory, there were houses in Rome, Ferrara, Avignon, Bollène (all in the Papal States), and in Estavayer in Switzerland.

it. Their teaching included prayers, the diocesan catechism, reading, writing, counting and spelling<sup>131</sup>. 450 Brothers, working seven hours per day in charity schools, taught more than 34,000 pupils. Their remuneration enabled them to enjoy only a very modest lifestyle which identified them with the working class they taught. The Superior felt he was justified in thinking "that it would certainly not be easy to find a similar number of sufficiently disinterested teachers to instruct gratuitously such a great multitude of children, for remuneration as low as that granted to the Brothers of the Christian Schools". Sure of his case, he repeated that "their schools were absolutely gratuitous, and (the Brothers) received nothing from the pupils or from their parents"<sup>132</sup>.

Seeing that it was necessary to demonstrate the usefulness of primary Christian education for the children of the indigent classes and of artisans, Brother Agathon spent many pages arguing his case. On some of them we recognise the thinking and even the words of the Common Rules, and even of the Meditations for the Time of Retreat<sup>133</sup>. After a detailed explanation of the Lasalian establishment in Angers, this small work closes, as it had started, with "the wish to maintain teaching in the charity schools and in the free boarding school at Angers".

In reality, his wish was stronger than any hope he had. The refusal of the vast majority of the Brothers to take the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy did little to disarm the anti-religious attitude of the leaders of the Revolution. The immediate con-

sequence was the expulsion of the Brothers from almost all the gratuitous schools, and the increasing difficulty of maintaining the boarding schools.

With a view to easing the conscience of the Brothers, in the most likely event of the suppression of the Institute, Brother Agathon requested and obtained from Pius VI the authorisation to dispense them from their vows.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>131</sup> *Idem*, p.4. In boarding schools, drawing and geometry are added. On page 14, he says that it would be appropriate to add some drawing "to improve the mechanical arts". We see a desire to adopt a low profile in the hope that the Institute will be left in peace.

<sup>132</sup> *Idem*, pages 7, 9 and 15. The annual salary per Brother of between 300 and 500 livres is stated here as clearly insufficient. The Brothers work in very difficult conditions: overcrowded classes (at Angers, there are 450 pupils and 4 classes), small rooms, bad ventilation. The result is that many teachers are prematurely worn out.

<sup>133</sup> RC 1.4 is echoed in "*Gratuitous schools greatly benefit society...there is a great need for them, because the artisans and the poor are normally little instructed...*" (p. 13). Many other paragraphs of the Superior's text are inspired by the Rule, as one might expect. On the other hand, it is a pleasant surprise (cf. CAMPOS 1,57, note 2) to see on pages 24 and 25 quotations from MR 203,2 and 197,1.

<sup>134</sup> GA, CD 255/1, dossier 22. Petition of Brother Agathon and the reply from the Sacred Penitentiary dated November 15th 1791. This reply grants the archbishop of Paris and those appointed by him, the right to dispense completely from their vows the Brothers who ask. In this document, those who remain unmarried are exhorted to return to the Institute, if Divine Providence reestablishes things as they were before.

After being delayed for many months by the Legislative Assembly, the law of suppression was finally adopted on August 18th 1792. The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, considered as one of those which had earned the gratitude of the nation, was designated by name as one of those that was to disappear<sup>135</sup>. And in this way, France deprived itself of the only body professionally committed to the primary education of working class boys.

Two weeks later, Brother Salomon, the Secretary General of the Superior General became the first martyr of the Institute. The same fate awaited others, and many more would be persecuted. The Superior himself, imprisoned on July 23rd 1793, but freed fourteen months later, ended his earthly pilgrimage at Tours on September 16th 1798, without seeing the re-establishment of the Lasallian schools.

As for education, the State-as-Educator, which was born in the heat of the Revolution, was not lacking in fine projects. The far-reaching project proposed by Talleyrand in September 1791 (but which the Constituent Assembly did not have the time to study) envisaged universal and gratuitous primary education. Condorcet's Report, in April of the following year, proposed that every locality with at least 400 inhabitants should have a primary school. On May 30th 1793, the Assembly (Convention) discussed the proposal, and ordered a survey to be made of the educational needs of communes with more than 1,500 inhabitants. A Report presented at the end of June recommended that

there should be a school for every 1,000 inhabitants, directed by a man and a woman teacher. Primary education would be funded entirely by the State. The law of October 24th 1795 (under the Directory) was more realistic about the situation: the primary school programme would include reading, writing, counting and morals, and the pupils would pay the teachers for their tuition. A quarter of the pupils would receive free education on account of their poverty.<sup>136</sup>

The Consulate, on the eve of the 19th century, inherited an unenviable situation in the school sector. In the hope of seeing better days, the Government imposed tuition fees in all public schools, and reduced free places for the poor to a fifth<sup>137</sup>.

In the meantime, the Brothers' Institute disappeared almost completely. Whatever remained of it was in Italy. At Ferrara, all possible space in the house had been filled by the arrival of French Brothers. In Rome, the French give a new impetus to the old school of Trinità dei Monti, and by the end of 1793, they opened a new school in Piazza Di San Salvatore in Lauro. Still in the Papal States, a new gratuitous school was started up in Orvieto, and next to it, the first non-French novitiate. In that same year, given that it was not possible for Brother Agathon to exercise his authority as Superior, Pope Pius VI appointed Brother Frumence, Director of San Salvatore in

<sup>135</sup> Cf. RIGAUULT 3, p. 218.

<sup>136</sup> RIGAUULT 3, p. 181, 211, 371 and 378.

<sup>137</sup> RIGAUULT 3, p. 450-451.

Lauro, Vicar General of the Institute. The two Roman schools had to close down for a period in 1798 when the city was invaded by French republican troops, but re-opened the following year, with a temporary dispensation from gratuity. The schools in Ferrara and Orvieto were able to continue their activity without too many problems.

The community of Estavayer, where some French Brothers took refuge, broke up in 1798. In Belgium, a number of secularised Brothers seem to have run some small boarding schools, such as those at St Hubert and Tournai.

In France, there remained burning embers beneath the ashes. A good number of ex-Brothers continued to teach, most of them in a private capacity. Brother Vivien went to Rheims to organise a large school, which was not without its inconsistencies. The most extraordinary case was that of the community of Laon: protected through the complicity of the local authorities, the Brothers spent the whole period of the Revolution living in community and teaching according to the Rule. When their financial situation became impossible, they limited themselves to putting out a collection box for voluntary alms from their pupils.

\* \* \*

In the period from its approbation in 1724-25 to the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789, the confidence of the Brothers in the mission of the Institute had been restored. They became increasingly conscious that they were working for the education of

the working classes through gratuitous schools. To serve the poor, it was sufficient for the Brothers to go where they were called. The Institute was called to do this work by bishops, parish priests, town authorities. There was no need to go looking for the poor, because there was a great many of them. It seems there were absolutely no doubts about the purpose of the Institute. And yet, perhaps some reservations on our part are justified. The almost complete absence of any kind of description of the living and working conditions of the poor and of workers is somewhat suspicious: it is as if the Brothers thought that what was written on this subject in the foundation documents (Rules, Bull of Benedict XIII, Meditations of the Founder) was enough, and that they felt no need to update it.

Taking it happily for granted that they worked with the poor and provided them with a useful service, the Brothers turned their attention, and with great insistence, to examining the nature and obligations of their vows, and in particular, but not exclusively, of the vow of gratuity. Concern about the means relegated to second place the purpose. Basically, they thought that gratuity was the only means to achieve the aims of the Institute, to the extent that, any breach of gratuity could bring about the destruction of the Institute. On the other hand, they were certain that the maintenance of gratuity guaranteed almost automatically the achievement of the aims. In this debate, the legal aspect was much more to the fore than the mystical.

Two problems, among others, deserve a more detailed treatment. Both are related to the massive commitment of the Institute to gratuitous primary education.

One of these problems was economic in nature: with only gratuitous schools, which were barely capable of supporting the staff that ran them, the Congregation was unable to provide for its own needs: the upkeep of its members, the formation of its teachers, the general services. This difficulty appeared in the 18th century and it was not easy to find a solution. The existence of boarding schools was closely related to this problem, and most of the Brothers accepted it with an easy conscience. It should not be forgotten also that the Superiors of the Congregation were involved in many a fierce struggle to obtain equitable financial contracts.

The other problem was that of formation. After a fairly short period of initial formation (a year's novitiate and a year of teaching practice in school), the Institute put its trust in the continuing formation of the Brother, undertaken totally within the Institute. This system produced some excellent individual results, but any body which wishes to provide itself with formators, leaders and administrators, and wishes to be capable of coping with the new and diverse needs of the educational service, will feel the need of raising the level of formation.

The 1777 Chapter was clearly aware of this and proposed a certain number of means which it considered adequate and possible. Its first eleven decisions concerned the

postulancy and the novitiate. Next, it described a few minimal characteristics required by houses which received recently qualified novices (XII), the duties of Directors regarding personal and professional questions (XIII), the application that young Brothers must have in their studies (catechism, writing, counting, grammar), and the means to support and assess them (XIV, XV, XVI).

But this was not thought sufficient: "The Chapter, convinced that the preservation of the Institute and the effective achievement of its aims regarding the public, as well as the enthusiasm of the Brothers in the difficult work of their profession, depend on the lessons in piety given in the years of probation, on the formation of the young Brothers in the skills needed to educate children well", and on concern for elderly and sick Brothers... (XVII). There were two obstacles, however: the fact that the government of the Institute lacked the necessary financial resources, and that all the Brothers were working.

To overcome the first obstacle, the Institute decided to put the profits from boarding schools into a central fund, knowing full well that hardly anything could be provided by the other houses (XVII to XXI). To overcome the second obstacle, after having admitted that the current state of the Institute made it impossible to have Brothers pursuing exclusively their studies (XXI), but wishing to have some, it imposed a ten-year ban on the opening of new schools. In this way, "if it becomes possible to find the

money necessary, Brothers who are thought capable of learning, and who have made their perpetual vows, will be made to study full-time for as long as is decided by the Superior or by those who will be in charge of them in the houses he finds suitable for this purpose" (XXII). Given that "the subjects taught in boarding schools, such as mathematics and drawing, are beneficial for the Institute and the public, Brothers who are thought suitable will be sent to learn them in the houses where they are taught" (XXIII).

At the time of the Chapter, there were no Brothers free who could be sent to study, but later there were. For example, Brother Salomon, the son of a Boulogne merchant, who was bursar at Maréville, was relieved of his work, which he passed on to someone else. One of the custodial boarders was told to teach him algebra and geometry, and he went on to master these subjects properly at St Yon by the sweat of his brow. From 1782 onwards, he was in charge of the young Brothers who were doing further studies in the Generalate in Melun. We are

told by Brother Guillame de Jésus that, in the same 10-year period <sup>138</sup>, "the Superior sent seven or eight promising Brothers, recently professed or soon to be so, to the boarding school at Marseilles, supervised or directed in their studies by Brother Jubin", a 27 year old, famous for his penmanship. The young Brothers devoted their time to writing, arithmetic, spelling, catechism and grammar.

St Yon, Melun, Marseilles, perhaps we ought to add other names to the list of these institutions, the precursors of what would later be scholasticates. The Brothers who were trained in these houses were remembered with deep admiration for the extent of their learning. And so the increased commitment after 1777 gave results that were full of hope. One can only imagine how things would have developed if the Revolution had not put a peremptory full stop to everything.

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<sup>138</sup> "Towards 1780", says Brother Guillaume de Jésus (GA, CK 562/1, dossier 6), but RIGAUT 2, p.528, N°3, corrects him.

## APPENDICES

### 1. INCREASE IN REMUNERATION

As the gap between the cost of living and the remuneration of the Brothers widened, the Superior Generals Florence and Agathon approached local authorities to obtain an increase in the remuneration. Here are two examples of what they wrote.

#### 1.

#### **To the Mayor and Councillors of the town of Auxonne**

Gentlemen,

We find ourselves obliged by the frequent illnesses and infirmities of our poor Brothers who teach in the schools of your town to remonstrate with you in all humility, and to beg you to look with compassion on their situation, which could not be sadder, and to bring them relief. You can do so, Gentlemen, and we expect it of your benevolent hearts. We ask you to choose between two means of doing so - either will give us satisfaction and will procure for our Brothers the relief they need.

The first is provide an allowance for a 4th Brother to look after the house, prepare meals, see to the garden, keep the house in the state of cleanliness that is appropriate, look after Brothers in case of illness... This is something which is done in almost all our houses, in accordance with our Regulations, and the person who does this we call a serving Brother.

If a school Brother has two responsibilities at the same time, teaching and cooking, he inevitably collapses under the burden of his work, becomes ill and infirm, and either loses interest in his state, or finds it impossible to fulfil his teaching duties properly, which causes great harm to the education of the children. A fourth Brother, therefore, is very useful because it makes it possible to have three Brothers working full time in the school.

If your resources, Gentlemen, do not allow you to make this increase in your expenses, then, in the meantime, while we wait for God's Providence to inspire some charitable person to make this possible, it is absolutely necessary to reduce the three classes to two, by withdrawing the better-off children from the school, and then the third Brother will be responsible only for temporal work, as is the custom in our other houses.

You are most humbly requested, Gentlemen, to have the goodness to consider which of the two means mentioned above you wish to choose, and to inform us, before the month of September, of the result of your deliberations, so that we may act in consequence.

In the meantime, I have the honour, Gentlemen, to be very respectfully Your very humble and very obedient Servant.

Brother Florence.

Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Paris, June 28th 1774.

(Auxonne town archives)

2.

**Letter addressed to the Mayor,  
Municipal Magistrates and Councillors  
of the Town and Community of Brest**

Melun, December 27th, 1781

Gentlemen,

I have been informed about the steps you have been good enough to take to alleviate the sufferings of our Brothers who are established in your town. I am writing to thank you most humbly for this, and to beg you to redouble your efforts to ensure that each of them receives an annual allowance of 500 livres. They have explained to you, Gentlemen, in their various requests that this sum was necessary for them, if they were to maintain themselves and live with the frugality befitting our state, and they begged you to grant them this sum from March 1st onwards of the current year. By your decision of May 5th, you recognised the justice of their reasons and their request and, moved with compassion for their difficult situation, you were good enough to send your Intendant to grant them the supplementary allowance which was due to them, as well as well as compensation. Most of this compensation was granted to them without diffi-

culty, but it appears, Gentlemen, that the same is not true of the supplementary allowance. However, since the Brothers have proved that they cannot do without it, because of the high cost of foodstuffs, and because of the loans and alms they are often obliged to seek, despite their economy, charity and justice, the gratuitous and assiduous instruction provided by them seems, Gentlemen, to require a final effort on your part to raise without delay the allowance of the Brothers to 500 livres. The order of the schools, the order of the Brothers' house is often disturbed by the requests the Brothers have to make to procure help for themselves. Even our own tranquillity, Gentlemen, and that of parish priests and of well-off and charitable persons, must be disturbed by the frequent requests and solicitations of the Brothers. The labourious, indigent and, I would even say, miserable life the Brothers have led since their establishment in Brest, their profession, which obliges them to devote themselves entirely to Christian and gratuitous education, presuppose that they will receive sufficiently high allowances which will dispense them from having to act contrary to their state by begging for their bread, a step they must not and cannot take without detriment to regularity. All these are additional reasons and motives that urge you, Gentlemen, to make this final effort, and not give up till the Brothers' allowance is increased to the amount they need and request. This is the only way of ensuring the continued presence in your town of this Establishment, of whose utility you are per-



fectly aware. Given your benevolence towards the Brothers, your justice and your zeal for the public good, I have good reason to hope, Gentlemen, that you will not delay in putting the final touches to this good work. All your fellow citizens will praise you for the lively interest you show in the Christian and gratuitous instruction of their

children, and I personally shall be most grateful.

I am, with the greatest of respect, Gentlemen, Your very humble and obedient Servant,

Br Agathon, Superior of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

## 2. CONSULTATION OF THE ABBOT OF LA BAUME

*Brother Agathon consulted this ecclesiastic in 1780, during the dispute between the town authorities of Boulogne sur Mer and the Brothers regarding gratuity. His answer was included in the Letter from the Superior, written in Angers on October 22nd 1780.*

I pass now, Very dear Brother, to the reason for which you wrote to me and which is of such great interest to the Institute, that is, the gratuity of teaching. You are right, My very dear Brother, to consider this point essential, and what some would like to establish in several towns, quite intolerable.

First of all, we must examine carefully what the Rule prescribes, and afterwards what constitutes the matter of the vow to teach gratuitously. The Rule, as quoted in the Bull, which constitutes the law, says the following: Fifth: That the said Brothers teach children gratuitously, and that they receive neither money nor presents, when offered by the pupils or their parents. Earlier, the Bull explains the spirit of the Institute, and says that the Brothers should make

it their chief care to teach children, especially poor children, and that this aim constitutes its distinctive characteristic and, so to speak, its spirit.

From this it follows that gratuitous teaching is an essential aspect of the Institute. Since this Institute is established especially for the poor, that is, for those who are not in a position to pay teachers, its constitutive purpose must necessarily be to instruct gratuitously. Whoever wants the end wants the means.

Moreover, this purpose is of the greatest consequence for the Institute, since it was to achieve it that the Institute was founded. In a certain sense, both things are mutually inclusive. If instruction is not gratuitous, it is no longer the purpose of the Institute. If one wishes the Institute to fulfil its purpose, instruction must be gratuitous.

Introducing teaching which was not gratuitous would mean the destruction of the Institute, and this is not to mention the abuses and the justified complaints from mercenary teachers to which such teaching

would give rise. Consequently it is not allowed to introduce it for any reason whatsoever.

Without doubt, it would be easier for towns which cannot afford to give the Brothers an allowance, to entrust them with the education of children on the same terms it offers mercenary teachers. The education the Brothers would give would be worth infinitely more than that given by these teachers, but since the children would no longer be taught gratuitously, the Brothers would be sacrificing the general good of the Institute for the particular good of these towns. This would be, one could say, simply a dispensation, a mitigation of the law of the Institute for these special cases. However, the Superiors must never grant this dispensation, if they wish to preserve the Institute in all its integrity and all its strength, as indeed they are obliged to do.

I have an example, My very honoured Brother – that of the Carthusians – which can be applied perfectly to your Institute. What part does abstinence play in the preservation of regularity in a religious order, such as that of the Carthusians? This observance cannot, of course, be put on a par with the gratuitous teaching prescribed by your Rule. Abstinence is only one point of the Rule of the Carthusians. It is not the very substance of their religion, it is not its principal and true aim: it is only a means of achieving sublime perfection, for which purpose this holy Order is established. Gratuitous teaching, on the other hand, is in some way the only purpose of your Insti-

tute: it characterises it; it is, if I may be permitted to use the expression, a fundamental law; it is not simply a means of achieving the end for which it exists: it is, in fact, the end itself of the Institute. To reduce even minimally the gratuity of teaching would affect the very substance of the Institute. It would mean shaking it to its very foundations, and this is something a wise Superior could never allow, because if he did, it would be a very serious crime on his part. It might be said that his firmness was not enlightened, but this would be a reproach as ill-founded as that levelled at the Carthusians with regard to abstinence, before skilful theologians such as Gerson undertook the defence of their observance.

As for what constitutes the matter of the Institute vow to teach gratuitously, its scope does not cover all the pupils taught. In article 5, the Bull declares that the Brothers teach children gratuitously. The object of the vow is general. Article 9 adds that among the vows the Brothers make there is the vow to teach the poor gratuitously. The matter of this vow is clearly restricted to the gratuitous teaching of the poor, meaning that the Brothers must teach all children gratuitously, both rich and poor, so that if they receive from the rich some recompense for their instruction or some present, they will, as the Bull says, break an important and essential point of the Rule; and if they received some present or recompense for teaching the poor, they would commit also a sacrilege, that is, a transgression of their vow. This reflection deserves, My very honoured

Brother, much attention: it must serve in resolving cases of conscience regarding this matter. However, this was not something the translator of the Bull bore in mind, when, speaking about the vows, he translated the Latin "pauperes gratis educendi" by "teaching gratuitously" and not by "teaching the poor gratuitously". It was not a faithful translation, and I have a printed copy of it.

As the vow is the promise made to God in view of a much greater good, one can understand how the gratuitous teaching of the poor could be the matter of the vow of the Brothers, while the gratuitous instruction of the rich was only the object of a simple law. In fact, the first is evidently a much greater good, and even the principal good for which the Institute was established.

We must see now what should be thought of the practice that some would like to introduce in a number of towns in order to raise the money for an allowance for the Brothers. The practice consists in obliging well-off pupils, or those thought to be so, to collect a ticket from the town hall, or from somewhere out of sight of the Brothers. The annual ticket costs 6 livres and is payable in two instalments. Another practice consists in requiring parents to bring their children to the town hall, and obliging them, even by threatening to refuse to give them a ticket, to pay according to their means.

It is clear that, in this last case, one could not ask for sums proportionate to the means of the parents, and calculate them in a just manner, without going into details, and

without seeking information incompatible with the inviolable secrecy which families have the right to safeguard regarding their financial situation. It would be, therefore, an abuse, a revolting abuse, to use such a means in order to be able to teach children. But even supposing that, contrary to all evidence, this procedure was not a problem for parents, it would always be, in spite of that, like the first means, absolutely contrary to the law of the Institute.

I admit that, by using one means or the other, one could instruct the poor gratuitously, since it would be only rich pupils, or those supposedly so, who would be obliged to pay for their instruction. But by this very reason, the rich pupils or those supposedly so would not be taught gratuitously, since they would have to pay both for their own instruction and that of the poor... Without doubt, by adopting this practice, the Brothers would not transgress their vow to teach gratuitously, since they make a vow to teach only the poor gratuitously, as I have already said, but they would transgress an important law, the constitutive law of the Institute which, by imposing on them the obligation to teach gratuitously especially the poor, imposes also that of teaching the rich gratuitously, although teaching them is less of a priority than teaching the poor.

It is not important whether it is the towns or the Brothers who collect the money necessary for the allowances. It is clear that that the Brothers would not teach gratuitously

because, once again, it would be the children of the rich who would pay for them and for those who are poor. Moreover, it would be thought that the Brothers themselves were doing what the others were doing in their place, in accordance with the legal dictum: "qui facit per alium ac si faciat per se ipsum". And so the means adopted by towns to collect an allowance for the Brothers would be thought to be a subterfuge thought up to evade the law of the Institute.

There are so many more things one could say, My very honoured Brother, about this matter, but I think I have said enough to prove the need and obligation to maintain the present practice of the Institute, and not to tolerate, directly or indirectly, anything that can weaken, however little, the force and the vigour that should always characterise the most essential and the most characteristic law of an Institute that is so useful and so valuable.

### 3. REPLY OF THE SORBONNE REGARDING THE DISPUTE BETWEEN THE TOWN OF BOULOGNE SUR MER AND THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

(Generalate archives, CF 362, dossier 11)

#### Memorandum for consultation

The municipal officers of the town of N....and the Regime of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools request the Gentlemen of the Sorbonne to have the goodness to rule on the following case:

The town of N....wishing the Brothers to provide instruction for the children of both rich and poor parents, cannot pay the allowance necessary for the said Brothers, without imposing an annual tax of 6 livres on all pupils whose parents are thought capable of paying. The said sum would be collected by the town and serve to pay the allowance of the Brothers. The Regime of the Institute asks whether this method of providing instruction for the children of the town is not

contrary to the Rules, the spirit and the principal purpose of the state of the Brothers, which is purely gratuitous instruction.

#### A. Arguments put forward by the town of N...

In the town of N....there are endowment funds for the Christian Schools, but they have become insufficient even for the number of Brothers stipulated in the original agreement when they came to the town. These funds are even more insufficient now because of the addition of another class, deemed necessary, in 1776, and because of yet another class the Brothers propose to re-open today.

The representations made by the Brothers regarding this situation were received favourably. No time was lost in coming to

their aid, for it was recognised that it would be beneficial for the education of children to increase rather than decrease the number of teachers; and it was felt also that there was a need to provide them with a sufficient allowance for their upkeep. We came to an agreement with them regarding the number of teachers to employ in the schools and to look after the house, and the amount of the allowance each one should receive. In a word, we agreed to all their proposals regarding these two matters and objected to nothing. After discussion, the town council promised to pay them an annual supplement which, added to what they already received, brought the total amount up to the sum agreed for the allowance of each Brother.

As the town lacked the resources to cover this expenditure, it decided that the endowment funds would continue to be used for their original purpose, that is, the purely gratuitous instruction of the poor, but that, at the beginning of the school year and at the beginning of Lent, the children of parents who could afford to pay, would be asked to contribute 3 livres, and that the Brothers would not be involved at all in the collection of these funds. The only thing that was asked of them in this connection was not to admit into their schools any child who did not have a card or a ticket issued by the town authorities.

All these tickets, which are identical, are issued free of charge to the poor and for a fixed price to the others. Nothing indicates whether a payment has been made or not. The result is that no discrimination is possi-

ble on the basis of the tickets presented by the children, and the Brothers themselves do not know who has paid and who has not.

The Brothers have expressed some reservations regarding this method of funding the payment of their allowance, saying that it is contrary to their Rule, which prescribes gratuitous instruction. To make it possible for the Council to judge for itself, we reproduce here the text of the foundation Bull as it appears in their Rule:

“Fifth. That the said Brothers teach children gratuitously, and that they receive neither money nor presents, when offered by the pupils or their parents”. The same Bull, when it explains the spirit of the spirit of their Institute, says that “they should make it their chief care to teach children, especially poor children”, and as a consequence, they make a vow to teach the poor gratuitously. Given this, the Brothers believe that, because they are obliged to teach gratuitously, they must not tolerate the payment of a contribution as a necessary condition for being admitted to their schools, and that the method of funding the allowance proposed by the town was nothing less than a subterfuge, devised to evade the law of the Institute. They said that it mattered little whether the town or the Brothers collected the money necessary for the allowances, or whether this tax was high or low. It was not the size of the tax, nor the manner of collecting it which destroyed the gratuity of the school, but the tax itself. By the very fact of imposing it on well-off children as a condi-

tion of admission to the schools, the schools would cease to be gratuitous.

We believe they are wrong to be alarmed: the gratuity prescribed for their Institute is not and cannot be an absolute gratuity properly so called.

The Rule cannot be understood to mean that they are forbidden to receive any payment for the teaching they undertake. They never open a school unless they are sure of receiving an allowance sufficient for their upkeep.

In any case, article 5 itself, which we quoted earlier, explains unequivocally how the following words should be understood: "that the said Brothers teach children gratuitously" and "they receive neither money nor presents, when offered by the pupils or their parents". They must not accept any payment for their lessons from either the pupils or their parents. That is all that is forbidden.

This Rule, far from forbidding it, presupposes that funds for their upkeep will be found in some other way. It has laid down no rules, nor could it have, regarding the means to be used to find them. These means are in no way the concern of the Regime. The only means at the disposal of the town and of the parishioners, who have no more funds allocated for this purpose, is to impose an appropriate tax on the inhabitants. This imposition, where it occurs, does not destroy the gratuity of the schools.

One can quote what is said in the life of Monsieur De La Salle, the Founder of the

Brothers ("volume 1, p. 14"): We read in it that "our princes have judged that the establishment of the Christian and gratuitous schools is a necessary benefit for the Church and the State. That is why, ...they authorise the imposition of a tax on the parishes of the town and surrounding countryside, to provide for the upkeep of the masters and mistresses of the gratuitous schools".

If it is possible to adopt this taxation as a means of funding the upkeep of the Brothers without damaging the gratuity of their teaching, without going against their statutes, and without any need for them to be informed, it would seem that they should not concern themselves about the method used to impose this tax.

It is not without good reason, and it is only after mature reflection on the part of the town of N..., that it was decided to choose the method adopted by its resolution, a resolution that has to be submitted to the Royal Council of State for approval, if its conditions are accepted, and which will be implemented only after it receives the royal assent. It is not a case here of judging motives, but simply of knowing – and this is the question on which the Council is being asked to rule – whether the arrangement proposed is contrary to the statutes of the Brothers, and whether they can or cannot accept this arrangement without transgressing them.

The solution of this question is all the more interesting as it concerns not a proposed new establishment, which the Regime

of the Brothers could accept or refuse, but the reduction or suppression of existing establishments, because of the lack of funds allocated to them. As for reduction, this can take place only if the town cannot fund the supplement which has been accepted as being necessary, or makes it depend on conditions incompatible with their Institute.

We feel that we cannot refrain from commenting on what the Brothers say about the proposed collection, that is, that it makes no difference whether they see to it or whether town does; whether it is done in school or outside; whether the tax is high or low. It will be seen that the difference is too fundamental not to be felt. If they collected the money themselves, it would be contrary to the most formal article of their statutes, opposed to what is the essence of gratuitous instruction.

It would certainly be so, if the teacher received the money from the hands of the pupils. And how many abuses there could be as a result, either regarding the admission of pupils, or the good order of schools, if some pupils paid the tax and others did not, and if the remuneration of the teachers depended on the number of the pupils and on the fees paid, and if the comfort of their house depended on the extent of the generosity of the parents. This is what the Rule forbids, this is what it wishes to avoid, when it forbids the Brothers to accept directly the tax allocated for the payment of their allowance. In the proposed arrangement, on the contrary, the Brothers do not know which children pay and which do not. Their

fixed allowance is determined quite independently of the income from the contributions – it makes no difference whether it is high or low – , which, in any case, from any point of view, has absolutely nothing to do with them. Whether the parents pay or not, whether the income produces a profit or is insufficient, does not concern them at all. Whatever the situation, they will receive from the town treasurer the agreed supplement and nothing more. It is up to the town councillors to make up for a deficit, if it occurs, and to reduce the contribution , if there is money over.

All the children admitted by their schools would be equal. They would have equal authority over all of them to maintain good order. There does not seem to be any reason why this tax should concern them more than any other, nor the reasons for imposing a new one. Nor does it appear that it is connected in any way with the observance of their statutes.

It would seem also that the smallness of the payment should be borne in mind: a contribution of 6 livres per year, payable in two instalments, one at the beginning and one in the middle of the year, by the richest parents in the town, cannot be considered as a tuition fee properly so called, even if it were collected in class and by the teachers themselves. This is what happens in colleges in which instruction is considered nonetheless gratuitous. It would be different if the amount were sufficiently large to be compared with the normal fees charged by private teachers.

## B. Arguments put forward by the Brothers

The Regime of the Brothers is convinced that if it adopts the means proposed by town N... to provide for the upkeep of the Brothers, their schools would cease to be gratuitous, because it is clear that the rich pupils, by paying 6 livres per year for their admission to the school, would provide a sum sufficient to pay for their own instruction and that of the poor.

The Brothers would, as a result, be confused with the mercenary teachers. What characterises the latter, is that their pupils pay for the lessons they receive. It is evident, therefore, that the teaching of the Brothers would be no different from theirs, since it would be paid for by the rich children.

The said Regime is of the opinion, which is contrary to that of the councillors of the town of N..., that the gratuity prescribed by the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is not and cannot be anything else except absolute gratuity properly so called, since their principal purpose is to instruct the poor who are totally incapable of paying teachers. "*Qui vel egestate oppressi, vel fabrili operi, unde vitam eliciunt, operam dantes quarumvis scientiarum humanarum ex defectu æris impendendi non solum penitus rudes, sed quod magis dolundum est elementa Religionis Christianæ persæpe ignorant*" (Bull). It is essential, therefore, for the instruction they give them to be entirely gratuitous. They make it expressly the matter of a vow, and they have always regarded

this point as one of their most serious obligations, and there is nothing more in conformity with the spirit of their Rule which forbids them to accept anything at all, whether presents or remuneration, from their pupils or their parents.

It is true that they do not open establishments unless they are certain of receiving income or allowances for their upkeep, but the reason for this is to enable them to give their lessons gratuitously to the poor and the rich.

It is true that the Rule of the Brothers does not forbid them to provide for their upkeep and says nothing about the means to be taken to do so, but it should be noted that it condemns absolutely all those who would suppose that the Brothers receive from their pupils what is necessary for their upkeep, because means such as these are absolutely incompatible with the gratuity of schools. The Regime of the Brothers feels bound not only to oppose the imposition of a special tax on rich pupils, but even to refuse to match the number of Brothers with the upkeep allowance they propose to fund by the general imposition of a tax on all the members of a parish, because this tax, by adding to the existing public financial burden, and involving yet another demand for money, would make the Brothers disliked and unwanted, would provoke complaints and protests, and would cause them trouble. In any case, any taxation of this kind, would make pupils desert the classes of other teachers, who would not fail to raise a hue and cry, and to plot the downfall of the



Brothers. The instruction of children can be entrusted to mercenary teachers. There is no need for Brothers in towns and parishes which, lacking funds, cannot provide for their upkeep except by some form of taxation. And the Brothers would be all the more deserving of blame by agreeing to this arrangement, if as a result they could not offer their services, because they were not sufficiently numerous, to various towns which, when requested, were prepared to provide for their upkeep by means which were in no way opposed to the state they had embraced. The Regime adds that the means proposed by the municipal officers of the town of N... appears to be opposed as much to the spirit of the Institute as to its Rules.

The Bull "In Apostolicæ dignitatis" explains clearly in what this spirit consists, when it recommends the Brothers to make it their chief care to to teach children, especially poor children. "Hoc maxime cavere debeant est pueros præsetim pauperes ad ea quæ ad bene christianeque vivendum pertinent erudiant". This is the distinctive character and, as it were, the spirit of the Institute: "Instituti illorum dos præcipua et quasi spiritus". Thus, the teaching of the rich is not the principal aim the Brothers should set themselves: their real purpose is the instruction of the poor.

1. If there were not enough room in the schools to accommodate all the rich and poor children, would there not be a risk that the need to make up the allowance of the teachers would favour the admission of the

former to the detriment of the poor? And if it were thought a good idea to use the same approach in other towns, would not the schools fill up with rich and well-off people, so that there would be almost no room for the artisans and the poor who, in any case, would not dare to come because the others would insult them on account of their poverty?

2. Would not the tax imposed on the rich cause the "ashamed poor" and the people who had fallen on bad times, through the failure of their business, not to send their children to school because they would be required to pay?

3. Would not these contributions make the poor think that the Brothers preferred those who paid, who would make sure others knew of it? If the Brothers punished the faults of the poor pupils, their parents might think that, because they did not pay, they were looked down upon by the Brothers on account of their poverty.

4. Those who paid would want to be treated differently from the poor, would want their failings to go unpunished, and would want to be respected. If the Brothers found they had to expel them, they would be accused of injustice and asked to reimburse the tuition fees, and there would be no shortage of insults. If the same thing happened in the case of poor pupils, their parents would not fail to say that the real reason was because they could not pay.

The Regime notes also that the method proposed by the town councillors of the

town of N... is contrary also to the intentions of those who join the Brothers' Institute. They know that their state was instituted to serve the schools which are gratuitous not only in their eyes, but also in the eyes of those who frequent them. They know that the absence of this gratuity could not fail to endanger the continued existence of the Institute and the purpose for which the Founder established it, that is, the instruction of the poor. They have always and at all times professed to direct schools in which instruction is free of charge for those who receive it. This belief was present at the birth of the Institute and has been, and continues to be, held by the Brothers. It existed before the Bull which confirmed their Rules. It was a conviction and a goal they had when they joined the Institute and made the vow to teach gratuitously. Could they be prevented from fulfilling their vow? Should they infringe one of their Constitutions which they consider to be fundamental for their Institute, and which stipulates that their schools must always be gratuitous?

All their establishments exist solely to help children who cannot pay, and the only name they have is "charity schools". If sometimes better-off pupils are admitted, it is only because, unlike in some other places, there are not enough poor children to fill the classes completely.

It is unheard of for the Brothers to have ever accepted an establishment on terms different from these, or that it was ever thought possible to infringe them for the sake of their upkeep by taxing rich or sup-

posedly rich children. In a number of towns, the number of schools has been decreased because it was impossible there to avoid having recourse to means which would have made the schools mercenary.

On one occasion, when the schools in N... ceased to be gratuitous, because of the contributions the pupils were obliged to pay, the Brothers in them revolted, protesting against this innovation, and declared loudly that, when they joined the Institute, their intention had been to consecrate themselves to the service of the poor in the schools, in which their instruction was not paid for by the pupils, and that they would prefer to abandon their state if they discovered they were mistaken regarding the purpose they had set themselves. The Superiors could not have restrained them if they had not given them the hope that the contributions they objected to would not last.

Because the Brothers have nothing to do with the taxation, are not involved in any way in making parents accept it, do not collect it themselves, and do not know, or are supposed not to know, the identity of those who pay, it is inferred that it is not contrary to the gratuity they have vowed. However, this conclusion is invalidated by the intention the Brothers have always had to devote themselves solely to teaching children who do not pay, in accordance with the constitutive law of the Institute. However much one might try to reassure them by saying that, since they do not collect the contributions themselves, and are very much opposed to it, they could accept the income from it for

their upkeep, the Brothers would be convinced that they should close the schools wherever this was the case, as soon as they realised that this involved something contrary to their Rule and harmful to their Institute. Although the tax in question seems low, and not consistent with the benefit obtained by the pupils from the school, and since it is collected by the town, it is nonetheless incompatible with what is written in the Common Rules of the Brothers: "They will not accept anything in remuneration from the pupils or their parents, either as a present, or for any other reason whatsoever". It makes no difference whether the tax is collected by the town or by them, whether at school or outside, whether the tax is low or high, it would not alter the fact that the Brothers would no longer be teaching gratuitously.

From all this, the Regime has no choice but to conclude that it cannot and ought not accept this solution, since it cannot be reconciled with the Rules of the Brothers, the spirit of the Institute, and the reason for which they join it.

The Superior General of the Brothers would like the Gentlemen of the Sorbonne to decide whether the following method of providing for the upkeep of the Brothers would not also be opposed to the gratuity of the schools, and consequently, to the spirit of the Institute:

Parents would present themselves with their children at the town hall and receive an admission ticket to the Brothers' schools. Rich and poor would receive an identical

ticket, but those who were thought to be rich would be asked by the clerk to pay what they could or wanted for this ticket. The income from this collection would go to the Brothers, and the schools would not be gratuitous. This method does not seem to them to be any less incompatible than the preceding one, with the Rules, the spirit of the Institute, and the intentions of those who work in it. This contribution, which appears to be voluntary, in fact, would not be so, because, if one wanted to leave the poor entirely free to pay or not to pay a certain sum, would one oblige them to present themselves at the town hall to obtain an admission ticket? And why would a clerk ask them to pay according to their real or apparent means? Why would they be made to discuss their greater or lesser wealth? Why would the names of contributors be listed in a public register? And those who appeared rich, but whose resources were belied by their appearance, would they be willing to go to the town hall and make the humiliating admission that in reality they were poor? And this method of raising funds, is it not something more than a contribution which would not embarrass anyone? Is it not the same as the tax we spoke about earlier?

After these reflections, does it not seem that in the opposite case, it would be the duty of the Regime not to make Brothers available unless their allowance were raised by means which were consistent with their state and were in no way incompatible with their profession?

## ANSWER

The Council of Conscience, having received the above-mentioned memorandum, which appears to have been submitted jointly by the municipal officers of the town of N, on the one hand, and by the Regime of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, on the other, together with the Bull of Pope Benedict XIII, dated February 1724, and the Rules and Constitutions of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, is of the opinion that the Regime of the said Institute cannot adopt the means proposed in order to procure through their ministry the instruction of the children of the town of N...The means in question consists in collecting the sum of 3 livres at the beginning of the school year, and a similar sum at the beginning of Lent, from children whose parents are in a position to pay, the Brothers having no part in this collection, and being simply required not to admit any child into their schools who does not have a card or ticket issued by the municipal authorities. This means cannot be adopted because it is contrary to the express provisions of the Bull of Benedict XIII, which approves and confirms the Institute, to the formula of vows pronounced by the Brothers, and to the terms of their Constitutions. It cannot be adopted also because it would expose them to the danger of being diverted from the principal aim of their Institute, and could cause them irreparable harm.

1. Article N°5 of the Rules, included in the Bull of Benedict XIII, declares: "Quod

*ipsi fratres gratis pueros edoceant, neque præmium aut munera a discipulis vel eorum parentibus oblata accipiant*".

The formula of vows is as follows: "I promise and vow Poverty, Chastity, Obedience, Stability in the said Society and to teach gratuitously, conformably to the Bull of Approbation of Our Holy Father the Pope Benedict XIII".

Finally, in chapter XVIII of the Constitutions which speaks of "The Obligation of the Vows", we read: "By the vow of teaching children gratuitously, we promise to take every possible care to teach children well and to bring them up in a Christian manner, and to use well all the time allocated to this subject, and not to demand nor accept anything whatsoever in remuneration from the pupils or their parents, either as a present, or for any other reason whatsoever, and not to employ the parents of pupils to undertake some work in the hope that they will do it without asking to be paid for it".

In chapter I of the Constitutions, we read also: "The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a Society in which profession is made of keeping Schools gratuitously, and this is essential for their Institute".

It is, therefore, an indispensable obligation for the Brothers of the Christian Schools to teach gratuitously. This obligation is clearly expressed in the Bull which confirms their Institute; they contract it in formal terms by the vows they pronounce; and finally, it is clearly indicated to them in the

chapter of the Constitutions which speaks of the obligation of the vows, and the others mentioned above. However, the arrangement that concerns us here, totally destroys the gratuity of instruction. It is evidently necessary to provide for the upkeep of those who devote themselves to gratuitous instruction and, when they accept this work, they do not renounce their right to receive their upkeep. But for instruction to be gratuitous, it is essential that none of the pupils and none of the parents pay anything to the teachers for the lessons they receive.

Despite this, according to the means proposed, some of the pupils or their parents, that is, those who are rich, would each pay 6 livres each year for the upkeep of the Brothers, for the lessons they received, and the safeguards that are proposed do not remove the difficulty. The result would be simply that the Brothers would not receive directly what was paid for them, and that perhaps they would not know even which pupils had their lessons paid for by their parents, but it would still be true that some of the parents of their pupils would each pay 6 livres each year for their lessons, and that consequently their teaching would cease to be completely gratuitous.

Article 5 of the Rules, included in the Bull which confirms the Institute, does not give a different interpretation. This article establishes two things: 1° That the Brothers will teach gratuitously (*quod ipsi fratres gratis pueros edoceant*), that is, according to the definition of gratuitous instruction established above, that neither the pupils nor

their parents will pay anything for the Brothers in return for their lessons, and the Pope wishes this to distinguish the Brothers from mercenary teachers. The same article establishes: 2° That the Brothers will accept neither presents nor remuneration that the pupils or their parents might offer (*neque praeium aut munera a discipulis vel eorum parentibus oblata accipiant*). By this, the Pope wishes the Brothers to act differently from these teachers who, obliged to give gratuitous instruction because they are established for this purpose, permit themselves, nevertheless, to accept presents offered to them by their pupils or their parents, not as remuneration for their lessons, which are paid for in another way, but as a voluntary token of gratitude on the part of those they instruct or of their parents. And so, the second part of this article is not a modification of the first, but on the contrary, includes a new provision. The Brothers are not only forbidden to accept any present from their pupils, but they are obliged also to ensure that none of them are made to pay anything at all for the lessons they receive. The small size of the payment demanded of them would be no justification, since what is prescribed is absolute gratuity of instruction.

Finally it is easy to see the difference between a tax imposed on the inhabitants of a town to provide for the needs of the Brothers, and the arrangement proposed in this last case, in which it is some of the pupils or their parents who each pay for the Brothers in return for the lessons they give,

which destroys totally the gratuity of the instruction. In the first case, on the contrary, it is other taxpayers who contribute to the upkeep of the useful teachers, something which does not infringe at all the said gratuity.

2. The principal aim of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is the instruction of poor children. This is what is clearly expressed in the first article of the Rule included in the confirmative Bull: "Quod ipsi (Fratres) sub clientela sanctissimi Infantis Jesu, et patrocinio sancti Josephi instituti, hoc maxime cavere debeant ut pueros, præsertim pauperes, ad ea quæ ad bene christianæque vivendum pertinent, erudiant; Instituti illorum dos præcipua et quasi spiritus Instituti, puerilis institutionis ad christianæ legis normam, zelus esse debeat"

The arrangement proposed would expose them to the danger of being diverted from this aim:

1. Because in the event of competition, it could happen that children whose parents paid the tax would be preferred to those whose parents did not.

2. Because it could happen also that the "ashamed poor" would not dare to present their children in order to obtain a ticket free of charge for fear of having to make the always humiliating admission of their situation. And if these problems arose, the Brothers, even if committed by preference to the instruction of the poor, would not be able to remedy them as they would have prom-

ised not to admit into their schools any pupils who did not have a ticket issued by the town councillors. And so, while the Brothers instructed rich children, poor children would be deprived of their instruction, even though their right to have it was superior to everyone else's.

3. The proposed arrangement could cause the Institute irreparable harm, by discrediting the teaching of the Brothers, by making them disliked, by causing some members of the said Institute to leave, and by preventing others from joining it.

a) We would be deceiving ourselves if we believed that it would not be known which children's fees were paid by their parents, and which were not. Parents who paid for their tickets would not fail to inform their children, and these would speak about it in school. The schools would be composed of children who knew they did not all have the same status, and some of them would not want to share the status of the others. Parents who had paid would demand special attention for their children. Parents who had not paid would have less confidence in the teachers and, when their children were punished because they were guilty, they would claim that they were being treated badly, precisely because they were poor. And so, discipline in the school would be undermined, and the teaching of the Brothers discredited.

b) The mercenary teachers would complain that the Brothers were harming them by admitting into their schools children

whose parents were in a position to pay, and would try to make them disliked. The Brothers who submitted the above memorandum to the Council affirmed that they had already been taken to court on a number of occasions because they admitted into their schools children whose parents were in a position to pay, although in practice, they did not pay anything. What would happen, therefore, when it was discovered that some of the parents had paid the tax in question?

c) The complaints, mentioned in the memorandum, made by the Brothers who were in the schools where the proposed arrangement was tried out, complaints which the Superiors were able to defuse only by the assurance that the arrangement would be shortlived, indicate sufficiently clearly that, if it were adopted by the Regime, there

would be a real risk that a number of members would leave the Institute, and the same reason that made them leave would also prevent others from joining it. In fact, if instruction ceased to be entirely gratuitous, the Institute would, by that very fact, seem to have something debased about it. In the opinion of the Council, the second way of funding the allowances of the Brothers, proposed at the end of the memorandum, has the same disadvantages as the one that has just been discussed and, consequently, cannot be adopted by the Regime of the Institute.

Examined at the Sorbonne on May 4th 1781.

Signed: Jolly, Gayée de Sansale and Asseline.

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## CHAPTER 3

# THE REBIRTH OF THE INSTITUTE

(1800-1830)

If, from a certain point of view, we can say that the French Revolution ended in 1799, the period that followed was nonetheless marked by it in a number of ways. Blatant attempts to return to the past all ended in failure.

At the very least, from the Revolution onwards, the State was secular, despite the desire of Charles X to revive the tradition of anointing the King in Rheims cathedral, and his attempts to associate throne and altar. Not all the potential repercussions of this new secularity made themselves felt immediately, but there was one tendency which grew strong, and which was not simply a passing weakness that one could hope to see cured within a short time. This secular State went so far as to promote religion, but in a framework and with characteristics which made it functional.

The Revolution gave the poor freedom without security: with the disappearance of

the guilds, the workers were at the mercy of financial interests. The new Civil Code of 1804 enshrined the right to personal property. In the case of a dispute between employer and worker, it was assumed that the employer was right. The lack of any regulation of working conditions and remuneration, caused a fall in salaries, and encouraged the exploitation of men, women and children<sup>1</sup>. Poverty became a widespread and permanent disease called pauperism, that was epidemic and endemic.

The Church, as an institution, did not seem to know how to react. Busy condemning and trying to contain the current bourgeois liberalism, it had no ready solution for the disaffection of the working class. Doctrinal stagnation did not prevent, however, an extraordinary proliferation of open-handed charity. Without questioning in any fundamental way the social system, a great many Christians attempted to come to the rescue of those who were its victims.

### 1. EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN FRANCE

#### **Educational policy of the Revolution**

Regarding education, one of the proposals made by certain 18th century philosophes was the creation of "national" education.

This idea was taken up by the Revolution. From that moment onwards, it became pos-

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<sup>1</sup> RIGAULT 4, p. 336 and R. PÉRONOUD, *op.cit.*, p. 332ff.

sible to speak of a true educational policy. The State itself determined the ends and means of education, and saw to its implementation. And so the State-as-Educator was born, and its life would be long. From then on, education became a secular matter, provided by the State, or at least, directed and strictly controlled by it. Public school became synonymous with State school, and the teacher became a State civil servant. It was the State that educated, and it educated for the State.

Initially, the debate swung from one extreme to another. Some believed school education should provide simply the means to acquire knowledge. Others wanted it to provide basic guidelines for personal behaviour, and give moral and civic training. Some advocated total freedom, and others, total control by the State. It was discussed whether it should be free of charge or paid for, egalitarian or elitist, humanistic or scientific.

The bourgeoisie who made the Revolution – with the help of the masses, but for their own benefit – thought of education in terms of the new order, as a political tool. Education was to produce individuals committed to national interests, devoted and disciplined servants of the Nation, that is, of the new order.

As for the practical implementation of its ideas, the Revolution could take credit for a degree of success in higher education, in the field of technology and science. On the other hand, in the area of popular instruction, its results were nil, not to say re-

cessive. Church contributions which used to finance schools were no longer available, and there was no sign of alternative funding. It was not possible to replace the teachers once provided by the Church, either as regards number or quality. Salaries were low, school materials were scarce or non-existent. To badly thought out or unrealistic legislation were added the economic difficulties of the country, internal dissension and a permanent state of war with the kingdoms of Europe. As the century drew to a close, schools were in a disastrous situation.

### **The educational policy of Napoleon**

The “coup d’état” of the 18th Brumaire (November 9th 1799) delivered into the hands of Citizen First Consul Napoleon Bonaparte a country in great need and desirous of order. He fulfilled its expectations, but at a price.

A survey launched by the education minister quickly revealed great concern regarding education. A long examination of the facts resulted in a law, adopted on the 11th Floréal, Year X (May 1st 1802), and known as the Fourcroy Law. By virtue of this law, the State made primary education the exclusive responsibility of communes. Parents paid for the education of their children according to a tariff fixed by the town authorities. Poor children were admitted free of charge, but they could not constitute more than a fifth of all the pupils. In connection with primary education, the law made no mention of private schools. At secondary school level, however, they were mentioned

side-by-side with the schools run by the communes. These schools taught French, Latin, the rudiments of geography, history and mathematics. The law concerned primarily the lycees (secondary schools) and special schools. These latter were exclusive State establishments, highly organised in every detail, intended to train the upper echelon administrators, military personnel and civil servants needed by the State.

On December 2nd 1804, the First Consul crowned himself Emperor in the presence of the Pope. On April 4th 1806, a decree ordered the publication and the obligatory and exclusive use of the "Imperial Catechism". In this way, all French people could learn the same truths and in the same way. Among these truths we find: "Christians owe the princes that govern them, and we owe this in particular to Napoleon I, our Emperor, love, respect, obedience, fidelity, military service, and the taxes ordered for the preservation and defence of the Empire and its throne. We owe him also fervent prayers for his health and for the spiritual and temporal prosperity of the State". The primary reason for so many obligations is "because God, who creates empires and distributes them as he wishes, by showering our Emperor with gifts, in both peace and war, has established him as our sovereign, and has made him the minister of his power and his image on earth", etc...<sup>2</sup>.

There developed at the same time an entirely centralised and uniform view of education, especially of the education offered to its civil servants. The ideal would be a

body of teachers, totally devoted to the State, completely committed to it, working within a perfectly coordinated organisational structure, and all sharing an absolutely identical set of aims and inspirations. In a word, they would constitute an "Order" on the Jesuit model, but secular ("Jesuit" and "congregation" were words banned by the Revolution, and even before). This was the idea behind the creation of the Imperial University, by the law of May 10th 1806: "1° There will be formed, and called University, a body exclusively responsible for education and public education in the whole of the Empire. 2° The members of the teaching body will contract special and temporary civil obligations. 3° The organisation of the teaching body will be submitted, in the form of a law, to the Legislative Body, during the session of the year 1810". The monopoly of the State was expressed in concise and unequivocal terms.

The long decree, promulgated on March 17th 1808, which outlined the organisation of the University, was not the fruit of laws, nor of 4 years of waiting, but of unceasing work and more than 20 successive drafts: "Public education in the entire Empire...is entrusted exclusively to the University"; "No school, no educational establishment of any kind can be created outside the Imperial University and without the authorization of its head. No one can open a school or teach publicly without being a member of the Imperial University and a graduate

<sup>2</sup> See RIGAUD 4, p. 96-97.

of one of its faculties". Basic education, obligatory for all schools, included in their curriculum the precepts of the Catholic religion, fidelity to the Emperor and to the Napoleonic dynasty, and obedience to the University statutes. These statutes had the uniformity of instruction as their objective, and aimed to train for the State citizens who were attached to their religion, their prince, their country and their family.

Article 102 concerned the Brothers: "The Brothers of the Christian Schools will be authorised to teach and will have the support of the Grand Master, who will endorse their statutes, administer the oath to them, will prescribe a particular form of dress for them, and will have their schools supervised. The Superiors of these Congregations (sic) will be able to be members of the University"<sup>3</sup>.

In reality, the monopoly exercised by the University was characterised by "variable geometry"<sup>4</sup>: Napoleon's control concerned the "thinking" classes, capable of supplying civil servants, and who studied at the secondary and tertiary level. Basic education for the masses had no interest for him, provided it stayed within its own parameters. He would be happy to see it totally entrusted to the Brothers. In practice, during the Empire and afterwards, primary education remained the responsibility of the communes.

### **Educational policy under the Restoration**

The abdication of Napoleon and the subsequent enthronement of Louis XVIII in

April 1814, brought about no changes in the structure of the University, although it did change hands. The decree of February 1815, which suppressed the University of France and the position of Grand Master, and replaced it by 17 provincial universities, could not be implemented for lack of time. Less than two weeks later, Napoleon landed in the bay of St Juan and, three weeks later (March 20th), was back in the Tuileries.

On June 18th, Napoleon's star was extinguished at Waterloo. Two days previously, the "Society for Primary Education" was born in Paris, under the patronage of the Minister of the Interior, Lazare Carnot, and was composed of liberals. Its aim was to give a strong impulse to popular education, by the diffusion of the "Lancastrian method", also called "mutual instruction", a method which originated in England. The Society had the support of the civil servants of the second Restoration, and mutual schools continued functioning for many decades.

Not peacefully, however! While in the majority of schools, especially in rural ar-

<sup>3</sup> See RIGAULT 4, p. 101.110 and circular 112, dated April 15th 1902, p. 73-74. Some have seen in this use of the plural the wish of Napoleon to establish a body of law applicable to all the Congregations of teaching Brothers. This is not obvious. In 1808, there were only two societies of this kind, both with the same name: the one founded by John Baptist de La Salle, and the other by Charles Tabourin, which had Jansenistic tendencies and was organised differently.

<sup>4</sup> Claude LELIÈVRE, *Histoire des Institutions scolaires* (1789-1989). Paris, Nathan, 1990, p. 51ff.

as, teaching continued to be individual (and actual circumstances would have made any other approach impossible), there now came onto the scene the simultaneous method, devised by the Brothers more than a hundred years before, used successfully in towns, and known as the “Brothers’ method”. And now there appeared another method which promised that a single teacher, helped by the more able of his students (monitors) could teach groups of hundreds of children simultaneously, using a complicated system of signs.

The battle over methods did not begin as a calm didactic joust. In both camps, acceptance or rejection depended largely on other reasons. The simultaneous method was considered to be the “Brothers’ method” and therefore Catholic and monarchistic. Religion was taught in their schools and it was quite clear who commanded and who obeyed. It was a French method. Because of the permanent and direct contact between the teacher and the pupils, it encouraged true education, that of the heart. The mutual method was more economical, more republican, authority was exercised in turn by different persons and responsibility was shared. It came from England, which was Anglican, and it was introduced by liberals. It put a distance between the teacher and his pupils, and made it impossible to educate the heart. Religion was not taught in school. The Church defended the simultaneous method, and it was not unknown for priests in the pulpit to call Lancastrian schools “schools

of the devil”. Liberals tended to defend mutual schools.

Before the battle between the two methods became generalised, but during the first skirmishes, a Royal Ordinance was published on February 29th 1816, a document of fundamental importance on which public primary education in France would be based<sup>5</sup>. In the preamble, the King declared he was “convinced that one of the greatest benefits we can procure for our subjects is an education suited to their respective situations; that this education, especially when it was founded on the true principles of religion and morality, is not only one of the most fruitful sources of public prosperity, but it contributes to the good order of society...”. The ultimate purpose was clearly defined: order. The purpose of religion was likewise to promote order. There was no room for “equality of opportunity”. Education had to be tailored to the situation (the “state”) of each individual.

The ordinance made school obligatory, at least on the commune level. The commune had to ensure that all children within its jurisdiction received primary education, which would be free for the poor. Persons wishing to be teachers would have to produce a certificate of good conduct, and ob-

<sup>5</sup> It was in this way that liberalism, dominant during the first part of Louis XVIII’s government, brought about the first decisive intervention of the State in primary education. This is a constant: French liberalism, and the many liberals inspired by it, is state-orientated regarding education.

tain, by taking an examination, a Certificate of Competence<sup>6</sup>. To teach in any given place, the teacher would need the authorization of the rector of the academy and the agreement of the prefect of the department. The curriculum and the methods to be used were those indicated by the office of Public Instruction<sup>7</sup>. Detailed directives concerning appointments and how the system functioned reinforced the preponderant presence of the State on supervisory committees, in the imposition of methods and regulations, in the endorsement or rejection of the appointment of teachers. Persons working in a private capacity had no room to manoeuvre.

Nothing was specified regarding the training of new teachers. It was supposed that "contagion" would be sufficient. An experienced teacher would have responsibility over a number of classes, and it would be his task to teach his assistants the art of teaching. Likewise, local authorities were authorised to give financial help to novices belonging to religious institutions. The situation of the Brothers' Institute had not changed from what it was previously: there are two specific references to it in the document: "All religious and charitable associations, such as that of the Christian Schools, can be authorised to provide...teachers for communes which request them"; and "The "brevet intermédiaire" (intermediate teaching certificate) will be awarded to teachers capable of teaching pupils according to the method of the "Brothers of the Christian Schools"<sup>8</sup>.

From 1820 onwards, there set in a strong conservative reaction. In 1822, the title of Grand Master of the University was restored, and an ecclesiastic, Mgr Frayssinous was appointed to the post. In 1824, to the title was added that of Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs and of Public Instruction. The Royal Ordinance of April 8th 1824 gave the oversight of primary education to the episcopate. A municipal commission, under the chairmanship of the bishop or of his representative, and consisting of the mayor, two leading citizens appointed by the prefect of the department, and two ecclesiastics, was given the task of ratifying the appointment of teachers for the schools of the commune or their equivalent. The same commission supervised the work of the teachers and could dismiss them. For a short time, one monopoly replaced another, but did not create freedom. The Church of France rejoiced at the turn taken by events, and thought that things were now the same as they had always been. The voice of Félicité de

<sup>6</sup> The Certificate of Competence gave rise to a long controversy between the Superiors of the Brothers and the government. In February 1819, the government conceded victory to the Institute: the Brothers could obtain the certificate by simply showing the "obedience" received from the Superior. But that was not all: other religious teaching congregations obtained the same authorisation.

<sup>7</sup> A body composed of 5 members, created on August 15th 1815, to replace the Grand Master and the Council of the University. It depended on the Ministry of the Interior.

<sup>8</sup> This is developed further in RICAULT 4, p. 347-352.

Lamennais in support of a Church independent of political power seemed discordant in the midst of the triumph which, in fact, could not last.

The accession to the throne of Charles X may have given the impression that it would, but in 1828, he had to give way to pressure from the liberals. Regarding education, the Ordinance of April 21st began by declaring that "in a good educational system, religious teaching and human teaching are inseparable", but then proceeded to initiate a process of partial de-clericalisation: henceforward, only a third of the commission in charge of each arrondissement would be appointed by the bishop, and the power to make decisions reverted to the University. The episcopate, upset by this reduction in power, could do nothing except express its disapproval. As for the Lancastrian schools, they hoped for better times.

### **The Institute once more recognised in France**

The Institute was dissolved by the Revolution. Ample opportunity to obtain dispensation from vows had reduced to the lay state all the Brothers who asked, and that was the majority. We know already how little there remained of the Institute and in what state. The absence of the Institute was felt in popular education. In answer to the survey launched by the minister Fourcroy in 1801, the towns complained about the disappearance of these good teachers, and some proposed that they should be purely and simply reinstated, seeing this as the best rem-

edy for the disastrous situation in which popular education found itself<sup>9</sup>.

The calming effect of the Consulate and especially of the Concordat of 1801 made it easier for Brothers to regroup in Lyons, Paris, Rheims and, in their own way, in Toulon, to mention but a few towns.

Those who formed a group in Lyons benefitted from the protection of Cardinal Fesch, archbishop of the city, French Ambassador to the Holy See, and above all, uncle of the First Consul. Wishing to give a certain stability to this group of men who provided gratuitous Christian education to poor children, he asked the government to give them a legal status. This was not an easy undertaking, since all orders, congregations and corporations had been suppressed. Minister Portalis, into whose hands the matter fell, had to do a balancing act to draw up a report which safeguarded the law and satisfied the Cardinal. The document submitted on December 2nd 1803 for Napoleon's signature presented a very prudent picture of the aims, composition and method of functioning of the Institute. In his view, the Brothers could not be considered as forming a corporation, since they were simply associated for the gratuitous education of children, as in Lyons. The minister had heard that other Brothers were responsible, as individuals and in their capacity as ordinary citizens, for gratuitous schools in Rheims, Chartres and other towns in

<sup>9</sup> RIGAULT 3, p. 446-449.

France. Their reinstatement would be beneficial from a financial point of view, because these teachers were satisfied with what was strictly necessary, and their teaching was gratuitous. It would be beneficial also for the education of the children entrusted to these teachers who devote themselves to it completely without the distractions of having to care for a family. For all these reasons, he proposed to Citizen First Consul to authorise the Brothers of the "Christian Doctrine"<sup>10</sup> to establish themselves in Lyons where they already had some postulants. The following day, the report was endorsed "Approved" and signed by Bonaparte.

The Brothers had no doubt that this act signified their legal resurrection in France<sup>11</sup>. In 1804, a decree dated June 22nd, which dispersed unauthorised "religious groups

and associations", served as a lightning conductor for them. Definitive confirmation came with the already quoted article 109 of March 1808. In the first 30 years of the 19th century, the reestablished Institute devoted itself entirely to gratuitous primary education. By doing so, it fulfilled its original purpose as well as what the government expected of it.

This process was presided over by three successive Superior Generals, all of whom were already members of the Congregation before 1789: Brother Frumence, appointed Vicar General by the Pope (1795-1810), Brother Gerbaud (1810-1822) and, already in Paris, Brother Guillaume de Jésus (1822-1830). The first and the third had spent a long time in Italy. Quite naturally, all three took as their model the flourishing Institute they had known before the Revolution.

## 2. BROTHER FRUMENCE

In the absence of any news from the Superior General, Pope Pius VI decided to take the initiative (*motu proprio*) to safeguard the Brothers. By the decree "Inter graves", dated August 7th 1795, he appointed Brother Frumence, who up till then had been Director of the Trinità dei Monti school in Rome, Director of the San Salvatore in Lauro school and, at the same time, Vicar General of the Institute. In practice, his authority extended only to the four communities in the Papal States, the community in Estavayer having dispersed. News of his appointment was more widely known,

however, and Brother Agathon, writing from his refuge in Tours, established contact with him. The fact that Pius VII, Pope from 1800 onwards, had confirmed the appointment, was never in doubt, even though there was no documentary evidence. The Brothers who formed groups in Lyons and Paris recognised his authority.

<sup>10</sup> This was one of the names, inaccurate but frequent, given to the Institute in official French documents of the 19th century. Sometimes the term "Ignorantins" can be found, or "Brothers of St Yon".

<sup>11</sup> For the text and commentary, see circular 112, p. 45-51 and RIGACLT 3, p. 533-537.



On November 19th 1804, giving way to the pressure exerted by Cardinal Fesch and by others through him, and leaving in his place Brother Guillaume de Jésus to be his representative in Rome, the Brother Vicar General took up residence in the "Petit Collège", the house occupied by the Brothers' community in Lyons, which now became the centre of the Institute. From there, for the next five years, the virtual Superior was the symbol and the driving force behind the regrouping of former Brothers, and the promoter of new generations of Brothers.

With great patience, trying to reconcile the desirable with the possible, Brother Frumence appealed to former Brothers who were still in a position to rejoin the Institute, organised the formation of new candidates, reestablished broken contacts, explained the procedures to follow to Brothers and to the authorities who asked him for them to teach the children of their respective towns.

### **Gratuity of teaching**

The Institute was not short of work, and had no doubts about where it should be teaching and at what level: its place was in primary education in public schools. The problems that arose were connected with gratuity. Defending it or reinstating it, to ensure that the Institute remained faithful to its reason for existing and to the service to which it felt called, took up most of the energy of the Vicar General and his collaborators.

The obstacles to overcome came from both within and from outside the Institute. Internal difficulties stemmed from the habit of making pupils pay, adopted by some Brothers at a time when, unable to rely on the support of the Congregation, they had to provide for their own needs. The pleasure of having one's own money, the freedom to use it, and the relative comfort achieved by some, was not something that could be given up easily. Another factor to be taken into account, was the critical situations to which they were reduced by the low salaries given by the communes: they led a mortified life, and lacked funds for general expenses.

External difficulties came from legislation which stipulated that the majority of pupils had to pay fees, and also from the fact that most communes, and the country as a whole, lacked resources. Even if town authorities decided to improve the remuneration of the Brothers, the government would oppose any such increase.

Brother Frumence did not produce a body of doctrine comparable with that of his predecessor, but his correspondence reflects his daily and tirelessly repeated efforts, to enlighten consciences and to bend wills to make the Institute more faithful to its "profession of teaching gratuitously", as the Rule, reprinted in 1809 without any changes, had always said.

The Institute described itself as existing to serve the poor – and it was seen as such – and was defined in terms of its gratuitous

teaching. As the Vicar wrote to the dignitaries of the University in 1808<sup>12</sup>: “The schools directed by the above-mentioned Brothers are gratuitous, and their purpose is to give an education based on religion and on whatever has to do with sentiments and morals”... “a congregation which, by instructing poor children, has the sole purpose of remaining faithful to the poor now and in the future”. A parish priest from Amiens confided to him “the wish to have Brothers to undertake the instruction of the poor children of his parish”<sup>13</sup>, and to Cardinal Fesch, who was putting pressure on the Grand Master to approve the Brothers’ statutes, he said that he hoped that His Excellency would take “all the means necessary to preserve for the poorer classes a Society which is consecrated to it by its state and religion”<sup>14</sup>. To a Sub-Director, greatly upset by the possible turn his Director’s illness could take, the dying Superior had the following words of encouragement: “Rest assured that Divine Providence will not leave you orphans, and will not allow to fail a work which is so useful and necessary for poor children, especially as I have reason to believe that your classes are gratuitous, which is essential for our state”<sup>15</sup>.

To defend the principle and its faithful implementation, the Superior did not hesitate to confront the authorities. For example, he wrote to a mayor: “When I sent Brothers to Condrieu, I did not think that this establishment had to be an exception to the Rule which we follow in the others. Therefore, Sir, if you wish yours to con-

tinue to exist, would you please make its teaching gratuitous and no longer make its pupils pay. This could only increase the esteem of the inhabitants for you because of the service you were rendering them. I know, moreover, that the major<sup>16</sup> Superiors wish the schools to be gratuitous. I would be most grateful to you if you did not oblige me to refer to them, or to withdraw the Brothers who would go elsewhere”<sup>17</sup>.

A timely explanation from the Superior, a piece of advice, an exhortation, a reprimand, showed disorientated or wavering Brothers the traditional way of the Institute, the only one they ought to follow: “You know, my very dear Brother, that gratuity in schools has always been absolutely essential for our congregation, and that we

<sup>12</sup> GA, EE 273, dossier 1, letters 30 and 2. The second is almost certainly addressed to Fr. Jacques André Émery, a Sulpician.

<sup>13</sup> GA, EE 273, dossier 2, letter 111, dated March 1809.

<sup>14</sup> GA, EE 273, dossier 11, dated May 19th 1810. The Brothers asked for the approbation of their statutes at this point so that they could call a General Chapter in order to elect a Superior, and replace the Vicar who had died.

<sup>15</sup> GA, EE 273, dossier 18, letter 274, dated January 7th 1810.

<sup>16</sup> Major, that is, superior to the Mayor: the Prefect of the Department, the Imperial Government.

<sup>17</sup> GA, EE 273, dossier 2, letter 113, dated March 31st 1809, to the mayor of Condrieu. See also letter 116, dated April 4th, to the Prefect of the Rhône; dossier 20, letter dated April 24th, to the mayor of Castres; dossier 3, letter 185, dated October 18th, to the mayor of Orléans.

have never accepted any establishment without this absolute gratuity. Consequently, I enjoin you most expressly to oppose any such innovation and to abandon the establishment if there is pressure on you to introduce a practice which is so contrary to the principles established in our congregation”<sup>18</sup>. “You know, my very dear Brother, that our schools are completely gratuitous for all children without distinction. Consequently, we must not accept anything from those who attend our schools or from their parents”<sup>19</sup>. “You surprised me greatly when you told me your schools were mercenary. You would do well to explain to the magistrates and to the parish priest of the town that our schools must be completely gratuitous, otherwise you will be obliged to go and work elsewhere”<sup>20</sup>. Messages in a similar vein were sent to Brothers Gontran in Valence, Ferréol in Marseilles, Bernard in Montélimar, Emmanuel in Ornans and Géronce in Besançon.

He did not fail to express his joy when he heard of well-run schools: “I am delighted to learn that you are completely satisfied with the way things have turned out, that the number of your schools is increasing and that they are all gratuitous. With zeal, time and patience, one can do anything”<sup>21</sup>.

In St Étienne, the young Brother Anaclet - a future Superior General - and the Director, Jean Marcelin, earned a reprimand from the Vicar General. Brother Anaclet had volunteered to give paid tuition during the summer holidays to help one of his brothers. The Vicar General, reminding him first that

teachers needed to have a rest, went on to warn him: “Apart from the fact that I do not think my authority extends to allowing you to draw any benefit from your lessons, it could happen that your town councillors, who have often tried to suppress gratuity in our schools, learning of the remuneration you received for your lessons, would use this as a reason for making further attempts, on the basis of what they had learned”. However, the young Brother insisted, and was allowed to do what he wanted. After the holidays, two extra classes were opened in the town. The town improved the furniture but, with the complicity of the Director, the new classes were for fee-paying pupils. The reaction of the Superior was unequivocal: “You would have done well to allow me to deal with Mayor of St Étienne to prevent an abuse I am very much opposed to. As soon as you realised that the town authorities of St Étienne wanted to make the two new classes fee-paying, you should have lost no time in objecting strongly to it and, before accepting the furniture and other articles, you should have informed me; and you

<sup>18</sup> GA, EE 273, dossier 3, letter 155, dated September 23rd 1809, to Brother Libère. To him also, letters 158, 185 and 187.

<sup>19</sup> GA, EE 273, dossier 17, letter 208, dated November 8th 1809, to Brother Jean Chrysostome, Director of a newly opened school.

<sup>20</sup> GA, EE 273, dossier 18, letter 278, dated January 10th 1810, to Brother Lysimaque, at St-Omer.

<sup>21</sup> GA, EE 273, dossier 18, letter 272, dated January 6th 1810, to Brother Joseph Marie of Toulouse; cf. Letter 282, dated January 13th, to Brother Libère of Orléans.

should not have written to me to wait until January before preventing an abuse so contrary to our Rules, saying that «If you start shouting, they'll give me nothing». It is easier to remedy an evil as soon as it appears than to wait till it has become established. Be prepared, therefore, to sacrifice the furniture you have been given, if the two Brothers are withdrawn because the town is unwilling to make this school like the others... These problems have arisen because it became known that you had a fee-paying school during the holidays. This should serve as a lesson in order to avoid similar problems in the future, bearing in mind that this is directly opposed to our practices". And for the directly involved culprit, he had the following words of reproof, wrapped up in best wishes for the new year: "The problems which have resulted from teaching children for a fee during the holidays are too obvious for you not to have been the first to notice them, for this is what gave the mayor the idea of establishing the new schools on this model. I have no doubt that you have come to the conclusion that such remuneration is directly opposed to the good order of the Institute and contrary also to our Holy Rules" <sup>22</sup>.

A manuscript drawn up at some later date and included with Brother Frumence's papers recalls that, at the beginning of 1804, the schools were not gratuitous, but that from 1806 onwards, only gratuitous ones were opened. The evidence of the documents quoted indicate to what extent affirmations regarding such a tradition

should be taken at their face value. They reveal at the same time, however, the sincere commitment to absolute gratuity, defended stubbornly by an Institute which wished to remain faithful to itself, this being the only way of ensuring its own existence and the usefulness of its service.

The same manuscript – and here it is trustworthy – says that, after the strong boost provided by the Emperor's approval in 1808, towns were not slow to ask for Brothers, to the point that not all requests could be satisfied. The memory of the work of the former Brothers led town authorities to ask for these efficacious, devoted and cheap teachers <sup>23</sup>. But the Institute could not pro-

<sup>22</sup> GA, EE 273, dossier 2, letter 114, dated April 2nd 1809; dossier 17, letters 252 and 253, dated December 25th.

<sup>23</sup> Cheap, but not the cheapest: several of the religious teaching congregations founded in the years that followed, asked for a smaller remuneration for their service. Part of the explanation for this lies in the fact that the Brothers worked in the towns or in places which could afford to support at least three Brothers. Some of the other Brothers' congregations were founded specifically for country areas which were not served by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. These congregations accepted more readily than the Brothers legislation which was opposed to the universal gratuity of education, and this was understandable: these villages could not afford to maintain teachers solely on public funds and, as a consequence, they charged pupils for their education if they could pay.

Be that as it may, the Brothers could never satisfy all the requests which came from town councils or from other founders. It is hard to believe that either of the latter were prepared to waste money.

vide them as fast as they were required. The formation of its members became a complex problem, not always satisfactorily resolved, it would seem. In any case, the in-

evitable haste, accompanied by such a lack of human and material resources left their mark for many years to come.

### 3. BROTHER GERBAUD

Brother Frumence died at Lyons on January 27th 1810. The General Chapter due to elect his successor met only seven months later. First of all, authorisation had to be obtained from the government. Then there was a delay before the Grand Master approved the Statutes. Finally, it was decided to wait for the end of the school year. The Brothers in Italy did not attend<sup>24</sup>. At last, on September 8th, the Assembly began its work and elected a Superior and three Assistants. Two days later it ended. All its decisions can be resumed in one: "to abide by what is written". By this was meant the spiritual, pedagogical and legislative texts of the Institute, the decisions of the General Chapter of 1777 and 1787, the principal Circulars of Brother Agathon. To illuminate its path in the future, the Institute sought light in the previous century.

Brother Gerbaud, elected to lead the Institute, is the one who worked hardest to gather together the dispersed Brothers and to obtain the official recognition of the Institute by the Consulate and then by the Empire. The seven or eight years he spent in Paris put him into contact with civil and ecclesiastic authorities. The late Vicar General often had recourse to his services for negotiations with the government and for

everything to do with the well-being of the Institute in the North of France. No one had so much support as he before the election, and he was the only one surprised by the result.

The years of his government coincided with the highest and the lowest point of Napoleon's power, the return of the Pope to Rome, the restoration of the Bourbons (who had in the Superior an enthusiastic supporter), the Congress of Vienna, the outbreak of the virulent dispute with Lancastrian schools, and the question of Teaching Certificates. This was the background of the Institute's work for the poor.

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<sup>24</sup> The reason given for their absence was the difficulty of travelling – expense, distance, dangers – but to these could be added, a more weighty reason, the political situation. Napoleon kept the Pope prisoner and had annexed the Papal States to his Kingdom of Italy. The Brothers in Italy could not understand how the Brothers in France could have friendly relations with a government – and even be its civil servants – which was persecuting the Church. The Brothers in France, for their part, mistrusted the Brothers in Italy, who were less strict regarding the gratuity of teaching and had, therefore "lost the spirit of the Institute". Perhaps, there was a certain jealousy of precedence which was traditional on both sides of the Alps. This tension arose on a number of occasions during the 19th century.

### **The poor, the clientele of the Institute's educational service**

We know already who these poor children were: they lived in the towns and went to school to learn the rudiments. The Brothers made the absolute gratuity of the school a sine qua non of their presence, and there was no distinction between rich and poor. In practice, most of the children in their schools came from the poorer classes. Documents in the archives<sup>25</sup> speak frequently of the "poor", but also of the "indigent", of the "abandoned poor", of "especially poor". In the Brothers' schools, there was no distinction between rich and poor, and if preference had to be given to someone, it was given to the poor. One mayor, unwilling to accept the absolute gratuity demanded by the Brothers, had the idea of having two separate schools, a fee-paying one for the rich, and a gratuitous one for the poor, run by the Brothers<sup>26</sup>.

In 1814, Brother Gerbaud had testimonials drawn up by the bishops, parish priests and civil authorities of the places where the Brothers worked. His intention was to present them to the King in the hope that he would renew the Letters Patent granted by his predecessors, and agree to the restitution of the property of the Institute confiscated by the Revolution and still held by the State. In the end he obtained nothing, but the testimonials remain. Glancing through them, we learn, for example, that in Lyons, the Brothers taught about 1,200 working class children, and that at St Étienne, the seven Brothers did a lot of good

instructing working-class children. According to the mayor of Trévoux, the establishment of the Brothers provided the "inestimable advantage of offering the indigent class the teaching that suited them". The parish priests of Orléans, the mayor and the bishop of Soissons, the mayor and a parish priest of Amiens, speak also of the indigent class. The archbishop of Toulouse speaks of the children of the lowest class of the common people. In Paris, the parish priest of St Nicolas des Champs speaks of indigent families, and that of St Roch says that the children of the less well-off class of the social order received preferential treatment in the Brothers' schools. The clergy of Annonay state that the Brothers devote themselves solely to the gratuitous instruction of the poor children of their parish. In the four classes at St Germain en Laye, the mayor says, they educate piously 300 children from poor families. According to the bishop of Amiens, the children of the poor class receive great benefit. The archbishop of Bordeaux declared that the congregation "devoted itself entirely to the education of poor children". Finally, in certain testimonials, the children taught by the Brothers are called children of the common people or working-class children<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> GA, mainly EE 274/1, 274/2, and 274/3.

<sup>26</sup> Letter dated November 1st 1810, to the mayor of Castres. It does not seem that this measure was actually taken. On the 30th of the same month, the letter of the Superior to Brother Chérubin, Director of the community in this town, said: "I am delighted that your schools are gratuitous" (GA, EE 274/2, dossier 5, drafts 122 and 165). <sup>27</sup> See next page

The documents we have quoted are clearly apologetic in nature, and we know that the poor were not the only ones to attend the Brothers' schools. The Superior, recalling his own youth, wrote the following to a Director: "You can be equally useful to the well-off child by admitting him gratuitously into your school, as we do at Lisieux and elsewhere. The difference between rich and poor lies wholly in the fact that the former are accompanied to school and back home by servants and sometimes even by coach when the weather is bad"<sup>28</sup>.

The last paragraph, with its picturesque details, balances a little the accumulation of poverty in the previous one, but it cannot make us forget that the work of the Brothers, as at the beginning of the Institute, was concentrated on the children of families of modest means. If others attended their schools also, they were admitted on condition they accepted the same treatment, which included the complete gratuity of the teaching.

### **The educational service they received**

The Brothers continued to work exclusively in primary education in public schools. Despite invitations, they did not want to concern themselves with other levels or forms of education. For example, they refused the request of a port to run courses for pilots<sup>29</sup>. They no longer had any boarding schools<sup>30</sup>. The curriculum, timetable and methods were those prescribed by the Conduct of Schools, which the Superior had reprinted in 1811 and 1819<sup>31</sup>. The curriculum included catechism, reading, writing,

arithmetic and spelling. The pupils had lunch and the afternoon snack in school, and every day, they were taken to Mass. Prayer, the reflection, hymns, the examination of conscience had an important place in the timetable.

The smallest schools had to have at least two classes: the "small" (lower) class, in which the children learned to read, and the "big" (upper) class, in which they practised

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<sup>27</sup> GA, EE 274/3. These are not spontaneous testimonials: it is clear that they were requested by the Brothers. Presumably, they suggested aspects which interested them. We cannot exclude that, in certain cases, they wrote the text themselves. However, none of this takes away the truthfulness of these documents. In the text, I have highlighted the expressions containing the word "class" as an example of current usage.

<sup>28</sup> Letter dated December 6th 1810, to the Brother Director of Auray. He wrote later in a similar vein to the Director of Lisieux (GA, EE 274/2, dossier 3, drafts 172 and 183).

<sup>29</sup> Letter to the Brother Director of Auray, already quoted. The town asked also for a school for the deaf and dumb. The Institute did not offer this kind of service at the time.

<sup>30</sup> At least, officially. In practice, it seems that certain Directors had admitted a boarder or two, more or less in secret. This can be deduced from certain letters in which the Superior expresses his astonishment at what he has heard reported, or asks point-blank that this practice be stopped.

<sup>31</sup> Practically identical editions, based on that of 1720, with very few modifications, such as, the suppression of the most severe corporal punishments, some reflections on the Brothers' vocation and on the teaching of catechism, but none regarding the curriculum and teaching methods. During this same period, he re-edited the *Collection*.

writing and the rest. In theory, the small class was not supposed to have more than 80 pupils, and the big one, more than 60, but in practice, it was not always easy to keep numbers within these limits. In a school of this kind, the Director and another Brother would take the two classes, and a third Brother would see to various domestic chores, and replace a Brother in class in case of need. The teaching, hard in itself, had to be done often in difficult material conditions, because of lack of space, light and ventilation. The close proximity of the children made contagion easier. That is why teachers were very frequently ill. The adjective "painful/laborious" applied to the work of the Brothers was not an exaggeration.

Regularly drawn up Institute statistics for this period have not come down to us. A fairly detailed report, which must have been written in 1814, gives a total of 55 houses, 382 Brothers and 17,760 pupils. Of this total, 4 houses, 26 Brothers and 1,800 pupils were in Italy (Orvieto, Rome and Ajaccio!). The list includes also the house of St Hubert (Belgium), and Rheims, even though its position vis-a-vis the body of the Institute had not been regularised. These two houses had 3 and 8 Brothers respectively. Twelve houses had the minimum number of members allowed, that is, 3 Brothers. Eleven others, had slightly more, with 4<sup>32</sup>.

In the years that followed, there was a strong surge in missionary activity. In May 1817, five Brothers landed on the island of La Réunion. On July 3rd, three others em-

barked for the United States. Unfortunately, the two expeditions encountered great difficulties because the Brothers did not stay together. In La Réunion, the torch continued to burn thanks to the heroism of Brother Bénézet, who lived alone for several years. In the United States, the poor Brothers lost contact with one another and with the rest of the Institute. The impression made by these failures prevented further attempts for many years.

As the Brothers' work in France expanded, one event which took place in March 1817 was particularly significant: on this date, a group of Brothers took charge of an establishment for juvenile delinquents in Paris, called "The Refuge", which lasted till 1832. It was the first custodial institution to be run by the Congregation in the 19th century.

Outside France, there was a new foundation in the Papal States: Bolsena had a Brothers' school from the beginning of 1817. In Belgium, there were several prom-

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<sup>32</sup> GA, EE 274/1, dossier 14, and 273, dossier 12. The number of Brothers includes the novices and the sick Brothers. The occupation by Napoleon's troops was disastrous for the Brothers' establishments in Italy. The application of the decree suppressing congregations led to the closure of the house in Ferrara, to which the Brothers had retired at the beginning of 1811. In 1813, Brother Guillaume de Jésus was summoned to France by the Superior General, and this caused some panic in Rome. Once fears were allayed, the two communities of the city were reconstituted. Orvieto was the only house not to experience many problems during this period.



ising starts: between 1816 and 1821, the Brothers opened houses in Dinant, Namur (with a novitiate), Liège and Tournai<sup>33</sup>. But then, the Congress of Vienna placed Belgium under the authority of the Calvinist monarchy of The Hague, and this led to the closure of all these houses.

In 1822, a short time before the death of the Superior, a list giving the names of towns where the Brothers were working gives the following figures: 164 houses, including 4 in Italy, 4 in Belgium, 5 in Corsica and 1 on the island of Bourbon (formerly La Réunion). There were novitiates at Orvieto, Ajaccio, Rheims, Paris, St Omer, Avignon, Clermont, Lyons and Toulouse<sup>34</sup>.

### Gratuitous teaching

The affirmation of gratuitous teaching as a fundamental norm of the Institute was maintained unaltered during the generalate of Brother Gerbaud, and the policy of his predecessors remained unchanged. In all its dealings with civil and ecclesiastical authorities who wished to entrust schools to the Brothers, or who simply asked for information, the Institute stated its policy of teaching gratuitously. If something was not clear, the explanation given was always the same one: the upkeep of the Brothers must not be paid for by the pupils or their parents<sup>35</sup>.

The obligations of the Brothers were contained in the Rule, re-edited in 1821, without any changes regarding this point. The Collection was less useful, because the 1811 and 1819 editions had gone back to the 1711 text and, as a consequence, the double mean-

ing which Brother Agathon had removed in 1783 had been re-inserted. This had no repercussion on the vow of gratuity because the Collection did not mention it. In 1814, the Rule of Government appeared for the first time. The Institute defined itself once again as an "association or congregation whose purpose is to work for its own perfection and to instruct and bring up children as Christians, especially the poor, by keeping gratuitous schools" (chapter 1)<sup>36</sup>. To maintain piety and good conduct in it, the Brothers must refuse all remuneration and all presents from the pupils and their parents, because the schools must always be gratuitous (chapter 5, article 7). Among the things listed that a Director had to mention in his correspondence with the Superior, there is: "3. Whether anyone has given something to the house, either food products, or something else, and if so, what?; If this person or persons had children in a

<sup>33</sup> A special case is that of the boarding school in St Hubert, which two brothers Brothers kept running till 1817. When one of them died, in the December of that year, the other handed over the boarding school to the town authorities and moved to Dinant with his collaborators (RIGAULT 4, p. 554-556).

<sup>34</sup> GA, EE 274/3: a fine manuscript which contains the documentation sent to the community of Orléans. The list mentioned here can be found on pages 152-159. On pages 175-177, 41 other towns are mentioned, in which the Brothers established themselves between 1822 and 1824, all in France, except Cayenne. (The foundation in Spoleto was omitted by mistake or through ignorance).

<sup>35</sup> GA, EE 274/2, drafts 69, 3, 19, 100, 172, all dated 1810; EE 274/1, dossiers 14 and 23 (Circulars to parish priests promoting the Brothers' vocation).

Brothers' school" (page 80). Among the numerous appendices to the Rule (decisions of the 1777 and 1787 General Chapters, Brother Agathon's circulars and Brother Gerbaud's first circular), which take up almost half of the volume, there was also the prospectus given to postulants, in which the Institute described itself. In the section on the vows, the fifth vow is called "the vow to teach gratuitously", as in the Rule and in the formula of vows. But in the section on serving Brothers, we read that they make the same vows as the others, "apart from that of teaching". As can be seen, when dealing with this question, there was considerable variation in the language used.

It was not enough to state the principle: it had to be asserted in dealings with the authorities and with Brothers. The documents available for consultation are somewhat monotonous, because the same things have to be explained over and over again. One mayor who asked for three Brothers for a school received the following reply: "The plan to open a school for well-off fee-paying pupils makes it impossible for us to send you any Brothers. Despite everything, if you agreed to make the classes completely gratuitous, without remuneration from either pupils or parents, I would do whatever possible to satisfy quickly your request". Another reply goes as follows: "Before sending you the Brothers you want, I need to know whether your schools are gratuitous, in accordance with the principles we profess". In another reply we read: "In virtue of the Imperial Decree, we are recog-

nised as a body dedicated to the service of Christian and gratuitous schools. But schools accessible only to fee-payers cannot be called gratuitous...Our Rules forbid us to accept any commitment if the schools in question are not completely gratuitous".

The mayor of Condrieu was particularly tenacious in refusing to admit defeat. The Superior did not hesitate to make use of his relations with Cardinal Fesch and the Grand Master of the University to defend what he and the Brothers in general considered to be essential for their Institute. The mayor of Castres argued that he lacked the necessary resources to provide gratuitous schooling for all the pupils. The suggestion was made to him to open a gratuitous school for the poor, directed by the Brothers, and a fee-paying school, run by other teachers, for the rich. Such a suggestion had already been made by Brother Agathon, and was repeated by Brother Gerbaud. It was based on experience: in a certain school, the rich parents were made to pay, but they continued to demand that their children not be obliged to mix with the non-fee payers. The Superior explained as follows: "The majority of rich parents refuse to pay teachers to teach the poor, and to see their children mingle

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<sup>36</sup> It is strange that the first article says that the serving Brothers wore a brown habit. This was the case throughout the 18th century, and the parallel text of 1777 said the same thing, but the 1810 General Chapter established that the habit of the serving Brothers should be of the same material, shape and colour as that of the teaching Brothers (GA, ED 277, Chapter Register B, p. 105).

with them on the same terms. Our Rules do not forbid us to have preferences: if we have any, they are for the most poor”<sup>37</sup>.

If we turn to the Brothers, we find that not everything is perfect either. Permission to rejoin the Institute is refused to the Rheims community as long as they do not regularise their position regarding gratuity. The elderly Brother Évariste was strongly urged to put an end to payment that was forbidden by the Rule. The Directors of Orléans (the meritorious Brother Libère) and Castres were informed of the repugnance of many Brothers, who did not wish to join their communities (nor those of Condrieu, St Étienne and Chartres), because gratuity was not observed perfectly there. “What can I say to them?”, concluded the Superior, “the Rule is on their side”.

When necessary, he reminded Brothers what the Rules said, and sent them another copy of the famous prospectus to help them defend themselves against external pressure. To a Brother who had gone to a town to see what arrangements were proposed for a new foundation, he indicated where he could go if gratuity was not totally guaranteed<sup>38</sup>.

In addition, certain Brothers turned to the Superior for explanations regarding more specific cases involving gratuity. For example, could a bequest made to the school be accepted? Or – a mundane detail – what money should be used to buy ink that they have to provide free of charge to the pupils? What should be done with the profits from selling school materials? How much

could be asked for the heating? What presents can be accepted and from whom?<sup>39</sup> A concern for regularity not without some scrupulosity.

### **Within a particular mental framework**

The ecclesiastical and civil authorities congratulated the Brothers on the education they gave gratuitously to poor children. They gave “instruction that was appropriate for the indigent class”; it was a class “instructed with piety” by the Brothers; their instruction was “based on religion” and was such as to enlighten the common people “regarding their social duties, good morality, and it made them love their Sovereign and the Christian religion”. The stress was predominantly on the benefit derived by religion, virtue, morality, and good habits from instruction. The Brothers succeeded in “reforming” the children who attended their schools; they “inspired in them a taste for work”.

In addition to praising the religious and moral aspect of the teaching of the Brothers

<sup>37</sup> GA, EE274/2: drafts 12, 101, 102, 112, 116, 122, 125, 211, 228, 229, 249, dated between August 12th 1810 and January 28th 1811. The first is from the Brothers who provisionally took charge in Lyons in the absence of the Superior.

<sup>38</sup> GA, EE 274/2, drafts 53, 79, 28, 80, 82, 85, 96, 115, 121, 131, 140, 151, 165, 166, 177, 219, 200. Letter 113 and EE 274/1, dossier 20; CG 406/3, dossier 9.

<sup>39</sup> GA, EE 274/2, draft 100, letters 79, 98, 176, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 197, 215, 216, 235. Almost all are letters to Brother Nicolas.

ers, these dignitaries did not overlook the other kinds of knowledge they taught in the schools: a parish priest praised the way the Brothers trained the children “in piety and in the sciences proper to their state”, that is, their state as children of indigent families; a bishop stated that the Brothers taught children “the elementary forms of knowledge suited to their birth, fortune and the various functions these children might exercise one day”<sup>40</sup>. A Royal Ordinance, dated February 29th 1816, expresses the desire of the Monarch to give his subjects “instruction fitting to their respective stations in life”.

It was a period of history when “state” or “condition” were considered to be of divine origin, in the same way as kings were. It was in the interest of those favoured by this “established order” to preserve it, and to ask religion to defend them by preserving it or by re-establishing it. The hope of being rendered this service – hope born of good faith or cynicism – must have been one of the main reasons why the Brothers (but, not only the Brothers) received help from the ruling classes.

At the end of 1818, in the face of the difficulties that the Institute had to confront because of the Certificates of Competence demanded by the University authorities as a condition for having the right to teach, the Superior consulted a group of legal experts in Paris. These learned men first read the “Statutes or Rules of the Congregation and other documents submitted to them” by the Superior General or his representative in the

capital, and then based their answer on their understanding of the Institute and its purpose. They did so in the following terms:

“As for the section of the population this Institution seeks to help, it is the multitude of the indigent that the Abbé de La Salle embraced in all its entirety in his plan, a multitude he found the means to provide with the daily bread that was more necessary than material bread: the bread of religious teaching. This teaching is one that an intelligent creature, cast into a world in the midst of indigence, can receive from religion. Its aim is to teach him not to envy riches, to respect the will of God who places the poor person in this state of privation so that he may exercise his virtue, and earn, in another world, a reward in proportion to the courage he has shown.

“To teach the children of the poor that they have an all-powerful father in heaven, and to found on this knowledge both the certitude of happiness in another life, and even hope of some happiness in the present life, through resignation, patience and the practice of the Christian virtues, this is what the Founder proposed to do, this is what his disciples have been able to do...

“In this teaching, reading, writing, and counting are included simply as exercises to fill the hours of class usefully, in order to imprint more deeply the true instruction which the Order gives, for it is only this in-

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<sup>40</sup> GA, EE 274/3: testimonials, dated October and November 1814.

struction that is beneficial for the poor. It is a benefit their children could receive without reading, without writing, without counting. It is not incompatible with these three things, and can become more fruitful because of them, while at the same time providing the poor with the means to earn their livelihood. The Institute has had to accept them as a means to achieve its aims, and to be at the same time more useful to the indigent”<sup>41</sup>.

A few days later, the same body, consulted a second time, recalled that the Brothers, hardly had the Revolution ended, had reopened their schools “to teach the children of the poor to accept, without murmuring, the inequality of conditions and fortunes, and to offer them, with the lights and consolations of religion, the first rudiments of knowledge that could be useful to them in their laborious lives”<sup>42</sup>.

Taking everything into consideration<sup>43</sup>, these words reflect a mentality that cannot be ignored. Did the Brothers think in these terms?

To be able to say yes or no, we would need some direct proof. It could be found perhaps by analysing the school texts in use in those days. None of the correspondence consulted has anything to say in this connection. But could they have thought in any other way, given the actual conditions in which they lived, were formed and exercised their mission?

Moreover, this was the language commonly used by priests, bishops and cardi-

nals. Many years later, the very famous encyclical *Rerum Novarum* continued to teach that in civil society it is impossible to raise everyone to the same level. Inequality is imposed by nature, and to struggle against nature is pointless. The Catechism of Pius X remains faithful to a solid tradition by affirming that “the tenth commandment commands us to be satisfied with the state into which God has placed us, and to accept poverty with patience when God wishes us to be in that state. The greatest of goods, is a pure and tranquil conscience, because our true country is heaven...and Jesus Christ has promised a special reward to those who accept poverty with patience”<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> GA. EE 274/1, dossier 32. Discussed in Paris on December 26th 1818, followed by 25 signatures. What we stressed is in the original.

<sup>42</sup> Idem. Discussed in Paris on January 12th 1819. Followed by 27 signatures, 21 of which figured on the first consultation document.

<sup>43</sup> There were various considerations. The document was an apologia in which aspects were stressed that were most favourable to the position they held. It tried to make a distinction between the Brothers' schools and other schools, so that the Brothers would not be required to produce the same teaching qualifications as the teachers in other schools. And in this sense, the document may have been effective, to the extent that it helped to bring about the hoped for results at the beginning of 1819. It was not a text intended for the Brothers, nor for the families of their pupils, but for educational authorities and persons who could be called upon to offer advice in this matter.

<sup>44</sup> Christophe, PAUL, *Les pauvres et la pauvreté*, part 2, Paris, Desclée, 1987, pp. 117-121; 135; 144-147.

#### 4. BROTHER GUILLAUME DE JÉSUS

Brother Gerbaud died on August 10th 1822. In November, the General Chapter duly met and elected Brother Guillaume de Jésus Superior<sup>45</sup>. His advanced age was counterbalanced by his robust health and his great prestige. During the eight years or so that this Superior, who was so passionately interested in figures, was in office, there were few upsets, if we exclude the suppression of the Institute in Belgium. His doctrinal output was small. However, in addition to keeping pace with what was happening in the Institute in general, it would be useful perhaps to look at the birth of some new undertakings which led to important developments in later years.

##### **A traditional apostolate: gratuitous primary education**

From the decisions of the 1822 Chapter, the circulars of the Superior General and his correspondence, it is clear that this tradition was being maintained.

In this connection, the General Chapter made two decisions:

“22. The collection by towns of any remuneration whatsoever from pupils will not be tolerated. Where such an abuse exists, the establishment will be suppressed.

“30. When the Rule says that ink will be given free of charge to the pupils, it means that the Brothers will pay it out of their purse”<sup>46</sup>.

The first circular of the new Superior,

dated December 12th, communicates these texts to all the Brothers, with a few slight alterations: 19 and 26 are new numbers, and the text of 30 is slightly modified to read: “free ink means that the Brothers pay for it with community money”.

These are details, one might say, but there is hardly anything else in the circulars, published at the rate of between 6 and 10 per year, and numbered from number 3 onwards. In them, Brother Guillaume reports recent deaths, and fills the rest of the space with brief news items, or advice to be prudent and, especially, to be regular. Even reporting deaths is motivated by a desire to be regular: the deceased must receive the suffrages indicated by the Rule and in accordance with their status regarding vows.

Circular 28, dated July 11th 1826, summarises all the advice given in previous circulars. It includes the following: “Houses which make very little profit from selling school materials and which, consequently are unable to give the children the monthly rewards prescribed by the *Conduct*, can take what is necessary from the community cash-box”. The Brothers are then told how many pennies they can take for the small class and how many for the big class, “if the commu-

<sup>45</sup> Born in Carcassonne on February 1st 1748, he was elected shortly before his 75th birthday. He was the first of an important series of southern Superior Generals.

<sup>46</sup> GA, EE 227, Chapter Register B, p. 126-127.

nity can afford to be so generous". We read also: "A number of our dear Brothers do not know what to do with any heating money left over. We thought that the most just and the most simple solution would be to use it to buy more wood for the following winter. Like that, one could ask less from the pupils. We should always try to make them give as little as possible, because parents are often very short of money, especially at the beginning of winter... Make sure you do not buy rewards with it or use it to make small repairs in class".

The following passage will give us an idea of the overall level, although not exclusively so, of the school clientele: "In the interests of the poor children...sell them school materials at cost price, including all costs, and at a minimum profit", "so as to produce some fruit in the souls of these poor children". The Superior invites the Brothers to be faithful to their religious duties and to the customs of their elders <sup>47</sup>.

These are the children we should think of, when obituary notices praise the zeal of the Brothers for their instruction <sup>48</sup>, or the love these children show, when hundreds of them attend their funerals, weeping.

Correspondence with the authorities (bishops, ministers, governors and others) reveals a congregation that is very much in demand, which calls for patience because it cannot satisfy immediately all the numerous requests for Brothers. The Superior also let it be understood that it was difficult to obtain for them satisfactory living and work-

ing conditions, which included light, ventilation, tranquillity and space. Expressions such as "poor children" or "poor youth" occur regularly. The following two passages are highly significant: "We have completely given up running custodial boarding schools because of the unpleasantness encountered there, and because this kind of work does us great harm regarding the instruction of poor children, a work to which we wish to devote ourselves entirely, and which we consider preferable, especially today, to any other". In connection with the implementation of a bequest made to the Brothers to establish a Christian school in a particular place, he wrote: "The only thing I want to do is to support the intentions of the pious founder, which is to provide a Christian education for poor children... so that this business will finally benefit poor youth" <sup>49</sup>.

For the benefit of these young people, he asked the Brothers to learn their catechism properly, as well as writing, spelling and arithmetic, the only subjects in the curriculum, and not to spend time on any

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<sup>47</sup> Circular dated December 2nd 1822.

<sup>48</sup> In certain cases, this is stated explicitly: Brother Préside died at the age of 26. "He showed always an ardent and tireless zeal for the education of the poor children entrusted to his care" (circular 54, dated October 30th 1829). About Brother Primus it is said: "His zeal for the instruction of poor children" led him to teach up to a short while before his death at the age of 81 (circular 56, dated February 3rd, 1830).

<sup>49</sup> GA, EE 272, dossier 22, letters 372 and 397, dated respectively August 8th and December 8th 1826.

other studies. The request of the town of St Étienne for a drawing class was refused by the Superior because it was not part of the curriculum. Study programmes would soon change, however, and a few "disobedient Brothers" would prove very useful!

There were few allusions to gratuity. For the Brothers, the same documents remained in force. The 1823 edition of the Collection repeated for the last time the 1711 explanation of the vows, but the Rule was clear and complete.

Such allusions were few also in relations with local authorities: two references only, concerning subscriptions organised by neighbours to provide for the upkeep of the Brothers. This system, which became widespread later, did not please Brother Guillaume: "I would much prefer the town and not the subscribers to pay for the Brothers" and "I must point out to you that this method of providing funds for the nourishment of our Brothers is outmoded, apart from the fact that it is not permissible if, among the subscribers, there are persons who have children they intend to send to our schools, because teaching must be gratuitous, in accordance with our religious commitments"<sup>50</sup>.

### Some new ventures

In relatively recent times, two groups of Brothers had been sent on the missions. During the generalate of Brother Gerbaud, negotiations had begun with the government, which was interested in seeing the Brothers open a community in Cayenne. In the first months of 1823, the new Superior

was able to send three Brothers to this colony. It was known that conditions would be difficult, and so the missionaries received detailed instructions, inspired by affection, faith and hope. Relations between blacks and whites had not yet been evangelised!: "If the number of pupils called for a third class, you would need to find someone for the temporal work. It would be highly desirable for this person to be white, capable of becoming one of us one day". But the great zeal of the Brothers opened the doors of the school to slaves, and the local governor sounded the alarm. "These individuals have no legal rights. Their instruction must be limited to catechism and prayers", he wrote to the Director who, apparently, was ignorant of this aspect of civilisation<sup>51</sup>.

In the middle of 1826, a group of 5 Brothers left France to establish a Lasallian presence in the island of La Réunion. It was a venture that was costly in human resources. The Brothers were chosen by the superiors, and the communities of France were deprived of three Directors and a Sub-Director. Brother Cartère, a second form teacher from Nantes, was the only one without stripes! Such a capital investment could not be wasted. It would be an error to disperse these Brothers. The Superiors asked the lo-

<sup>50</sup> GA, EE 272, dossier 22, letters 222 (December 16th 1824) and 252 (March 15th 1825), written respectively to a mayor and to a parish priest.

<sup>51</sup> GA, EE 272, dossier 22, letter 38, dated June 124th 1823. Circular 7, dated July 14th, announces the recent departure of 3 Brothers. Circular 9, dated February 18th 1824, reports their safe arrival.



cal authorities permission for the Brothers to stay together, promising to send another group in the near future: "I believe it is absolutely essential for the good order of our houses, and for instruction to become more extensive, that our houses on the Ile Bourbon be composed of five Brothers, two of whom would teach in classes for the whites, and two in those for the coloured children. The fifth Brother would attend to the material care of the house, and replace Brothers in case of illness. This arrangement is necessary because of the repugnance of the inhabitants to put their children with the blacks ... I ask Your Excellence to arrange for the communes to provide two black workers for each of our houses" <sup>52</sup>.

It was a different world, with challenges people did not know how to cope with. The letter which approved the decision of the Director to separate the blacks and the whites, contains a recommendation: "But be careful not to show too much preference for the latter, so as not to make the others envious". He tells him also to teach catechism to the two blacks (i.e. the workers). But the Director had in mind catechesis on a much wider scale. On being consulted on this matter, the Superior replied as follows: "Regarding catechism for the blacks and the slaves, consult the Apostolic Delegate to see what he thinks. Do not do it in the church, but in the house, and realise that, just because you are doing it, you cannot impose it as an obligation on your successors" <sup>53</sup>. These were the timid beginnings of an apostolate destined to develop, and the tomb

of Blessed Brother Scubilion (Jean Bernard Rousseau) continues to bear eloquent witness to this.

It would be pointless to be scandalised at the racism of those days, and to do so might even be pure hypocrisy on our part. An honest look at this technological world at the end of the 20th century, would empty the hands filled with stones to throw.

Although there were some previous instances of this during the life of the Founder, the creation of courses for workers can be considered as a new response to new needs. Lille was the first town to have these courses. What was considered to be an interesting plan at the end of 1823, became a well-established reality two years later: two Brothers, relieved of all other work, with their own separate premises, and paid by the town, gave lessons for 11 to 13 hours to adolescents and young people (even adults) who wished to learn the rudiments of knowledge that life had deprived them of. This experiment stimulated emulation in other places and, in Lille, provoked enthusiasm which the Superior saw fit to cool, so that the lat-

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<sup>52</sup> GA, EE 272/1, dossier 22, letter 328, dated March 15th 1826, to the Minister for the Navy. Circular 25, dated March 31st, announced the imminent departure of the Brothers. Circular 34, dated May 9th 1827, reports that the Brothers arrived at their destination on October 20th, after a journey lasting 127 days.

<sup>53</sup> GA, EE 275, dossier 4, letters dated March 15th and July 2nd 1827.

est trend did not take Brothers away from their normal work <sup>54</sup>.

It was in 1823 also that an agreement in principle was reached between the Institute and the government regarding the opening of a teacher training college in Rouen, the fulfilment of one of the most cherished ambitions of the Brothers. The Brothers hoped at the same time to regain possession of the much venerated property of St Yon, which was much more suitable than the building proposed by the civil authorities. The Institute thought in terms of many more than the 25 students envisaged by the government authorities, and bore in mind the need for open air and space of these young men brought up in the country, and who would have to be boarders in a town environment.

But the negotiations fell through: St Yon did not return to the Brothers, and the teacher training college began functioning only in February 1829, in a convent in St Lô, with very few students, but with an exceptional person at its head, a certain Brother Calixte, the first "Director of Rural Schoolmasters". Under his leadership, the establishment acquired a well-deserved and long-lasting celebrity <sup>55</sup>.

Finally, it fell to Brother Guillaume to prepare the ground for the reappearance of boarding schools. In 1824, a great benefactor, the parish priest of Béziers died. In his will, he bequeathed to the Institute a building in the parish of St Aphrodisia, occupied by a Brothers' gratuitous school since 1820, on condition that the Brothers opened a boarding school in it.

The government of the Institute was not opposed to the idea, but to do things properly, time was needed. In the first place, the Superior sought to show that such a work could not be considered to be in contradiction with the identity of the Brothers, and did not entail problems of conscience. And so, a few months later, he consulted the Pope. The terms used in the Petition and in the reply explain what the problem was.

"Most Holy Father, Brother Guillaume de Jésus, Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, humbly prostrate at the feet of your Holiness, states that, although the Brothers of this same Institute make the vow of teaching gratuitously, conformably with the Bull of Approbation granted by Benedict XIII, nevertheless, up to the time of the French Revolution, they always had a number of houses set aside for the admission of young boarders, who were admitted only on payment of annual fees, intended not only to provide for their own upkeep, but also for that of the Brothers employed to instruct them, and to meet the various needs of the boarders. If there was

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<sup>54</sup> GA, EE 272, dossier 22, letters 86 (October 7th 1823), 295 (November 26th 1825) and 334 (April 6th 1826). The circulars do not mention this creation, perhaps to prevent the trend from spreading. (Cf. BEC, dated July 1921, on the creation of evening classes by Brother Philippe in Paris before 1830. RIGAUT 4, p. 506).

<sup>55</sup> GA, EE 272, letter 19, dated April 14th 1823. EE 275, dossier 13 contains the "obedience" of Brother Calixte. It is dated January 27th 1829, and transfers him to Rouen as "Director of the Rural Schoolmasters".

money over, it served for the maintenance of a number of buildings and for other needs of the Society. Despite everything, this seemed to be contrary to gratuitous teaching.

“Your humble supplicant, having been requested by several towns to re-establish the above-mentioned institutions, and wishing to remove all fears, scruples and perplexity regarding the vow of teaching gratuitously, begs Your Holiness to authorise, if it considers this appropriate, the same Brothers to re-establish the houses in question. If Your Holiness considered such establishments incompatible with their obligations, the same Brothers, with complete resignation, were prepared to desist from such undertakings.

“While awaiting your Sovereign decision, your humble supplicant has the honour of calling himself with the greatest of respect, Your Holiness’s very humble and very submissive son, Brother Guillaume de Jésus.

Paris, March 1st 1825”.

In an audience given on the 25th of the same month, Pope Leo XII approved the reply to the government of the Institute prepared by Cardinal Gonzaga Guerrieri:

“The Holy Father, at the request of the said Superior General, leaves to his judgment and his prudence, enlightened by the advice of his Assistants, the freedom to re-establish the pious and most useful boarding houses for children, separately from the houses constituted as public schools, keeping unchanged the form and the methods lawfully established before 1788, and on

condition that the annual fee, established in keeping with local usage, and whose amount and use will be fixed by the Superior assisted by his council, will be faithfully administered. If at the end of the year, there is a surplus from the fees, it can be used as alms, for the upkeep of the novices, sick and elderly Brothers, and for any other need of the pious Institute. Notwithstanding all to the contrary”<sup>56</sup>.

Negotiations with the royal government were slower. Current legislation was not so benevolent regarding curricula and professional qualifications, and the matter had to be referred to a number of different officials. Finally, however, the Royal Council for Public Instruction gave its approval in July 1829. A few other negotiations and the equipping of the premises held up the opening till the first months of 1831<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> The official text is in GA, EL 552/2, dossier 21. The Petition was drawn up in French, but submitted in Italian. The reply was in Latin. GA, EE 272/1, dossier 22, letter 243, contains the French text as it was originally drawn up.

<sup>57</sup> GA, NC 434/1, dossier 1 and 434/2, dossier 11. On September 19th 1832, the Rector of the Academy of Montpellier approved the plan to set up a boarding school and sent the document back with the comment: “I have the honour to return to you the prospectus of your boarding school bearing my stamp of approval. Since this boarding school is authorised by a ministerial decision, you have nothing to fear regarding its existence, at least, for as long as the attention you devote to it does not make you neglect your schools for the poor, which are the area in which you must principally seek to make yourselves useful and worthy of praise” (Copy in GA, NC 434/1, dossier 1).

A few words now about events outside France, in Belgium and Italy. In Belgium, the malevolence of the Dutch government forced the Brothers to abandon all their schools. The last Brothers left in March 1826.

In the Papal States, there were two new foundations. The school opened by the Brothers in Spoleto in October 1824 was at the request of Pope Leo XII. On the other hand, the third house in Rome was founded in response to a request from the French government. By virtue of an agreement reached with the Superiors of the Congregation, and with the assent of the Holy See, a community of 12 French Brothers was due to be established in an annexe of the convent of Trinità dei Monti, previously occupied by the Capuchins, and a short distance from the first community set up in Rome. The plan had to be modified, however, and the group took up residence far from there, near the church of La Madonna dei Monti. On June 13th 1829, the house was officially opened, and became the headquarters of an autonomous District within the Papal States.

In the North of the peninsula, the Kingdom of Piedmont appealed to the Brothers to remedy a serious deficiency in popular education. Negotiations were longer than foreseen, but were successfully concluded and, at the beginning of 1830, a first group of 5 Brothers, all Italians, took charge of some classes in Turin. These classes were dependent on the Regia Opera della Mendicizia Istruita – a world of poor children in which the zeal and methods of the Brothers would work wonders. With a view to the

future, a novitiate was opened also <sup>58</sup>.

To conclude this chapter, it would be good to make some observations on the commitment of the Brothers to the poor, and on the economy of the Institute, both in the French context.

In a certain way, the educational work of the Brothers went against current laws. The law guaranteed education for those who could pay, and did little for the poor. By imposing gratuity for all pupils as a condition for taking on schools, the Institute made them automatically accessible to a great number of poor pupils. The battle for gratuity, considered perhaps and above all as a battle to maintain its own identity, proved eventually to be beneficial for the poor. It was not an accidental result, but a consciously pursued aim. The awareness of institutional identity includes the awareness of being in the service of the poor.

In the conditions in which the Institute pursued its apostolate, economic resources were not abundant. To cope with the costs of formation, with caring for elderly Brothers, and with the expenses of general administration, the Congregation depended to a large extent on the alms of rich people, with all the consequences that this involved.

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<sup>58</sup> In reality, by a decision of the Congress of Vienna, the lands of the King of Piedmont included also Savoy, where the Brothers had been working since 1810. Brother Giuseppe Maria, born at Ferrara, was sent from Corsica to Turin to be Director of the new house. The four others, trained in the novitiate of Orvieto, came directly from the Papal States.

## CHAPTER 4

# BROTHER ANACLET

Brother Anaclet's term in office was relatively short. While it clearly provided continuity with the previous history of the Institute, it was marked all the same by a number of things which showed that there was a new generation in charge at all levels of the Institute. At this time, the vast majority of establishments and Brothers were still

in France, and for this reason, the present chapter is mainly concerned with that country. The development of the Brothers' work in the Papal States, the Kingdom of Sardinia and Belgium will be noted, as will the opening of a community in Canada at the end of this period.

### 1. THE TRIUMPH OF THE BOURGEOISIE

#### **The bourgeoisie in power**

After a long agony, Brother William of Jesus died on June 10th 1830, at the age of 82. The same day, the two Assistants who survived him (the third had died in February) signed the letter convoking the Chapter General which, at the beginning of September, chose his successor. On July 22nd the list of delegates was published.

On July 26th, however, an anti-monarchist protest broke out, and on the 27th the barricades went up. July 28th, 29th and 30th are known as the "Three Glorious Days": Charles X abdicated<sup>1</sup> and left the country. Seeing the indecision of the victors, the liberal bourgeoisie provided the support necessary to put the Duc d'Orléans on the throne. The Republicans who had done most

to ensure the success of the revolution were rewarded by a Constitutional Letter. The July monarchy was born. It began with fine speeches about liberty and then progressively became more conservative and repressive.

On the international level, the most visible and most local reaction to these events – because of the effect it would have on the history of the Institute – took place in Belgium. The popular uprising which broke out at the end of August, proclaimed independence, beat back an attempt by the government in The Hague to restore control, and finally in 1831, succeeded in obtaining in-

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<sup>1</sup> He did so in favour of his grandson, but the victors did not accept his choice.

ternational recognition for independence. England took advantage of its diplomatic involvement to impose a king on the new nation.

For the moment, there were no changes in Piedmont. In the Papal States, however, during the interregnum following the death of Leo XII in November 1830, revolutionary unrest broke out in Modena, Bologna, Ancona, and even in Rome. After a long conclave, Gregory XVI was elected. His Secretary of State asked for foreign aid, and Austrian troops came to put a stop to the unrest. The movement which eventually led to Italian unity continued to pursue its work quietly, awaiting the right moment to manifest itself publicly once again.

In France itself, the 1830 Revolution put an end to the hopes and aspirations of 1789. The bourgeois ideal of wealth ("Become rich!") became the nation's programme. For wealth to increase, production had to be increased, costs reduced, communications improved, and all this in a climate of order. If there was to be order, people had to remain in the social class in which they were. Common subjects were not to aspire to the status of "gentleman", and the poor were not to envy the property of the rich. The kind of education the system needed was one that trained people to produce more and better, but which did not improve their social status. The kind of religion the system needed was one which taught people patience, resignation, respect and submission to those who were socially superior, and which explained that social differences were

willed by Divine Providence, and that to oppose this would be sinful. The work of promoting order, undertaken by schools and the Church, was ably complemented by that of the police <sup>2</sup>.

To see how the work of the Brothers fitted into all this, we need to have a look first at the world of industrial labour and of education.

### Work

France was still essentially a rural country <sup>3</sup>, despite the growth of industry and rural migration. However, the type of poor person referred to most, as least in politics, in the 19th century, is no longer the beggar, nor the peasant, but the worker, belonging to the working class or the proletariat.

The 1789 Revolution had decreed the death of corporations, the Restoration had abolished the minimal wage, and the inter-

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<sup>2</sup> Expressed in this way, it sounds cynical, and in some way it is. In any case, I am not trying to say that education and the Churches behaved in this way, but that this is what the bourgeoisie expected of them, and there is no reason to suppose an entire lack of good faith.

<sup>3</sup> According to the 1826 census, the population of France was just under 32 million inhabitants, divided up as follows: 70% farmers/peasants, 13% workers, and 17% businessmen, civil servants and manufacturers. The same census tells us that the total population of the chief towns of arrondissements numbered 4,300,000. Twenty years later, the population of France was 35,400,000 inhabitants, a quarter of whom lived in towns of at least 2,000 persons. This gives us an idea of the work opportunities for the Brothers.

vention of the State in labour relations was considered to be an improper and unthinkable restriction of freedom. In the name of freedom, the absolute prohibition of all forms of workers' associations was maintained. The result of all this was to leave the working class without any form of defence. In general, all salaries in 1830 were lower than those of 1800. Some of them had gone down by 20%, others by more than 60%. At the same time, the price of staple products had risen without, however, doubling.

The working day had been made longer: it was rarely as short as 12 hours and never shorter (except in building work), and it could be as long as 16 hours. The wages of women were much lower than those of men, and children's wages were even lower. To think in terms of suitable accommodation and nourishment was out of the question. Two kilos of bread in Paris cost between 0.57 francs and 0.70 francs, which could be, and sometimes was, equal to half the wage earned.

To catch up with England in industrialisation, France was forced to speed up its own process, but this led to no immediate improvements for the working class. Working conditions in towns did not change substantially during the July Monarchy. The number of people depending on public assistance increased. In 1840, it was stated in the Chamber of Peers that the young people in the most industrialised departments were those who were in the worst physical shape: almost 90% of them failed the physical ex-

amination when they were called to join the army; whereas in mainly agricultural departments, only 40% failed. It was only in 1841 that there was a timid attempt at legislation regarding child labour. In 1844, official authorisation was given for the creation of trade unions.

In this context, with much hesitation, there was born what came to be known as "social Catholicism". The great abyss that had opened up between the multitude of underprivileged workers and the small group of owners who exploited them, awoke the conscience of certain Christians who, in the name of the faith they professed, undertook to improve existing conditions. In 1836, one of their chief exponents, Frédéric Ozanam, explained the situation in the following terms: "The question which perturbs the world about us today is not a question of persons, nor a question of political forms, but a social question. If it is a struggle between those who have nothing and those who have too much, if it is a violent collision between opulence and poverty that makes the earth shake under our feet, our duty, as Christians, is to come between these unreconcilable enemies"<sup>4</sup>.

Concern regarding the social question was not restricted to Catholic circles. Other Christian denominations, and many other persons claiming no religious affiliation, turned their attention to this subject, either

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Jean Baptiste Duroselle in "*Les débuts du catholicisme social en France (1822-1870)*", p.17. We cannot recommend this work too highly.

in a bid to understand it, or to offer some solution. Various forms of socialism appeared. The Catholic social movement was one of many which sought to find a solution for a social situation which, in many ways and for objective reasons, appeared problematical.

Since social Catholicism impinged on the work of the Brothers, two points need to be made immediately. In the first place, this movement was almost completely ignored, and even rejected, by the ecclesiastical hierarchy<sup>5</sup>, the majority of the bishops being seemingly unaware that there was a social problem. Their main concern was maintaining order, and so they put the faithful on their guard against all agitation or subversion. The bishops did not see that behind all this there might be a fundamental injustice<sup>6</sup>.

In the second place, social Catholicism, which comprised lay people and some priests, included a number of very different positions: while Catholic socialists attached great importance to the formulation and dissemination of social theories, the conservative wing concentrated on helping workers with the elaboration of doctrine. The most visible and most durable action group of the time was the Conference of St Vincent de Paul, founded in May 1833 by Frédéric Ozanam, representing liberal Catholicism.

### Primary education

Where primary education was concerned, the July Monarchy inherited from the Restoration successes, deficiencies and conflicts. Among the successes, there was the

new impetus given to the school system, its organisation, the legislative texts of 1816 and complementary documents, 30,000 municipal schools, that is, 10,000 more than in 1815 (but only 3,000 more than in 1820). Deficiencies included the fact that more than 10,000 communes had no school, the ineffectiveness of vigilance committees, the lack of classrooms, school materials, teachers and teaching methods. Conflicts existed between those supporting freedom to teach and the educational monopoly of the State; be-

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<sup>5</sup> In the period in question, it is sufficient to note the Lent pastoral letter of Cardinal de Cröy, Archbishop of Rouen, against child labour in factories ("on extreme weakness there weighs down extreme oppression"), and the 1837 and 1841 Lent pastoral letters of Mgr Belmas, Bishop of Cambrai: "the immoderate thirst of the rich immolates to its fury those that it employs...leaving to them in recompense only a fraction of what they produce, which corresponds hardly to a drop of their abundant sweat". One can add to this list of names those of Mgr Affre (future Archbishop of Paris) and Cardinal de Bonald (Archbishop of Lyons), each with his own characteristics... cf. J.B. Duroselle, *op.cit.*, p. 236-241; P. Christophe, "*Les pauvres et la pauvreté*", vol 2, p. 113-132.

<sup>6</sup> This was not exclusive to the French episcopate: the encyclical of Gregory XVI "*Mirari vos*", dated August 15th 1832, recalling the troubles that marked the beginning of his pontificate, condemns the revolution, liberalism, freedom of conscience, freedom of the press. Without naming them, he called innovators such as Lamennais, Lacordaire and Montalambert dangerous. The last two submitted, but Lamennais continued his "*Paroles d'un croyant*" which was explicitly condemned in the encyclical "*Singulari vos*" of June 25th 1834. This is a backcloth we have to take into account.



tween anticlericalism and the educational role of the Church, between the Lancastrian schools and simultaneous teaching.

The July Revolution waved the banner of freedom to teach (in its most liberal sense), but the Charter did not legislate in this matter, promising simply the enactment of a law sometime in the future. The alliance between throne and altar, especially under Charles X, provoked an increase in anticlericalism. Through conviction, or a desire to keep up with the times, a certain number of town authorities hurried to rid themselves of their religious teachers and replace them with lay persons. The Brothers' congregations lost their privileges relating to the Teaching Ability Certificate of their members. The supporters of the mutual schools, blocked since 1820, hoped for better days, since the new governors and the Citizen King himself were members of their society.

Time passed. The Lancastrians were reassured by fine words; social disorder led to the formation of a conservative government (the banker Casimir Périer became prime minister in March 1831) which saw religion as a means of maintaining order. The promised law was postponed, and the impatience of certain deputies increased.

### **The Guizot Law**

In October 1832, François Guizot was appointed Minister of Public Instruction. A convinced Calvinist, a clever politician and a conservative, he had a high idea of the

role of the State, and he was prepared to apply it to education.

At the end of 1832, a deputy presented an educational bill in the Chamber, proposing a large measure of freedom regarding teaching. The Government could wait no longer and decided to counter-attack.

On January 2nd 1833, the minister introduced his own bill on primary education. He tried to hide his ideological position – and succeeded in doing so – under the guise of an “essentially practical” law, easy to understand, reflecting all points of view, none of which dominated. There was freedom of teaching, but under the close supervision of the State; parents had freedom of choice regarding the religious instruction of their children, but all programmes were based on morality and religion, and the clergy of the recognised denominations belonged to local supervisory organisations; free education for the poor, but fees for all others<sup>7</sup>; a guaranteed minimum salary for teachers, but low enough to make fees almost unavoidable; appointment of the teacher by the lo-

<sup>7</sup> Eliminating all school fees “would establish the right to gratuitous education, including for those who can pay. This would be an injustice without any benefit, because one profits more from something if it involves making a sacrifice, and elementary education itself must not be gratuitous, except when there is no choice. In a word, it will not be gratuitous except for those who have proved they cannot pay for it. And then, but only then, it becomes a sacred debt, a noble tax for the poor, that the country must impose upon itself” (Guizot in his message of January 2nd).

cal organisation, but his right to teach depended on the Ministry of Public Instruction; the local committee was in charge of supervision, but only delegates (but not inspectors) sent by the Ministry could take decisive action; teachers' accommodation was paid for by the commune, but they were classed as State civil servants. In this subtle card game, the State kept all the aces. Social order, security and prosperity were symbolised by the stability of the constitutional monarchy. A factor in all this was intellectual development – but not enough to improve one's social status – and morality and religion to teach people discipline. The solidly ensconced bourgeoisie could not have had a better, more honest or more convincing spokesman than Guizot.

Discussed and slightly modified by the legislative powers, the law was promulgated on June 28th.

Article 1 defined two levels of primary education: elementary and superior. The programmes were modest in scope. At the elementary level, the programme included moral and religious instruction, reading, writing, rudiments of the French language and counting, the legal system of weights and measures. At the superior level, were added rudiments of geometry and their current applications, especially geometrical drawing and surveying, rudiments of the physical sciences and natural history and their application to current use, singing, rudiments of history and geography, especially of France.

According to article 2, parents would always be consulted, and their wishes respected, regarding the participation of their children in religious instruction classes. The 3rd, by putting public and private education on the same footing, enshrined the freedom to teach promised by the Charter.

Articles 4 to 7 regulated the opening and functioning of private primary schools. Articles 8 to 16 referred to public schools. Some of them, without referring directly to the Brothers' Institute, nevertheless concerned them directly.

Article 9 obliged each commune to support at least one primary school. If it could not do so by itself, it could link up with a neighbouring commune. When local circumstances permitted, the Minister could recognise as communal schools, establishments which belonged more directly to one of the denominations recognised by the State.

Article 10 obliged each departmental capital and each commune with more than 6,000 inhabitants to have a superior-level primary school. Article 11 obliged every department to support a teacher training college. Departments could link up with other departments if necessary.

Article 12 listed in detail minimal material conditions: each teacher in a communal school was to be given an appropriate classroom and accommodation, a wage not lower than 200 francs per year, at the elementary level, and 400 francs at the superior level, a modest sum complemented in article 14 by

a monthly fee from the pupils. Nothing was said about the percentage of free pupils: elementary level municipal schools were to accept as such all children the municipal council designated as being unable to pay even the lowest fee. The superior-level primary schools, on the other hand, were paying (they were established especially for a paying clientele). The municipal council reserved the right, however, to fill a certain number of free places with pupils who passed competitive examinations.

Article 13 explained how public instruction was to be financed. Article 15 spoke of the creation of a savings and insurance bank for teachers; articles 17 to 25, of the government of primary education, balancing carefully intervention at local and national government level, and identifying the role of bodies at all the intermediate levels.

It was a simple law that was also clear and clever. It introduced the idea that education was a public service for which the State was responsible. It was accepted that this service would be complemented by private initiatives<sup>8</sup>. The effective application of the Law by the Ministry raised noticeably the general level of instruction: "The ignorance of the peasants and craftsmen diminished progressively. In 1829, it was noted that only 45% of conscripts could read and that, by the end of the July Monarchy, the percentage had risen to 64%. This was the result of the 1833 law. One year after its promulgation, 2,275 primary schools were opened and, thanks to the initiative of towns and departments, a further 15 teacher train-

ing colleges were added to the 47 already existing. The number of primary schools increased from 31,420 to 33,695, and that of the pupils from 1,200,715 to 1,654,828. In 1847, there were 43,514 boys' schools with 2,176,000 pupils.<sup>9</sup> The 1833 law was applied to girls' schools by an ordinance in 1836. The number of girls' schools increased rapidly: in 1830, they numbered about 10,000. In 1847 the number had risen to 19,000, 8,000 of which were communal schools. The number of pupils rose from 730,000 to 1,354,000. On an average, 1,200 new schools were founded each year. Three and a half million children were now receiving primary education, that is, more or less a tenth of the total population. It was funded by the State, the departments, the communes and private individuals. Whereas under the Restoration, in 16 years, the State budget had allocated in all only 742,000 francs to primary education, in 17 years under Louis Philippe, it allocated 37,640,000 francs. In the same period de-

<sup>8</sup> "Private schools are for instruction what voluntary conscripts are for the army: they must be taken advantage of, but not excessively relied upon" (*Ibid*).

<sup>9</sup> In the same message, Guizot said also: "The first revolution made many promises without concerning itself with results. The Empire spent its energy on regenerating secondary education, but did nothing for the common people. The Restoration, up to 1828, allocated 50,000 francs annually to primary education. The 1828 Ministry obtained from the Chambers 300,000 francs. The July Revolution has given us a million each year, that is, more in two years than the Restoration in 15".

partmental budgets provided 60 million, communal budgets 120 million, school fees paid by about a third of all pupils (the others received free education) brought in 130 million <sup>10</sup>.

The impetus imparted to the education of children extended also to adults who had not attended, or hardly attended, school when they were children <sup>11</sup>.

It was in this initially unsettled and then, apparently, more tranquil context, that the Brothers worked and at times reacted strongly. During this period quite a number of other teaching Brothers' congregations were involved in education. There was plenty of room for everybody <sup>12</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Ernest LAVISSE, *op.cit.*, p. 220.

<sup>11</sup> There does not seem to have been any new legislation in Piedmont and in the Papal States in those years. In Belgium, the 1831 Constitution established much greater freedom for education.

The expansion of education, encouraged from various quarters, and for various motives, took place in the midst of distrust and opposition from a number of areas. There were factory owners who profited from the fact children did not go to school; the ruling classes feared that the spread of education among the common people would be accompanied by ideas and desires which would imperil the dominant position they occupied; in the Church voices were raised against knowledge which puffs up with pride and threatens subversion.

In this connection, the case of Rafaele Lambruschini is enlightening. In 1832, this priest opened and funded a Sunday school in Figline (Tuscany), where

he lived. Full of enthusiasm, he spoke of it to his uncle, Cardinal Luigi Lambruschini, Secretary of State of Gregory XVI: he told him that he had hired "a teacher of geometrical drawing and practical geometry for the poor children of the artisans. So as not to take them away from their work on working days, and to protect them from idleness and gambling on feast days, he had organised lessons on feast days, at times that did not clash with those of religious services. The Scollopini Fathers had been happy to make a room available in their house, and all the priests applauded the idea". His Eminence saw things differently: "The indiscreet love that is seen today to generalise instruction and culture does not contribute to improve society, but rather to make it more unhappy. Let the pride of the lower classes (destined by Providence for the exercise of crafts and labour) become inflamed by superficial knowledge, and we shall see what fruits will be produced by such an interested system! You would have done better if, instead of opening a geometry school for the poor of Figline on feast days, to the surprise and scandal of respectable people, you had gathered them together on those days to listen to pious and solid instructions which would teach them to be good and perfect Christians". As for Count Monaldo Leopardi, the father of the very famous Santiago, he never ceased to be scandalised by this violation of the Sunday rest, and feared that such a diffusion of lights would end up by burning down the house (A. GAMBARO, "*R. Lambruschini and the school in the period of the Risorgimento*", R.L., December 1961, p. 237-238).

In 1839, Cardinal Lambruschini, who was already the Protector of the Brothers in Italy, accepted to be the Protector of the whole Institute, a position he occupied till 1855.

<sup>12</sup> RIGAULT 5, p. 119-121; Pierre ZIND, "*Les nouvelles congrégations de Frères enseignants en France (1800-1830)*", p. 465-472.

## 2. THE INSTITUTE IN THE SERVICE OF THE POOR

### Initial difficulties under the July Monarchy

When the 1830 Revolution broke out, almost all the Brothers were in France: 237 communities, 1,420 Brothers <sup>13</sup>, teaching 87,000 pupils in 1,014 classes, in 380 schools. Outside France, there were only 8 houses, 6 of which in the Papal states: 3 in Rome (Trinità dei Monti, San Salvatore in Lauro, Madonna dei Monti), 1 each in Orvieto, Bolsena and Spoleto. The other two were in the Kingdom of Sardinia: one at Chambéry (Savoy), founded in 1810, and the other in Turin, dating from 1829 <sup>14</sup>.

In the France of 1830, words such as "revolution" and "republic" had nothing reassuring about them for the Brothers. Under the Restoration they were able to live in peace, pursue their apostolate without much worry, and receive from the government and the royal family consistent and opportune financial aid. For many, the new situation had overtones of the other Revolution, in which the Institute lost everything. The last straw had been the looting of the Generalate house.

The "principal Brothers" who, in these circumstances, were responsible for keeping the Institute functioning during the interregnum, gave proof of their character and faith, did not lose their heads, and encouraged the others to remain calm, giving them the impression that they knew the way ahead

and were following it without hesitation. As a measure of prudence, the making of vows was suspended that year, and changes of Brothers were reduced to a minimum.

The General Chapter finally met on September 2nd. Despite his resistance, Brother Anaclet was elected Superior. He was given 4 Assistants: Brothers Eloi, Philippe, Abdon and Jean Chysostome. All 5 had joined the Institute during the time of the Empire.

Elected Superior at the age of 42, Brother Anaclet was not new to the work of government. He had been Assistant for 8 years, and Director for 12, a responsibility he had been given before his perpetual profession in Lyon, in September 1813 <sup>15</sup>. His fragile

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<sup>13</sup> I am not in a position to say whether this figure included the novices in the novitiates. In the communities there were "employed novices".

<sup>14</sup> Despite this state of things, the 1830 General Chapter wanted to include into the legislation of the Institute a clause which guaranteed the representation of "foreign provinces" in the assemblies of the Congregation. The proposition voted on this occasion presupposes changes in the Bull of 1725, and that is why there was a recourse to the Holy See. In the following General Chapter in 1837, these provinces were already represented as such.

The Brothers came to Turin at the end of 1829 and began teaching at the beginning of 1830.

<sup>15</sup> The name of Bordeaux given in RIGAUT 5, p.24 is an error. The autograph formula of vows leaves no doubt (GA. EE 276, dossier 19).

health and his affable ways belied possibly the foresight and strength of character which enabled him to prove equal to the task.

The anticlericalism which followed the 1830 Revolution had negative consequences for the Institute in France. Some writings and actions reflect an initial period in which the worse was expected. As a precaution, the new Superior wasted no time in having recourse to the Pope. Having explained to him that recent changes in the situation threatened to make him witness once again the dispersion of the Brothers and the suppression of the Institute in France, he asked him to grant a general dispensation from perpetual and triennial vows (excluding that of chastity), in the event of the suppression of the Institute in France, adding that this dispensation would be cancelled if the reasons for it disappeared<sup>16</sup>.

Circular 60, dated November 24th 1830, recommends the Brothers to observe "the strictest regularity; let each Brother act at all times through a sentiment of faith, submission, obedience and profound humility. In this way we shall be sure that the Lord will protect us from the arrows of our enemies, and will save us so that we may continue instructing these poor children".

But two months later his tone had changed: "We have nothing but thanksgiving to give to the Lord for all the blessings he constantly deigns to bestow upon our Institute. The losses it has suffered, since times became more difficult, are insignificant by comparison with what we had rea-

son to fear; and they will be largely compensated for by the establishments we are being asked to found in Piedmont, Savoy and Belgium. The eagerness with which our Brothers are being recalled to the last country is truly admirable, and we feel obliged to fulfil such pressing requests without delay. We are considering also completing our house in Rome and increasing the one in Turin. And so, my very dear Brothers, if in certain towns, the magistrates judge it proper to withdraw their confidence in us, and it is not possible to maintain the house by subscription or the generosity of some benefactors, you should not be too upset by this. If this happens, inform us so that we can take the appropriate steps to find communities for the Brothers. Let us never lose the confidence we should have in God and in the protection of the Most Blessed Virgin" (Circular 61, January 26th 1831). This text lists the 3 forms of support for schools: the municipal budget, which is preferable, and which identifies the school as a public school; if this is not available, a "foundation" set up by some benefactors; or thirdly a voluntary "subscription" by persons who contribute funds to ensure the school does not disappear. If the last two sources of funding were used, the school was considered private. The Superiors did not consider public and private schools equivalent.

<sup>16</sup> The text of the petition is known, and the fact that the rescript was given on October 23rd 1830, is also known. As it was not needed, it must have been destroyed (cf. GA EL 552/2).

Subsequently, as the government tried to regain the favour of the Church, the Institute's situation improved. But the Guizot law which, under certain aspects, offered so many advantages, declared war with renewed vigour on gratuity.

### **The awareness of existing for the poor**

The text of Circular 60, quoted earlier, expresses also an awareness of the purpose of the Institute: "in order to continue to teach poor children". Other texts of the period either give a timely reminder of this purpose, or promote it. A manuscript written at the end of 1833, to which we will have to refer again later, summarises in two sentences the history of the congregation: "The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was founded in 1681 by M. De La Salle for the Christian and civil education of the children of the poor and of the artisans... The Christian Schools having been established especially for the working classes, have always been essentially and perfectly gratuitous, not only for the children of the poor and of the artisans, who are admitted by preference, but also for the small number of non-poor children who have always been admitted, without detriment to the poor"<sup>17</sup>. The following greeting for the New Year includes a recommendation to all the Brothers: "Let us ask God... that he will give you the sweet satisfaction of seeing your lessons bear fruit for the glory of God and the salvation of the poor children entrusted to your care"<sup>18</sup>.

Sometimes, in recording the memory of deceased Brothers, writers mentioned their love for the poor. The obituary of Brother Adélarde, deceased at the age of 84, mentions that, although he could have lived comfortably in the world, he lost no time in joining the Brothers at Lyons: "the obligations contracted by his vows and his ardent zeal for the Christian instruction of poor children, called him back to his vocation, and he was faithful to this call" (Circ. 63, April 12th 1831). The town in which Brother Servant de Marie lived and died will preserve "for a long time the memory of his boundless devotedness and his charity for poor children" (Circ. 73, March 4th 1833). At Verviers in Belgium, Brother Achaire "undertakes with great zeal the education of poor children" (Circ.78, March 20th 1834). The same text, speaking of steps taken to introduce the cause of beatification of the Founder, added: "Let us consider...this spirit of faith which was the principle of all his important actions, since it was this spirit of faith which led him to consecrate himself generously to the education of poor children, so as to procure for them the knowledge of the Christian Truths, and to teach them the way to live a holy life". In another Circular dated 1833, we are told that Brother Vétérins, who accompanied Blessed Scubilion on his journey: "filled with ar-

<sup>17</sup> GA, EE 276, dossier 16.

<sup>18</sup> GA, EE 276, dossier 1, letter dated January 10th 1834.

dent zeal for the evangelisation of the poor, had asked for an overseas mission”<sup>19</sup>.

In the light of this awareness, we need to look now at the participation of the Brothers in the development of the educational service and, as the occasion arises, at some initiatives of social Catholicism. They had little room to manoeuvre given the limits imposed upon them by legal and political pressure, as also by their own particular view of their mission. What they did was based on an approach which was more practical than theoretical, and based more on order and uniformity than on free initiative. This needs to be acknowledged. We need to accept also that the seriousness of their commitment led them to overcome in a certain measure their initial limitations.

### **Evolution of the educational service**

Ordinary primary schools remained the place where the great majority of the Brothers exercised their apostolate, but other much larger establishments were also opened. In 1831, the boarding school at Béziers finally opened, with programmes that went beyond the elementary level. The teacher training college at Rouen was joined by that of Namur in Belgium at the end of 1836. Sunday classes were begun at Lisieux and Turin. In Paris, and then in other towns, evening courses for adults were started and became widespread. At the end 1834, the Brothers took charge of an orphanage located in Diocletian's Baths, in Rome. Some of these establishments deserve a closer look.

### **(1) Study programmes**

Public pressure did not allow the Institute to restrict its programme to what was indicated in the Rule. In 1831, the Superior announced the imminent publication of a text on geometrical drawing: “Some of our Brothers, having been obliged, at the request of the magistrates, to introduce geometrical drawing in their classes...”<sup>20</sup>. In reality, the requests went further and included history and geography. The framework of the Conduct of Schools proved to be too narrow, and the challenge was accepted. It was decided to produce a new edition, including changes that were considered substantial, and the Regime wished to hear the opinion of the body of the Institute regarding this.

As a consequence, a reduced General Chapter, calling itself a “Committee”, met at the Generalate on October 25th 1834 “to decide whether the Brothers would continue to teach geometrical drawing, history and geography in the schools of the Institute, as had been the practice for a number of years. The Committee, following the example of M. De La Salle, our venerable Founder who, in order to attract children to his schools so that they could receive religious instruction, wanted his schools to teach the same subjects as other similar schools did; and considering that, given the circumstances and the lack of zeal on the part of most parents

<sup>19</sup> Circular 96, dated January 30th 1838. Brother Vétérins, after wearing himself out on the Ile Bourbon (La Réunion), died at Lyons.

<sup>20</sup> Circular 65, dated July 27th 1831.



for religious matters, their children ought to have the same temporal advantages they can find elsewhere, decided unanimously, after mature deliberation, and having examined the reasons for and against, that it was necessary to tolerate in our schools the teaching of these three special subjects”<sup>21</sup>.

That was how they expressed themselves, for better or for worse. The new subjects, finally officially accepted, had already been taught for many years. The new edition of the Conduct included them in the main body of the work and not as a simple appendix<sup>22</sup>.

The General Chapter which met in 1837 ratified these decisions and went one step further: “Convinced that, in the present circumstances, it is impossible to conduct a school without having a Teacher’s Certificate, and warned by the Superior that it was possible that the Examining Commission might eventually require a knowledge of not only history, geography and geometric drawing, but also of the rudiments of music, the Chapter believes that, given this, the Regime could establish, in which places, and by which Brothers, it will be permitted to study this most recent branch of education, but limiting this to what is strictly necessary”<sup>23</sup>.

The words “strictly necessary” were meant as a warning against all neglect of religious teaching, against being dazzled by novelty, and against the pursuit of vain glory. In short, the intention was to ensure that Brothers stayed accessible to children, especially to those who needed their help most, and controlled any ambition they

might have to outshine others. Circular 81, which communicated the results of the Committee, took up again and enlarged on the warnings given previously: it disapproved of “those who have an inordinate passion for study, and devote to the teaching of these sciences more time than they ought, or allow children to study them, when these do not have a sufficient degree of instruction, and their intellect is not developed enough”. It should not be thought that children could leave elementary schools as trained geometers, architects or surveyors; and “if some children endowed with extraordinary talent make greater progress, this cannot be due to anything else except their work and their application, and not to the extra lessons of the teacher, nor to the special attention he gives him. Another abuse, just as great, would be for a Brother to take it upon himself to introduce into his school new branches of teaching not authorised by the Conduct and by us, such as bookkeeping, the rudiments of algebra and physics, etc”  
The 1837 General Chapter, conscious still

<sup>21</sup> GA, ED 227, Chapter Register B, p.138. After deciding to introduce new “specialities”, the Committee spent 32 meetings revising completely the Conduct.

<sup>22</sup> The new edition did not appear immediately. There are copies from 1837 and 1838. It is as if the 1837 copy was used as a model by the capitulants of that year. The 1838 copies (and those of later editions) carry the approval of the Chapter. On the impact that such a novelty might have had, see Pedro M. GIL, *Three Centuries of Lasallian Identity*, (p. 194-201, especially 196-197).

<sup>23</sup> GA, ED 227, Chapter Register B, p.146-147.

of the abuses which had been introduced “in some houses with regard to the teaching of geometric drawing, recommends Brothers to restrict themselves rigorously to what is prescribed in the *Conduct* concerning this, and forbids the teaching of figure drawing except in adult schools and boarding schools”<sup>24</sup>.

## (2) Methodology

The war of the methods broke out again in 1830. The Institute showed it could learn. Circular 64 reveals a salutary attitude of mind: “It often happens that children remain a long time in the lowest stage of learning to read, and make no progress. This happens, not only because they are not very gifted, but also because they do not work enough in class. Their whole lessons consists in reading two or three lines every half day, and the rest of the time is entirely wasted”. One could hardly be more severe about a routine practice of the traditional methodology, often further hampered by overcrowded classes taught by a single teacher. “To remedy this deficiency and hasten progress in the lower classes, it would be good to place three or four small posters with reading texts around the class”, of different levels of complexity, for the children to read. And so the teacher, after having made a homogeneous group read from a poster, would hand the group over to an “inspector”<sup>25</sup> who would make the group practise read the same text again, while he himself went to another group, and so on, according to the number of groups that could be formed.

“It would be good to use a similar approach when explaining arithmetic. To make this possible, there would have to be in each senior class as many blackboards as there are arithmetical Orders. The children would line up according to their lesson, with the questionnaire in their hand and, under the supervision of the Inspector, would practise solving on the blackboard the problem set for them. After that, they would go and do the same problem in their exercise book. In the meantime, the Inspector would help the less intelligent of the Order, and note those who did best. The first problem having been solved in this way, he would propose another one, which would be solved in the same manner. The teacher would supervise the class as a whole, or alternatively give lessons or more complete explanations to all the Orders, and check on everyone’s progress”.

And finally: “If this approach were used by zealous and vigilant teachers, there would be rapid progress in reading and arithmetic, a fact that can be vouched for by the many Brothers who have used this method for a long time. We could then claim that we had taken from the mutual method everything that was really useful and applicable to our own teaching”<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Circulars: 71 (30/9/32), 79 (17/8/34), 81 (16/12/34). GA, ED 227, Chapter Register B, p.148. Note the plural of “pensionnats” (boarding schools).

<sup>25</sup> A more advanced pupil. The term “monitor”, used in Lancastrian schools, is studiously avoided.

<sup>26</sup> Circular 64, dated June 1st 1831. The emphasis is mine. These means are included in the later editions of the *Conduct*.

This "reconciliation" included a stimulating recognition for those who had not resigned themselves to confusing tradition with simple routine. This was not only a fact, but also an indication of an attitude.

### (3) Schools for adults

As has already been said, from 1824 or 1825 onwards, Lille had a school offering half-day courses for workers, but Brother Guillaume de Jésus had shown no interest in a school "lit by candles". But here also changes occurred.

At the end of 1830, the new Superior informed all the Brothers discreetly that "establishments of a new kind" (Circ. 60, already quoted) were being set up. A month later, the Brothers of the École St Nicolas in Paris "organised evening classes for workers, which were proving very successful"<sup>27</sup>. In the month of February, the Secretary General of the Administration of the civil hospices of Paris recognised the good results, and proposed to the Superior to extend this kind of work to two or three other schools in the capital. Brother Anaclet did not reject the idea, and indicated what contribution the municipality would have to make to ensure the viability of the project<sup>28</sup>.

In fact, adult courses became widespread, and the government continued to demonstrate its interest. On February 2nd 1833, Minister Guizot asked the Superior for information, his intention being to increase the number of these courses with the help of the State. A few days later, thanking the Superior for his answer, the minister ex-

pressed "his great satisfaction" with the fine results achieved by the Institute, "since 790 workers of all kinds are receiving instruction at the present time in your establishments, and you are on the point of completing arrangements which will enable you to increase their number". The Superior wasted no time in communicating these letters to the Brothers. His aim was to increase their serenity, and to sweep away any doubts about the intentions of the government. But he warned them: "Our intention is not to persuade you to establish schools for adults, without first asking for our opinion, because they disturb our communities to a certain degree, unless there are Brothers whose only responsibility is to work in them. This is the arrangement we have obtained for the 6

<sup>27</sup> GA, EE 276, dossier 14: Letter to Brother Calixte, Director of Rouen, dated December 27th 1830. Such a quick move can be explained only if all arrangements had already been made. In fact, Brother Philippe, Director of this school before he was appointed Assistant, had prepared the ground. The July Revolution and its new future halted the opening of the courses. It is not certain that the Director of the Brothers' École St Nicolas des Champs was in contact with StNicolas de Vaugirard, directed by a certain Fr Bervanger. The regulation of this latter institution, dated 1826, says that the workers it lodged "could frequent classes in reading, writing and counting from 7 pm every evening. These classes lasted at least two hours" (J.B. DUROSELLE, *op.cit.*, p.33).

<sup>28</sup> GA, EE 276, dossier 13 (letter from the Secretary General, dated February 13th 1831), and dossier 4 (draft of the response of the Brother Superior). According to this last document, the pupils attending evening classes numbered 120.

we have in Paris, where 14 Brothers are paid to do this work. We will have the same arrangement for the schools we shall establish at the request of the Minister, and the Brothers will be paid by the University”<sup>29</sup>.

A few years later, a “Notice on the Institute” speaks at some length of “the multitude of pupils of all ages and conditions” who come to school each evening from 8 pm to 10 pm. Here we see “fathers of families who come, after a tiring day’s work, to sit on the same bench that was occupied by their children during the day, and with great docility receive the instruction they missed when they were younger, and to learn the prayers they had forgotten or had the misfortune never to learn”. We read also that there were seven schools for adults with 1,280 pupils between the ages of 17 and 40, “not to mention the 200 apprentices who, not being able to be admitted with the workers between 8pm and 10pm, were admitted from 5pm to 7pm, after the departure of the young children”. Similar schools existed outside Paris<sup>30</sup>.

Some fairly detailed statistics indicate, for 1838, 22 “adult schools, all in France, with 56 classes and 4,850 pupils”<sup>31</sup>. Inevitably, there was much diversity in what was taught: reading, writing, counting, grammar, geometry, drawing, music, singing, narration, bookkeeping, “in a word, each one learned the subjects he needed and without paying fees”. There was also religious instruction which the Brothers never omitted. The story is told of a government minister who came incognito to check on the pres-

ence of these numerous workers, and found them all working in order and silence under the supervision of the Brothers<sup>32</sup>.

Education for the workers was available also for children and adolescents who had been sent out to work at an early age. To the two hours per half-day of class in Lille, and the evening classes in Paris, there were now added Sunday schools. Already in 1830, the Brothers had taken charge of one of these schools in Turin, run by the ROMI (*Regia Opera della Mendicita Istruita*). In 1838, the mayor of Lisieux arranged for the Brothers’ community to obtain an extra

<sup>29</sup> Letters from Guizot in GA, EE 276, dossier 4; Circular 73, dated March 4th 1833.

<sup>30</sup> GA, xEF 303/2: “Notice on the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools”, inserted at the beginning of a collection of circulars, and probably from the beginning of 1836.

<sup>31</sup> GA, xBO 776: sheet glued in at the end of copy N° 27 of the *Rule of Government*. Adult schools in 1838: 6 in Paris, 2 in Lille, 1 at Nîmes, Rennes, Nantes, Orléans, Valenciennes, Lyon, Villefranche, Le Mans, Bolbec, Rouen, Poitiers, Alençon (GA DD 268, dossier 1).

<sup>32</sup> GA, EE 276, dossier 20: Handwritten notes about Brother Anaclæt by Brother Calixte. Strange observations by an eye witness or someone very near. Some go so far as to attribute to these schools the prolongation of the reign of Louis Philippe, whom the republicans would have liked to dethrone earlier. The reason for this was that thousands of workers, instead of going to start a revolution, were sitting quietly in the classrooms of Brothers’ schools. It is possibly a picturesque and ingenuous explanation, but it gives some idea of how the Brothers and the government gave one another mutual support, without there being a complete coincidence of interests.

Brother to teach the children who “at the age of 7, 8 or 9 are pushed into factories”. For two hours every week-day, and three on Sundays, the Brothers looked after these children trying to give them the rudiments of an education and some moral training. No doubt, this was not the only example of this kind of work.

#### (4) Orphanages

After protracted negotiations, towards the end of 1834, a sizeable group of Brothers took charge of an orphanage founded in Rome by Pope Gregory XVI. The various stages of the negotiations are closely linked

with the history of the special relations that existed between the Generalate and the Brothers of Italy <sup>33</sup>.

Whatever the truth may be about the intrigue implied, and even though the Superior did not approve of Brothers providing “services other than instruction”, the Brothers demonstrated their talents and their self-sacrifice in this new branch of education. In 1838, the orphanage, the only one the Institute had at the time, looked after 400 children. Similar establishments were established in other Papal States, but also in different parts of the world from 1840 onwards.

### 3. THE FIGHT TO MAINTAIN GRATUITY

#### First reactions to the Guizot Law

In 1830, the number of Brothers’ schools in France began decreasing. The Brothers had to withdraw from certain places where the Lancastrians had come back into favour. In other places, they were able to continue thanks to the support of powerful benefactors or of public subscription (even though Brother Guillaume de Jésus had called it “completely out of date”).

The Superior tried to share with the Brothers the confidence he had as he saw the efforts being made by the Congregation to save its schools: “The Brothers who have heard that the municipal councils of various towns have refused to allocate funds for the upkeep of our Brothers, have no doubt

convinced themselves that these establishments are going to close down. We feel that it is our duty to tell them, for their consolation, that they are staying open thanks to the zeal of a number of generous benefactors” <sup>34</sup>. There is not the slightest mention of making the pupils pay.

From 1833 onwards, articles 12 and 14 of the Guizot Law brought the question of gratuity once more to the fore, and the Institute resumed its fight for what it considered to be an essential characteristic of its identity and of the service it rendered. Circular 75, dated September 6th, showed that

<sup>33</sup> See RIGALT 5, p. 188-198.

<sup>34</sup> Circular 68, dated March 20th 1832. See Circ. 61, dated January 26th 1831, already quoted.

the superiors of the Congregation had not been caught by surprise: "If when the new law on public instruction is published, you are asked to do something that worries you, you should ask for time to reflect, so that you can write to us and wait for our answer".

Twenty days later, Circular 76 indicates very briefly the precise line of conduct and defines the strategy that is to be followed: uncompromising fidelity to the Rules of the Institute, fidelity, as far as possible, to civil law: "Several municipal councils, basing themselves on the new law, have decided, for the benefit of the municipal treasury, to demand fees from those of our pupils whom they will judge able to pay. We have earnestly begged these Gentlemen not to abrogate the absolute gratuity of our teaching. Several towns have reacted favourably to our request, and we are prepared to renew our pressure on those which have not, in the hope that they will eventually take into consideration our humble and pressing entreaties, which are as much in keeping with our Rules as they are conducive to the true good of education...Establishments suppressed for this reason, or even for other motives, such as those of Beauvais, Versailles, etc...will be maintained by subscription, and will even grow. You know, my very dear Brothers, how much our Holy Founder held dear the absolute gratuity of our schools. He considered this as the foundation and support of our Institute. And so, he was not satisfied simply to forbid us expressly to receive anything from the parents of our pupils, either

in the form of money, or of presents, or of free services, but he wanted us also to make it the object of one of our vows, and not to accept any establishment unless the schools were absolutely free, in conformity with our Rules, and the children or their parents contributed nothing to them.

"The new law establishes, it is true, that the non-poor children will have to pay a monthly fee, but it says expressly that this fee will go to the teacher, in addition to his fixed salary, and will become part of his income. But one is free to give away this fee to whomsoever one pleases; and so we formally declare that we shall return this fee to the children who have to pay it, and that we will be satisfied with the fixed salary, convinced that communes will make our salaries proportional to the number of poor children they will want us to instruct gratuitously. It seems to us that this act of generosity ought to provoke only gratitude, even that of the authorities, some of whose worries we will be removing. We will not go into greater detail here, because we hope to send you without delay a short memoir in which this important matter will be treated at the length it deserves".

As we can see, arguments are based on interpretations of the Rule and of the Law. The Rule is quoted in the light of the current practice of the Institute, reflected in legislative texts inherited from the Founder, prospectuses drawn up according the needs of the times, as well as in current practice regarding the making of vows and under-

standing them. As for the Law, advantage is taken of doors that lie open, because they have not been closed.

### **Circular of November 11th 1833**

The “small memoir” that was promised appeared on the following November 11th, under the title “Circular letter of the Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools on the gratuity of teaching prescribed by the Statutes of the Order, compared with the law of June 28th 1833”. The Superior provides the Brothers with 18 pages of small writing, containing abundant, detailed and subtle argumentation, in the hope that nothing remained unsolved, and no string remained un-plucked. The result hoped for was a clarified and renewed commitment to maintain vigorously, in particular, gratuity, and in general, regularity.

This document, uncharacteristic in some ways, deserves some attention. Ever since the days of Brother Agathon, almost half a century before, no Superior had written such a long document on a single subject. While it referred to tradition, and appealed abundantly to it for support, this circular was something new, and the circumstances of the dispute were such, that certain of his arguments had no precedent in previous Institute documents. The document deserves more than a cursory analysis.

It begins with an act of trust: the Institute survives because Divine Providence loves it and protects it, and because it remains faithful to the Rule given to us by the Founder. In this fact is to be found its guar-

antee for the future, and the reason for resisting courageously all attacks against these essential Rules.

There follows an uncompromising presentation and analysis of the legislative texts being contested (the law, regulation, ministerial circulars) to demonstrate how mistaken are the friends and protectors of the Institute when, blinded by their good intentions, they think that the remuneration prescribed by the law is not incompatible with the Rule and the vows of the Brothers.

The Institute cannot accept school fees, in the first place because they are intended entirely for the teacher, and do not constitute a supplementary tax that would go into the coffers of the municipality<sup>35</sup>. Those who paid them, remunerated the teacher for the lessons he had given them. The fact that a municipal officer collected the fees changed absolutely nothing: it was money paid by the parents of pupils, and went entirely into the pocket of the teacher. And so, if through fidelity to their Rule, the Brothers refused to accept remuneration from the rich, would they be satisfied with the fixed basic salary? Yes, replied the Superior, on condition it was calculated justly. As he saw it, justice consisted in the municipality paying for each poor pupil the same sum they

<sup>35</sup> That was why the municipality did not have the right to depend on this income to meet its own expenses, and the Brothers did not in any way disappoint the legitimate expectations of the municipality when they objected to the remuneration: it was their money, not the municipality's. The reasoning does not lack subtlety.

wished to make each rich child pay. Supported by this "poor tax", the Brothers would have more than they needed, and would even be satisfied with less, given the large number of poor children that frequented their schools.

The second error committed by certain friends of the Institute consists in thinking that school fees could exist without the Brothers participating directly or indirectly in this operation: the process prescribed by the law makes such participation absolutely inevitable. As he lists the consequences, the writer becomes emotional: "We would be the ones, would we not, who would set the collector to work on the first day of every month, when we handed in our list. We would be the ones to show him on which doors to knock, and it would be in the name of the Brothers that he would ask, solicit, demand or threaten. If he met with a refusal, it would be in the name of the Brothers, who have made a vow in the presence of God to teach children gratuitously without distinction, and without wishing to discover who was poor and who was rich, that the furniture of the debtors in arrears would be seized, advertised for sale and sold. Let us have no illusions about this: that is how the Treasury proceeds against tax payers in arrears, and this privilege, which the law in its solicitude wishes to give us in order to ensure our income; this privilege which it does not name but which is written clearly in legal documents regarding direct taxation, is nothing less than the appalling right to sell by public auction the furniture of the

parents of our dear pupils. No, such a scandal will never take place in our Institute. For the last 150 years that we have been teaching, our pupils have never owed us any money; our present pupils do not owe us any; and those we shall have in the future will not owe us any either. We instruct them for God and for the State and not for ourselves. From them we ask for docility and virtue: we do not ask them for money. They are our children and not our tax payers. And therefore, neither each month, nor ever, will we give the collector the list of names of our alleged debtors".

Having demonstrated that the remuneration imposed by the law was intended for the teacher, and that it could not be collected without his involvement, it followed inevitably "that this new state of things is incompatible with our Institute". The text of the Rule, of the Bull, of the Prospectus, of the Instructive Circular of Brother Agathon (in 1784, p.42), inevitably led to the conclusion that: "You see, my very dear Brothers, the fundamental and essential Rules of our Institute, the practice of all the time that has preceded us, our vows, the authority of the Holy See and the constant tradition of the Institute, all join together to establish the legitimacy of our opposition to a tax which would be the downfall of the Christian Schools, as our venerable Founder foretold".

The Circular then ran through the various accusations made against the Institute. For example:

Although the Brothers profess to teach gratuitously, they make towns pay them:



Yes, but they have no income of their own, and they do not make the pupils as such pay them.

The taxes used by municipalities are supported also by the parents of pupils: Yes, but they pay them for food, and not for sending their children to school, and everybody pays, not only the parents of teachers. What about voluntary subscriptions? "In a number of towns, our schools are supported by voluntary subscriptions, and perhaps several fathers of pupils are involved in this, but we make a great distinction between alms voluntarily deposited into the hands of the treasurer of the association, and a monthly remuneration based specifically on the frequentation of the school. And in fact, it would be ridiculous to say that the father of a family could no longer contribute to a good work he agrees with, once he put his child in the school; or that another would have to take his son away because he was a subscriber". And if the authorities left for the Brothers only the poor children in the school, and sent those who could pay to another? The Brothers would accept this, because their lessons and their concern are intended in particular for the poor, but by doing this, the authorities would be violating the freedom of choice of the poor, a principle on which the law is based. And if the Brothers returned the fees to the town which, in return, would see to their upkeep? To be able to give them away they would first have to accept them, and if they accepted them, their school would cease to be gratuitous. Consequently, this could not be done.

In the eyes of the Institute, there remained only one just way, already mentioned: towns would give the Brothers a fixed remuneration, equitably established, dependent on the number of poor pupils attending the school. This remuneration might be higher, in some cases, than what had been agreed upon previously with the town, "but we are far from wishing to take advantage of this circumstance in order to increase our income. We ask for ourselves only what is strictly necessary". The easiest solution would be for communes to reduce their contribution. If that happened, the Superior would ask his Brothers to make their frugality, their patience and their love for mortification, poverty and suffering compensate for the diminution in their resources. Let them add to their modest income their increased and trusting virtue, and they will be able to point gloriously to a career which everything had helped to render more meritorious in the eyes of God. And so, by sacrificing a small of what was necessary, they would have the happiness of not moving away from a town where they were doing good, where the pupils loved them, the parents blessed them and everyone esteemed them.

If these renouncements did not make it possible to come to an agreement, but only then, they would go elsewhere.

There is a last point which was inspired perhaps by other congregations of Brothers who did not refuse remuneration. The Circular explains, without being polemical: "M. De La Salle, wishing that there should always be at least three Brothers (so that they

could more easily continue to fulfil their duties), was able to establish schools only in more populated towns which had enough resources. But since his aim was to provide poor children with the benefits of education, he made absolute gratuity a strict duty for his disciples. The Founders of the new congregations, whose principal aim is to provide education for children in small communes, must have foreseen that the limited resources of these communes and the fewness of poor children in them, would make absolute gratuity impossible, and so they had not imposed it on their disciples.

Another essential difference was that, in small communes there could be only one school, and so necessarily, all the children, poor and rich, would have to go to it, and the rich would pay fees, without which the teacher could not survive. In towns, on the contrary, there were several free schools where rich children had always been able to have instruction by paying. When the Brothers were founded, however, the aim was to make instruction available for the poor, who were very numerous and completely neglected educationally. That is why schools have always been absolutely gratuitous, but this has never prevented the admission of non-poor children, when this was not at the expense of the poor”<sup>36</sup>.

This conclusion shows how the Institute saw itself. This self-image enabled it to maintain its position, in all serenity, among the many other similar religious families which were born in France and elsewhere<sup>37</sup>.

### Other writings

A memoir kept in the archives in manuscript form has to date from this period. Originally, it was intended for a public outside the Institute. The arguments it uses are similar to those found in the two circulars we have seen. What is different about it, however, is its desire to destroy the illusion of the authorities who might think that they could collect considerable sums of money from school fees: “Those who thought that we have many really rich children in our schools would make a very big mistake. The attempts made by various towns to remove such children from our classes, or to make them pay fees, made it possible for us to gauge how many there were more accurately

<sup>36</sup> The objection is expressly formulated by Minister Guizot in a letter dated October 17th 1833, and the case he quotes is that of Agen where there were Marianist Brothers. In his response dated November 7th, Brother Anaclét referred specifically to several founders: Chaminade, La Mennais, Deshayes, etc. The two documents are important. Most of the arguments which will be brandished 20 or 30 years later are already there (GA, LD 252/2, dossiers 5 and 6).

<sup>37</sup> In 1802, in Ireland, Blessed Edmund Rice founded his congregation of Brothers, which split into two parts subsequently: The Brothers of the Presentation and the Brothers of the Christian Schools (Christian Brothers), approved by Pius VII in 1820. In the 1830's, St Joseph Cottolengo thought that his “Brothers of St Vincent” could go to the small villages where the Brothers had no schools. (Cf. Elio POMATTO, *La Fondazione dei Fratelli di San Vincenzo e i Fratelli delle Scuole Cristiane*, in R.L., 1992, p. 112-135).

than by simply looking at their clothes". This affirmation was based on the statistics of three towns <sup>38</sup>.

The sensitive aspect of voluntary subscriptions is broached in Circular 77, dated December 17th of the same year 1833. Given that parents of pupils were allowed to take part, it was absolutely essential that subscriptions were "completely voluntary, without individual invitations or solicitations. We would very much like it to be possible not to allow parents of our pupils to take part in the subscriptions. This would be the perfection of gratuity. But if some do take part, it must be of their own free will. If it became impossible in some towns to maintain establishment without violating gratuity, we are firmly resolved that we would close them and send the Brothers to the many places where our presence is wanted, and where absolute gratuity is guaranteed us".

The thinking behind this is made explicit in the last paragraph: "Moreover, my very dear Brothers, we must consider subscriptions as precarious and provisional resources and, in the light of this, we must always aim to obtain once again for our establishments recognition as communal schools. When in a town the right time seems to have arrived to make this request, the opportunity must not be wasted. In the light of this, there is a recommendation also to cultivate the best possible relations with the local authorities.

In 1834, a new edition of the Collection appeared. This time, the obligations of the vows are explained as in 1783, that is to say,

almost as in the Rule, a new edition of which appeared in 1835. The Brothers were given also a collection of the Chapter decisions and practical indications contained in the circulars going back to 1810. In the collection, the decision of the General Chapter of 1822 reads as follows: "It will not be tolerated that pupils be obliged to pay the smallest remuneration. Establishments where attempts are made to introduce such an abuse will be closed". The famous "free ink" had still to be paid for by the community!

### **What had the fight achieved?**

The municipal authorities still had to be won over, some of them clearly unwilling to accept the point of view of the Institute: "We have to continue to fight for gratuity. All the same, we have won up till now. Quimper has allocated 2,400 francs and has abandoned the monthly fee <sup>39</sup>. Meaux has also just done away with it. As for Charleville and Chartres, they have been more severe, or one could say, more unjust, because the first of these towns has reduced the total remuneration of seven Brothers to 3,000 francs, but the parish priest has promised 600 francs, and the Minister said I could count on him. The second town has reduced the fixed salary to the legal minimum. I have told the mayor how improper it was to reduce our remuneration to such a low sum, after taking the measures he has taken to

<sup>38</sup> GA, EE 276, dossier 16: undated manuscript, signed by Brother Anaclet.

<sup>39</sup> Probable meaning of "and abandoned to us the monthly remuneration".

drive out the rich children from our classes. A subscription will make up what has been taken from us. We are still fighting with Montreuil, Nogent..."<sup>40</sup>.

And still two years later, Pelet, the Minister for Public Instruction, intervened to make the city of Rouen, traditionally ill-disposed towards the Brothers, accept once and for all their point of view regarding gratuity<sup>41</sup>.

These examples give some idea of a fight which, at least from 1833 onwards, obliged the Institute in France to remain constantly vigilant.

A document dated 1837<sup>42</sup> referring to schools for children, gives the following figures for France: 313 communal schools and 111 private schools run by the Brothers. In the first type of school, the remuneration of the Brothers was paid completely or partially by the municipality. Private schools existed only because of "foundations" or subscriptions. The provenance of salaries was as follows: 577,845 francs from municipalities; 167,358 from foundations; 218,268 from subscriptions.

#### 4. IN THE "FOREIGN PROVINCES"

##### The Papal States

In 1831 or shortly afterwards, the Roman community of La Madonna dei Monti was running a gratuitous elementary school with two classes near St Mary Major, on which it depended.

In 1835, Cardinal Bussi, Archbishop of Benevento, finally put an end to his worries regarding the poor children of his cathedral city. A community of Brothers took charge of four classes for poor children in a town which benefitted also from institutions run by the Brothers of the Pious Schools and the Jesuits<sup>43</sup>. In 1837, Cardinal Pacca succeeded in obtaining a community of Brothers for Velletri, a short distance from Rome. The municipality promised an annual sum to provide school materials for the poor pupils<sup>44</sup>.

In 1838, the institutions directed by the Brothers were supported by foundations in Benevento, Velletri, Bolsena, Spoleto and the community of La Madonna dei Monti in Rome. The Apostolic Chamber funded the school at Orvieto, where the novitiate

<sup>40</sup> GA, EE 276, dossier 1: Letter from Brother Anaclet to Brother Abdon, Assistant, dated January 10th 1834.

<sup>41</sup> GA, EE 276, dossier 7: Letter from Minister Pelet to Faucon, President of the Christian Schools' Committee of Rouen, dated March 9th 1836. See also RIGAULT 5, p. 107-11.

<sup>42</sup> GA, DD 268, dossier 1.

<sup>43</sup> GA, ND 200: A hundred years earlier, there had been an archbishop at Benevento who, when elected Pope, took the name of Benedict XIII – another reason for the Brothers to be happy to have schools in this town.

<sup>44</sup> GA, ND 511.

continued to function, and the other establishments in Rome. The Province numbered 80 Brothers and novices, and 2,700 pupils.

### **Piedmont and Savoy**

Having taken charge of the classes of the *Mendicità Istruita* at the beginning of 1831, the Brothers were not slow to demonstrate their competence in teaching the poor. In 1831 and 1832, the capital of the Kingdom entrusted to them six elementary public schools, with two classes in each, in various parts of the town. In 1833, the municipality asked for a third class to be added to four of these schools. The enthusiasm of the Court was such that the municipalities of the Kingdom were recommended to entrust elementary schools to the Brothers whenever possible. Racconigi, in 1833, Nice the following year, Genoa in 1837, acceded to the royal wish, with more or less conviction: it was up to the newly arrived Brothers to win over places which were not always too welcoming. But they managed. In Vigevano, in 1834, they ran a private school which depended on an association which took care of orphans. They were so successful that the municipal schools were entrusted to them. Duchess Marie Louise, the widow of Napoleon I, obtained a community of three Brothers for a school in her capital, Parma. There also the scope of their work was quickly extended because of their success. The school was supported by the Duchess herself till 1843, when the Public Treasury took over responsibility.

In Turin, a problem concerning gratuity occurred in the municipal schools. The municipality was accustomed to collecting an annual tax of 3 lire from each pupil, called the "minervale". The Brothers thought that this practice was against the gratuity they professed, and asked for its suppression. The authorities would have liked a little less stubbornness on the part of the Brothers, but in 1835 they gave in. Nothing could sway the Brothers' resolve to observe the Rule in its strictest sense. In 1838, the Piedmontese province numbered 80 Brothers, 20 novices and about 3,400 pupils.

In Savoy, where the Brothers had been in Chambéry since the end of 1810, Brothers' schools proliferated, especially after the province opened its own novitiate in 1831. The initiative to call the Brothers frequently came from the bishop (St Jean de Maurienne, Aosta), or from priests, but rarely from the municipal authorities. Normally a school opened with two classes, but in most others were added without much delay. The funding of schools was modelled more or less on the French system: expenses were covered entirely, either by the town (Aix les Bains, Annecy, Aosta, Evian, Rumilly, St Jean de Maurienne, St Julien, Sallanches, Tanninge), or by a foundation (Faverge), or by a subscription (St Paul), or by a combination: town and foundation (La Roche, Thonon), or town, donation and subscription (Chambéry). In this province, there were just under 60 Brothers, 10 novices, who, in 1838, taught and cared for more than 3,300 pupils.

## Belgium and Canada

Independence and a great deal of freedom in education guaranteed by Belgian law enabled the Brothers to respond positively to the many requests for their return to the new Kingdom. Seven years later, the schools run by the Brothers in Bouillon and Chimay were funded by the municipality, the school in Dinant, by a parish priest, and ad hoc commissions financed schools in Brussels, Liège, Mons, Namur, Nivelles, Péruwelz, Tournai and Verviers. For a number of reasons, Namur was the first foundation: it was the first town to which the Brothers returned; it was there that a novitiate was opened (there was a habit-taking ceremony on September 30th 1831); it was there in 1836, that a teacher training college, funded by the bishop, was opened (it moved 4 years later to larger premises in Malonne); and, in 1838, we hear a Brother from Namur was working in the prison.

There were about 100 Brothers in the province at the time, 20 or so novices, and more than 6,000 pupils.

At Christmas 1837, 4 French Brothers arrived in Canada and opened a Christian school in Montreal. More than 200 pupils filled the classrooms to overflowing, and many others waited to be admitted <sup>45</sup>.

\* \* \*

The impression given by the Institute at the end of Brother Analet's term in office is one of security and solidity. His concern for Christian education was centred mostly

on the poor, and the Institute was aware of this. What is more, the service of the poor was extensive and demanded a great deal of commitment from the Brothers. According to the statistics of 1838, there were 85 communities in France which ran schools with an average of 100 or more pupils in each class; 69 with schools which had an average of 90 to 99 pupils per class; and only 25 with classes with an average of fewer than 70. The national average was 94 pupils per class. The figures of other provinces are lower, but the average is higher than 65, making the average for the whole Institute 92. These figures raise all sorts of questions - space, health, pedagogy and pastoral care, for example.

To this traditional form of service, the Brothers had begun to add other ways of working with the poor, by introducing courses for those without access to primary education: Sunday schools, half-day schools, evening school, night schools. All were works which would grow. Sometimes, this extra work fell on the shoulders of those who taught in the ordinary schools.

Faced with new challenges, the Congregation felt it needed to improve the training of its members. The 1837 General Chapter, "considering how advantageous it would be for the Brothers to perfect themselves in the virtues of their state and in the knowledge necessary to exercise their teaching functions with greater success, have decided that

<sup>45</sup> Statistical tables for 1837 and 1838, with many details in GA, DD 268, dossier 1.

schools will be opened in various places, to which, each year, a certain number of Brothers will be summoned by the Superior General, to follow courses according to a regulation still to be established. These schools will be established and maintained in the same way as similar schools were before the Revolution, that is, with the help provided by the Directors of our houses. So that a greater number of Brothers can benefit from the advantages promised by these 'Pupil Schools', the Chapter has expressed the wish that no more establishments be founded, except when absolutely necessary"<sup>46</sup>. This revival of what was known in the 18th century as an "academy", and what later will be called a scholasticate was made impossible by the very state of the Institute: in the preceding century, these places were supported by the boarding schools, but in 1837, there was only one in existence, and the profits it made were only slightly higher than those of ordinary houses. There was a temporary scholasticate in Avignon, around 1838. More fortunate, Toulouse had one from 1837 to 1848<sup>47</sup>. As for the other Brothers, they learnt to teach by teaching.

Regarding the initial formation of the Brothers, the Committee, which met in 1834, "has decided unanimously that a novitiate school will be set up in various houses of our Institute, in which young people who give signs of a vocation to the religious state, will be admitted from the age of 13. These pupils will spend about 2 years there. then they will be admitted to the ordinary novitiates to do their year. A special regulation

will be drawn up for the conduct of this junior novitiate"<sup>48</sup>. Avignon tried to implement this, but had to give up in 1840 because it lacked the resources. It was only in the Generalate that the project could be implemented in a durable manner: the enterprising Brother Philippe made use of his connections in Paris to set up a "fund for the foundation and maintenance of the preparatory novitiate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools". Influential persons in Catholic circles, especially supporters of the legitimate monarchy, provided the necessary financial help to promote the growth of an Institute in which they sincerely believed<sup>49</sup>.

During the relatively short term Brother Anaclet was in office, the Institute remained faithful to its nature, without disdaining, however, various new opportunities. Within quite narrow limits imposed by State legislation and the prejudices of people in power, it devoted itself generously to the working classes.

The number of the Brothers continued to grow. The bitter taste left by the failure of the work in Cayenne was of little significance. In 1838, 2,317 Brothers (794 with perpetual vows, 670 with triennial vows, 853 "employed novices" and 459 other peo-

<sup>46</sup> Chapter Register B, p.147, articles 2nd and 3rd.

<sup>47</sup> For Toulouse, cf. Br LEMANDUS, *Histoire des Frères à Toulouse (1789-1850)*, Toulouse 1909, p. 319. For Avignon: GA NC 281, *Essai historique sur le District d'Avignon*.

<sup>48</sup> Chapter Register B, p.139, article 11th.

<sup>49</sup> RIGAUT 5, p. 156-157.

ple in formation in the various novitiates) conducted 524 schools, with 1,617 classes and 143,758 pupils. The vast majority of the schools were gratuitous. The Statistics mentioned 160 boarders at Béziers, and 60

week-day boarders at St Étienne, who presumably paid. Also, and this is strange, the pupils attending night schools in Paris - some 1,800 of them - paid 10 francs!

\* \* \*



## CHAPTER 5

### BROTHER PHILIPPE

On November 21st 1838, Brother Philippe (Matthieu Bransiet) was elected by the General Chapter to succeed Brother Anaclet. He was just 46 years old and had been Assistant to his predecessor for 8 years. His own term in office would last more than a third of a century, ending with his death on January 7th 1874. His exceptionally long generalate coincided with a period in which great changes occurred in the world, in the Church and in the Congregation. As the Superior faced these changes, he brought into play all his own personal characteristics, as well as those of the Brothers who supported him at different levels of government.

The Institute expanded to such an extent, into so many different countries that, each day, it became increasingly difficult to try to assess each new foundation. As a conse-

quence, the pages that follow will confine themselves to more general matters which are more closely connected with our subject.

The Congregation, however, remained essentially French. Statistics show clearly that the majority of the Brothers and the majority of their works were in France. Moreover, many of the Brothers working in other countries were French also. This explains why what happened in France continued to have repercussions in the whole Lasallian world.

During this period, the struggle of the Institute to preserve gratuity in schools took on a much greater significance, especially in France. To give this topic the attention it appears to deserve, we shall devote a whole chapter to it after the present one.

#### 1. A GLANCE AT THE WORLD CONTEX

##### FRANCE

##### Governments

The reign of Louis Philippe went on for another nine years. The country was caught up in the industrial revolution: its railways became a means and a symbol<sup>1</sup>, with their

disproportionate retinue of well-being and misery.

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<sup>1</sup> The development of the railways brought about the move of the Generalate. In 1847, it had to leave the house in the Faubourg St Martin, where the Gare de l'Est was being built, and move to rue Oudinot (called rue Plumet, at the time), where it stayed for almost 60 years.

In February 1848, an apparently insignificant event set in motion a revolution with far-reaching results, which at first was peaceful. The king was deposed, and the Second Republic was born. Hope spread: democracy was possible. Its values of liberty, equality and fraternity, were not invented in 1792, but came from the Gospel. Unfortunately, the dream was followed by a bitter awakening. The organisation of "national workshops" did not solve the problem of unemployment. Their suppression led to a popular uprising in June. The response of the government was brutal. The Archbishop of Paris tried to intervene and was killed in the process. In December 1848, the weak Republic ended up in the hands of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, its first President who, in December 1852, became Emperor by universal suffrage.

The Second Empire set its hopes on progress and greatness. France became industrialised and faced the challenge of free trade. Major exhibitions and an international peace Congress were held in a Paris transformed by urban planning. Napoleon III claimed a world role for France: French influence was felt in all the "hot spots": Italy, Germany, Russia, the Ottoman Empire, America, the Near and the Far East. Within France itself, the absolute Empire of the first years evolved to become more liberal and parliamentary. But a solid alliance was never formed between the common people and the emperor. The European interference in Mexico ended badly for the aggressors, and France's position was the most exposed. It

sought revenge by challenging Prussia, but this led to the final disaster of 1870.

Free of Napoleon, France recovered quickly and well, but the situation had altered: whatever had remained of an alliance between political power and religion now disappeared, and the Church faced persecution once again. But Brother Philippe barely saw the beginning of this new situation.

### School legislation

In primary education, the Guizot Law remained in force until 1848. In the first months of the Republic, Minister Hippolyte Carnot drew up a bill which made education obligatory for all children of both sexes, imposed complete gratuity on all public schools, and ensured that religious instruction would be provided by the ministers of the different denominations. The bill provided for much greater centralisation, giving much power to the minister of Public Instruction and very little to local authorities. However, the draft bill was withdrawn before it could be discussed by the Assembly.

The new minister, Falloux, gave his name to a law which, after careful preparation, was approved on March 15th 1850. The law reflected the views of the "Party of Order", and the strategy followed by the Catholics on this occasion. It broke the monopoly of the University regarding education, opened a wide field of action for religious teaching congregations, but maintained only partial gratuity, and did not impose obligatory

schooling. Such freedom appeared excessive to the President Emperor, and various decrees subsequently limited it and made the extension of gratuity more difficult.

At the secondary level, the monopoly of the University remained. Under Minister Victor Duruy, there was a diminution in the pressure of the government regarding fees in primary education, and secondary education began to take on a form more adapted to modern times.

### Employment legislation

In 1841, a law governing child labour was finally passed. Discussion of it gave some idea of how thinking had changed. The intervention of the State in employment contracts, opposed so strongly by the industrial bourgeoisie, found support in the parliamentary majority. Deputy Corne declared: "The first duty of a government is to ensure that the children of the country are healthy, strong, intelligent and moral". The law was not an attack on the freedom of industry, nor on paternal authority: "Industry cannot ask to be allowed to treat children, the future of generations, as it pleases". To a father "who peddles his son", society has the right to say: "This child no longer has a father, I shall protect him". No attempt should be made to hand over to local authorities – as some would like – the decision regarding the age of children or their hours of work. This would completely destroy the law which must keep "all the force of the central authority". An eight year old child is weak wherever he is, and needs pure

air and joy. Villeneuve Bargemont saw the law as a "very much overdue" reparation for the suffering endured for reasons of morality and the interests of society. The law raised the whole problem of misery, of modern misery that results from unlimited production and unrestrained competition. The emancipation of work had led to much progress, but had not brought with it the necessary guarantees. "In most factories, workers worn out by excessive work, having hardly enough with which to nourish themselves, unable to obtain any moral instruction, are reduced all week long to the state of machines and, on their rest day, they give themselves up to brutal debauchery. A major reform is necessary: the law regarding children is only the first step. There still remains the reduction of the working day to 12 hours, the prohibition to mix the sexes, the creation of nurseries for the children, and a weekly day of rest" <sup>2</sup>.

The law that was passed after so much effort does not amount to much: children will not be able to work in factories before they are 8 years old. Between the ages of 8 and 12, they cannot be made to work more than 8 hours out of 24. Between the age of 12 and 16, they can work 12 hours between 5 am and 9 pm. However, children over 13 can work at night, if there are urgent repairs

<sup>2</sup> Ernest LAVISSE, *Histoire de la France contemporaine*, vol. 5; *La Monarchie de Juillet (1830-1848)*, by S. CHARLÉTY, p. 243. The bill was presented on May 19th 1839, and the vote taken on March 22nd 1841. See also R. PÉRONOUD, *op.cit.*, p. 500-508.

to be done, if a hydraulic engine has to be stopped, or if the work is indispensable in factories where furnaces are never put out. No child less than 12 years old will be employed if he does not go to school. Lastly, the law does not apply to small workshops with few workers.

The law passed in February 1851, regarding apprentices, fixed the working hours of under 14 year old to 10 hours maximum, and that of 14 to 16 year old to 12. Under 16 year olds cannot be made to work at night. On Sundays and feastsdays, the only work employers can oblige apprentices to do is to clean the workshops, and they must be free from 10 am onwards<sup>3</sup>. Under 16's who cannot read, write or count, or who have not completed their elementary religious formation, will have 2 hours a day to remedy this deficiency.

In 1864, the right of workers to strike was recognised. In 1868, when it was once again allowed to hold meetings, working men's trade unions began to be tolerated.

Social Catholicism, after a troubled and active beginning, was reduced under the Second Empire to its conservative wing. Its efforts, tinged somewhat with protective paternalism, were directed more towards individual employees and minor craftsmen than the working masses of industry. This latter sector, still attached to the clergy in 1848 (despite the killing of Mgr Affre), became openly anticlerical by 1871.

## OTHER COUNTRIES

### Belgium

The "Patriotic Union" kept the various factions united in the face of an external peril. In this climate, in 1842, a law was passed which organised education along lines similar to those established in France by the 1833 law, without, however, imposing State monopoly. In 1847, the Union broke up, resulting in a power-struggle between the liberal "doctrinaires" and the mostly conservative Catholics. They refused to share power, and in the period leading up to 1884, it was the doctrinaires who dominated.

Lasallian establishments which, under the Patriotic Union, had been very much in favour, came increasingly under attack from doctrinaire anticlericalism. Some of them disappeared. Others, maintained as private institutions thanks to the tenacity of Belgian Catholics, offered a wide range of educational opportunities, which included the teacher training colleges of Malonne and Carlsbourg, and the St Luke Art School at Gand.

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<sup>3</sup> To be able to go to Mass and participate in other activities of Catholic organisations. The best known representative of social Catholicism at the time was undoubtedly Armand de Melun. He and others of his group played a decisive role in the drawing up of this law. Cf. JB. DUROSELLE, *op.cit.*, p. 470-472.

## Italy

The great aim was national unity. Some thought of it in terms of federation, with the Pope at its head, but free of the Austrian Empire. Would the Pope fight a war against another Catholic power?

The events of 1848 showed that the answer was no. The King of Piedmont, who thought he could rely on the support of the Italian states, found himself alone as he challenged Vienna. The Hapsburg Empire, though shaken, reacted energetically. The 1848 campaign ended with a truce; that of 1849, with disaster. To avoid greater misfortune for his country, Charles Albert abdicated and went into exile. Austria strengthened her frontiers and re-installed her allies on their thrones.

In the South, the King of Naples succeeded in disposing of the threat to dethrone him, and offered refuge in Gaeta to the Pope, who had to flee from Rome in December 1848. Finally, French intervention put an end to Mazzini's Roman Republic, and Pius IX was able to return to Rome in April 1850.

In musical terms, this was a pause for one beat and a change of key: from this point onwards, the march towards unity was marked by anticlericalism. Appointed the head the government in Turin, Cavour succeeded in making the "Italian question" a factor in European politics. Between 1859 and 1870, Piedmont succeeded, by the use of arms or diplomacy, and by combining foreign aid with popular movements within the country, to dislodge Austria and her al-

lies from almost the whole of the northern part of the peninsula <sup>4</sup>. By stages, it occupied the Papal States of the centre, made possible Garibaldi's expedition against the Bourbons in the South, and reaped all the benefits. The process, which was neither peaceful nor clear, created in Italian Catholics a tension between their patriotism and their faith, for which the Church offered no satisfactory solution at the time.

Lasallian institutions felt the repercussions of these events. In the North, they were mistrusted by those who feared that knowledge, made accessible to the common people, would destroy privileges or undermine the traditional faith. However, the protection of Charles Albert enabled them to flourish and to feel secure. Their problems began with the advent of Victor Emmanuel II. After 1860, they had to fight for their survival, and at times their efforts failed. They were accused of representing mediaeval obscurantism, and not moving with the current of the newly conquered renewal.

## Papal States

In the Papal States, the situation was more painful: the schools which had multiplied in the first half of the century were swept away for the most part by the unified kingdom, or by local fanatics who were even more zealous than the government. What

<sup>4</sup> By his participation in the 1859 campaign, and because he did not oppose the consequences of Garibaldi's 1860 expedition, Napoleon III was rewarded by the annexation of Savoy and Nice (Garibaldi's birthplace) to the French Empire.

remained, became the nucleus of a renewed District.

### **Prussia**

With fewer hitches, and not excluding the use of arms, Prussia brought about German unity, and did not fail to benefit from it. There also, Bismark's way of envisaging national unity brought him into conflict with the Catholic Church, and the consequences for the Brothers were painful and dramatic.

### **Austria**

Austria, excluded from Germany after Sadowa, gave itself up to a life of splendour which failed, however, to hide the profound differences arising from its multiethnic composition. The dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, now irreversible, continued apace.

### **England**

England was seen as the most powerful nation on earth at the time, and led the world in industrialisation. The influence of its diplomacy, trade and armed forces extended to the whole world, and its reigning monarch, Queen Victoria, gave her name to long period of history.

The great powers set about carving out colonial empires for themselves. Africa, Oceania and large tracts of Asia were shared out among a few European nations, which found there the raw materials they needed for their industry, a way to keep their armies busy, prestige for their governments, and outlets for their excess population.

Despite everything, persons considering emigration were not really attracted by what Africa or Asia offered them. Those who, for political or economic reasons, were obliged to leave Europe, chose by preference *the other side of the Atlantic*. In the North, the United States was completing, without too many scruples, the process of extending its territory from one ocean to the other, and offered an immense area for settlement. In the South, Brazil made the transition from a colony to an independent empire, and without too much suffering became a republic. Here also there was abundant space. The former Spanish possessions, which won their independence in the first quarter of the century, became more or less turbulent republics. When the situation settled down, they opened their frontiers to a flood of immigrants, most of whom went to seek their fortune on the banks of the Rio de la Plata.

### **The Papacy**

The pontificates of Gregory XVI (1831-1846) and of Pius IX (1846-1878) cover almost half a century. While the first was known for his austerity and his conservative and unpopular policy, the second impressed the world of his time by his amiability, and the conciliatory gestures with which he began his reign.

In the face of the irresistible progress of the process of national unification, Pius IX found himself on the horns of a dilemma: should he remain faithful to the commitments he had solemnly made to the Church,

or should he give way to the claims of the new political climate? His “non possumus” expressed his choice and the depths of his dramatic situation. A voluntary prisoner in the Vatican from September 1870 onwards, this well-loved Pope became for Catholics all over the world the living symbol of a Church hounded by the unleashed fury of Satan and of his followers.

Subsequent events showed that the loss of the Papal States was a liberation for the Church, which promoted greater transparency in its witness, but in 1870, the majority of Catholics did not see things in this way.

## 2. THE INSTITUTE EXPANDS

The term in office of Brother Philippe coincided with an acceleration in the expansion of the Institute, in terms of the number of the Brothers, geographical spread, and the diversification of works. Even a rapid glance at the statistical tables given below will give us a sufficient idea of the growth in numbers. The brief explanation which accompanies them adds the names of the countries to which the Brothers went.

The information available for the years 1838 and 1843 seems very good. That given for 1861 is summary but sufficient for our study. Information for 1873 is abundant and very detailed. From this date onwards, the so-called “états jaunes” (yellow information forms) were kept in the archives, and are a rich source of information <sup>6</sup>.

In addition to the pain caused by the evils which afflicted the Church (a constant theme of Pius IX’s writings), the Pope concentrated on promoting the evangelisation of the whole world, and restoring and strengthening the unity of Churches with the Holy See. Among the numerous and generous apostles who fulfilled the wishes of the Pope, there were numerous Brothers in the leading ranks.

On the other hand, neither of these Popes, in their official teaching, gave any indication of a growing awareness of the situation of the workers <sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> A glance at the encyclicals and some other texts of Pius IX reveals that workers are mentioned only once: “It is a fact that the leaders, either of Communism or of Socialism, while using different methods and different means, have a common intention of maintaining in constant agitation, and making progressively accustomed to increasingly criminal acts, the workers and men of inferior condition, deceived by their cunning language and seduced by the promise of a happier state of life. They count on using their help subsequently, to attack the power of all superior authority, to pillage and squander, first the property of the Church, and then that of all other individuals; in a word, to violate all divine and human rights, bring about the destruction of the worship of God, and overthrow all order in civilised society” (Nostris et Nobiscum, December 8th 1849). Communism and Socialism are mentioned in some other documents, almost always together, and come under a blanket condemnation without (Rest of note <sup>5</sup> and note <sup>6</sup>, page 185).

**FRANCE AND COLONIES**

	1838	1843	1868	1873
Houses	271	359	779	978
P.Vows	703	937	2,385	3,235
Tr.Vows	561	883	1,604	1,122
An.Vows	-	-	419	1,457
E.Nov	723	998	2,073	2,494
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,987</b>	<b>2,818</b>	<b>6,481</b>	<b>8,308</b>
Novices	407	496	812	1,167
Schools	434*	539*	1,403	1,827
Classes	1,340*	1,655*	4,479	6,096
Pupils	122,695	146,102	234,230	258,811
Others	5,190	12,329	43,670	60,139
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>127,883</b>	<b>158,431</b>	<b>277,900</b>	<b>318,950</b>

**OTHER COUNTRIES**

Houses	42	73	127	183
P.Vows	91	189	546	812
Tr.Vows	109	181	311	265
An.Vows	-	-	87	346
E.Nov	130	158	362	504
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>1,306</b>	<b>1,927</b>
Novices	52	118	99	168
Schools	63*	102*	251	317
Classes	194*	310*	819	1,316
Pupils	15,474	24,077	41,210	59,070
Others	400	1292	6,286	10,004
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15,875</b>	<b>25,369</b>	<b>47,496</b>	<b>69,074</b>



## A few remarks

\* **Houses:** a house is the residence of the Brothers. In general, the Brothers of a house constitute a community, but there can be several communities in the same house. For example, there could be a novitiate and a community of elderly Brothers.

\* **P.Vows, Tr.Vows. An.Vows:** Brothers with perpetual, triennial or annual vows. Annual vows were introduced in 1859.

\* **E.Nov:** Employed novices. These were Brothers without vows, outside the novitiate. This was the initial situation of all Brothers, because vows were not made at the end of the novitiate. Some Brothers remained without vows for a long time, even all their life.

\* **The first total** is that of the Brothers. It is obtained by adding up the 4 preceding lines.

\* **Novices:** Those who are in novitiates, including the junior novitiate in Paris.

\* **Schools:** several quite distinct schools can depend on the same house. If there is a day school for children and an evening school for adults in the same house, these are counted as 2 schools.

\* **Pupils:** these are pupils in ordinary day schools, public or private primary schools.

\* **Others:** all pupils who, by their age or their situation, are different from the above. This category includes: boarders, day boarders, "caméristes" (see p. 196 ff), orphans, apprentices, adults trainee teachers, soldiers, deaf and dumb, prisoners.

\* **Second total:** total of pupils obtained by adding up the previous lines.

An asterisk has been added in the tables to the number of schools and classes in 1838 and 1843. These figures indicate ordinary day primary schools. Their pupils are those indicated under the heading "pupils" in the table. For 1861 and 1873, as it is impossible or very complicated to distinguish between the various types of schools and classes, only totals are given.

For 1861, the figures given are those for January. For the other years, they are those for December.

\* **France and colonies:** In 1860, the houses and schools of Savoy and Nice were included with those of France. In 1870, those in Lorraine were listed as being in a foreign country. Included under "colonies" are: La Réunion, Algeria (1853)<sup>7</sup>, and Cochinchina (1866).

\* **The other countries** where the Brothers were present in 1838 were the Papal States, Savoy, Piedmont and Parma, Belgium and Canada. These were joined successively by Switzerland (1839), Turkey (1841), United States (1845), Egypt (1847), Modena (1850), Prussia (1850), Singapore

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appeal, together with sects, secret societies, biblical societies...multiform expressions of a great conspiracy against the Church and against the true good of civil society.

<sup>6</sup> GA. For 1838 and 1843: xBO 776, copy 27, at the end. For 1861: DD 250. For 1873: DD 250, DD 260/1 and yellow forms.

<sup>7</sup> The year the Brothers arrived is indicated

and Malaysia (1852), England (1855), Tunisia (1855), Austria (1857), India (1859), Mauritius (1859), Romania (1861 but only until 1871), Ecuador (1863), Madagascar (1866), Sri Lanka (1867), the Seychelles (1867).

In 1873, the Italian works were divided up among three Districts: Turin, Italian Rome (dependent on the Vicar General) and French Rome (dependent on the Procurator General to the Holy See).

In the United States, the development of works and the great distances involved led to the formation of 4 Districts: New York, St Louis, New Mexico and California.

In 35 years, the number of novices and pupils almost tripled, the number of houses almost quadrupled, and the number of Brothers easily quadrupled.

And so, when the Superior General died, more than 80 years old, the Institute numbered 1,161 houses and 10,235 Brothers, more than 1,335 novices in training in 38 novitiates (20 of which were in France). Almost 318,000 pupils attended 1,574 primary schools, 1,040 of which were public and 534 private <sup>8</sup>. 574 various other educational centres catered for about 15,000 boarders <sup>9</sup>, 5,700 day boarders, 449 trainee teachers, 5,100 abandoned or handicapped orphans, 7,550 apprentices, 36,000 adults. In total, 390,000 persons were under the direct influence of the Institute, and that is not to mention the 25,000 former pupils or others who benefited from Sunday meetings or other faith support groups <sup>10</sup>.

Despite its encouraging increase, the number of Brothers was far below the level required to respond to the enormous pressure of demand put on the Institute all over the world. Superiors were obliged to put on hold or refuse a great many requests, and they accepted to undertake new works only when they could not refuse.

Despite everything, the three or fourfold increase in the number of schools in the space of some 30 years frightened more than

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<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to agree with this figure for primary schools even if it is explicitly affirmed in the statistics, especially if only 23,000 pupils are attributed to them. A rapid but incomplete check of the yellow forms for 1873 indicated 516 schools, but we did not add up the number of pupils. Frequently, and especially in France, the statistics called a private school what was simply a class of 15 or 20 pupils, funded by a parish for its altar servers, and which functioned as an annexe to a public school. In any case, a more detailed study would be needed to discover where numbers have been inflated, by counting the same establishment etc. more than once.

<sup>9</sup> See later what is said about the different sorts of boarding schools.

<sup>10</sup> These statistics are for December 31st 1873. A few months previously, opening the General Chapter, the Superior estimated the composition of the Institute as: 3,973 Brothers with perpetual vows, 1,364 with triennial vows, 1,825 with annual vows, and 2,802 employed novices. In all, therefore, 9,964 Brothers. We need to add to this figure 1,144 novices in the novitiates. The increase, by comparison with the previous Chapter figures, is 2,093. During the same period, 1,503 Brothers had died. There are no figures for Brothers who left, but they were numerous. See GA, ED 230/1: notes for an inaugural address (with strange errors in calculation!).

one Brother. There was a negative side to such rapid expansion: a hurried and insufficient initial formation, premature assignments, the presence of undesirable candidates, whom the pressure of work made it

impossible to dismiss...The voices that had been raised calling for prudence at several General Chapters, doubled in number, in particular at the 1873 Chapter.

### 3. EDUCATIONAL WORKS FOR THE SERVICE OF THE POOR

#### Primary schools

The figures above show clearly the priority commitment of the Institute to primary education: more than four-fifths of its clientele consisted of children attending its 1,600 elementary schools. This was the area of the apostolate that the Institute considered to be most in line with the vocation of the Brother; the area where he would come into contact most naturally with the children of artisans and the poor. Most of the energy put into the pedagogical and spiritual preparation of the Brothers, and into the composition, publication and bringing up to date of school textbooks, was directed towards the primary sector.

This option, dating back to the foundation, was strengthened by external pressure: there was political pressure to prevent the Brothers from undertaking anything more advanced than primary education; there was suspicion on the part of the colleges, which thought that they had the exclusive right to teach anything beyond the primary school curriculum; the privileged classes also were suspicious, fearing that the common people, by increasing their knowledge, would

also increase their desire for well being and participation in politics, and even question the validity of the established order; there was apprehension also among those with short term pastoral views, who saw in the spread of science a peril for the faith.

There were Brothers who had no problem in accepting these limitations; others, by energetically developing the potential of schools, succeeded in shaking them up or taking them a step further.

Differences in the attitudes of Directors and teachers, of civil servants and clergy, the location of schools in different parts of the world, resulted in the Brothers' primary schools being a very diversified world.

In very small urban centres, the Brothers' schools had only two classes – the junior and the senior – taught by the Director and his assistant. A third Brother, whose role was to cook or to replace in class, completed the small community. This was a minimum and not what was desirable. In large towns, a single community provided Brothers for several schools. Some of these were sufficiently developed to offer the whole of the official curriculum and other specialised subjects.

The majority, as we have seen, were public schools. Sometimes, the municipality or the State covered all the expenses and running costs of an establishment, but often a part of the costs or their entirety was covered by foundation funds or by contributions from various private benefactors.

The other schools were private. The Brothers opened these to replace the public schools that had been taken away from them or, in countries where Catholics were a minority, to provide schools in keeping with their faith. Very often, these were gratuitous schools next to the paying schools<sup>11</sup>.

All these schools claimed they were open to all without discrimination. Consequently, at least in theory, they were completely gratuitous. When they could, the Brothers refused to make a distinction between poor and well-off pupils, even when the civil authorities wished to make the latter pay for the education they received. Gratuity was difficult also when schools were private, especially in non-Catholic countries.

### **Orphanages and schools for the deaf and dumb**

In the course of an audience granted him by Pius IX on April 16th 1859, Brother Philippe gave the Pope a general outline of the other types of work undertaken by the Institute. He said the following about orphanages: "Poor children, with no parents and nothing to live on, seemed to us to be deserving of pity, and that was what led us, with the permission and help of the clergy and of good people, to take responsibility

for a number of these establishments. We have 10 at present, caring for about 2,500 children. We have opened also 9 gratuitous classes for the deaf and dumb, who deserve no less pity than the orphans"<sup>12</sup>.

The opening of orphanages by the Brothers began in Rome during the time of Brother Anaclet, and spread throughout the Papal States in the first years of Brother Philippe's mandate. From 1848 onwards, for various reasons and in painful circumstances, the Brothers had to withdraw, but the work spread in other countries. The 1873 list shows that both Prussia and Austria have an orphanage each. There are orphanages in 10 or so towns in France. The most remarkable of these are the establishments dependent on the Oeuvre St Nicolas, with 2,000 children in Paris and in outlying dis-

<sup>11</sup> GA, DD 260/1: register of 1873 statistics. The final summary (p.57) gives, for France, 960 public schools, 360 private schools. For the French colonies, 36 public schools and 6 private schools. For the other countries, 48 public schools and 248 private schools. This gives a total of 1,044 public schools and 614 private schools. But in these figures have been included boarding schools, day boarding schools, orphanages, teacher training colleges, that is, everything that was not evening classes, night or Sunday school. See what was said earlier in note 8.

Outside France and her colonies, there was a significant number of public schools: in Italy (15 out of 30), Lorraine (4 out of 9), Canada (19 out of 40) and in Ecuador (6 out of 6). There were fewer in Belgium (3 out of 77) and in Prussia (1 out of 4). In the other countries, all the Brothers' schools were private.

<sup>12</sup> GA, EE 277/1. dossier 11.

tricts. The Catholic Protectory at Westchester, with 1,300 children, is the largest of the 6 establishments of this kind in the United States. Brothers had similar institutions in Italy (Biella, Vercelli), England (Liverpool), Belgium (Enghien), Ecuador and Singapore. In all, the Institute provided more than 5,000 orphans, or those considered as such, with a basic education and, in many cases, the rudiments of professional training.

The work with deaf and dumb children began in Saint Étienne in 1845. It was a new type of work, but not improvised: "we arranged for 4 of our dear Brothers to follow courses at the École Royale in Paris, so as to be able to render children of this kind all the services demanded by their unfortunate state"<sup>13</sup>. In 1873, at least 160 children were being cared for at Saint Étienne, in a school in Paris, and at Besançon<sup>14</sup>.

During this period, and including what is said below about prisons, there were at least 35 educational centres looking after children and adolescents with special needs. On the other hand, it is difficult to quantify the help given by the Brothers to children not attending schools, even though there is no doubt that this work existed.

## Prisons

During the same audience, Brother Philippe spoke of this type of work: "In several towns and, in particular, in Paris, Bordeaux, Rheims, Versailles, etc., we give religious instruction to prisoners. This helps them to bear with more patience the pun-

ishment to which they have been condemned".

The involvement of the Institute with detention centres reached its high point in the last years of Louis Philippe's reign, from 1842 onwards: Nîmes, Fontevault, Melun, Aniane, were prisons entirely run by large groups of Brothers. This was unrewarding and dangerous work which the Brothers did with great generosity until it became impossible after the 1848 Revolution. From then onwards, their work in prisons was restricted to pedagogical and catechetical help, as happened at least temporarily in Belgium and Italy.

## Schools for adults

Courses for adults were often run, in the evening or at night, in schools attended by children during the day. Their clientele consisted normally of workers and craftsmen. In certain cases, the Brothers who taught them were the same ones who had slaved away during the day. This was not desirable for reasons of health and regularity, and

<sup>13</sup> Circular 141, dated April 8th 1845

<sup>14</sup> They were probably more numerous. Among the Brothers in the Generalate in 1873 there was one with the title "Director of the Deaf and Dumb", and it was not only that year, nor was he the only one to have this title. A class of 16 deaf and dumb pupils in a school in Paris, which depended on a community, was not enough to justify such a position. Moreover, we know of the presence of deaf and dumb pupils in other places, although when this was so, is not easy to pin down: St Nicolas de Vaugirard, Chambéry...

sometimes different Brothers took over at night.

The timetable was certainly shorter than the daytime one: it amounted only to about 2 hours. Frequency varied also: courses were given either every day, or on two or three days each week. In the same way, courses could last a whole year or only a part of it (from the end of autumn to the middle of spring). In certain places, lessons were given at midday, to take advantage of the lunch-break at the factory; or at the end of the afternoon, before dark fell, when adolescents or young people were involved. In 1873, in France, there were more than 30,000 persons who benefited from this extra instruction, and in other countries, 2,500.

By its very nature, this type of work called for flexibility so that it could fit in with the needs and possibilities of the persons it was intended for. In Turin, for example, where evening classes had begun early in 1846, in addition to elementary instruction for hundreds of workers, the Brothers taught also French to people who had already completed their studies. Through their evening classes, the Brothers helped to spread the use of the decimal metric system in certain places. A good example of this is the North of Italy.

There was also the work of certain Brothers in army barracks, where they helped conscripts wishing to overcome their illiteracy or inadequate schooling. In the 1873 statistics, there were about 4,000 soldiers in this situation, all in France and Algeria.

## Courses for apprentices

Another aspect of the Brothers' work among the working classes concerns the 7,500 apprentices they taught in France. The work undertaken differed from place to place. During his 1859 audience the Superior described it as follows: "In France, there is a certain number of poor children whose parents oblige them to start work at a very early age. As these children have never attended school, or only for a short time, they do not know their prayers nor their catechism. Our Brothers give them lessons in the evening, from 7 pm to 9 pm. They teach them to read a little, to write and, especially, prayers and catechism. They also prepare them for their first communion. At present, we are looking after about 5,800 of them".

As time passed, and local conditions changed, this description lost some of its accuracy. Many young people, who were doing manual work for the first time, took advantage of the lunch-break or of the first few hours after work, to go to class and obtain extra instruction. Others, however, followed a whole course of apprenticeship at school, especially in schools which cared for children who had a special need for help, such as orphans or other similar cases. The practical type of instruction given involved the use of various workshops, but included also gardening, horticulture and agriculture<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> On the Institute of the Brothers and technical teaching, with interesting points of view about other things, see A. PRÉVOT, FSC, *L'enseignement tech-*

## Teacher training colleges

Four Brothers' institutions in France (Aurillac, Beauvais, Quimper and Rouen), two in Belgium (Malonne and Carlsbourg) and one in Ecuador (Quito) are mentioned in the 1873 statistics as training lay teachers, who number 450<sup>16</sup>. This work had ample scope for expansion.

In the period leading up to 1850, when the Kingdom of Sardinia was reforming its education system and obliging all teachers to have an official certificate of competence, the Brothers fulfilled an important role in summer courses (methodology schools) for practising teachers or for beginners. Several actually ran such courses, others sat on examination panels. At the same time, their methodology books were recommended as basic texts or reference works.

## Faith support groups

This is a general term to describe movements whose aim was to help young people and adults, who no longer attended school, to persevere in the practice of their faith.

## St Francis Xavier Societies

This movement, perhaps the most widespread of those inspired by the conservative wing of French social Catholicism, benefited from its birth from the determined and decisive collaboration of the Brothers<sup>17</sup>. In the Papal audience of 1859, the Superior spoke of this movement in the following terms: "We call St Francis Xavier Societies groups for men of all ages, which meet after the parish services to spend Sunday af-

ternoon in a useful manner. The time is spent in singing vespers, reading, having useful conversations, and listening to a sermon full of interest for them. These good people are prepared to receive the sacraments as the great feasts approach, and especially for their Easter communion. These men who, at one time, had an extreme aversion for the clergy, are now most attached to it. This is a remarkable improvement among the working classes, especially in Paris. We have a good 12,000 men in France who attend these meetings".

In reality, the association involved more than these pious meetings: the opportunity they offered for raising levels of awareness and mobilising people, soon aroused the suspicion of the police, who put them under surveillance, especially under Louis Philippe. After 1848, it shared the fate of the social Catholicism of the day.

## Youth movements

These were meant for adolescents and young people, and in particular for those who began work in factories or workshops after completing their primary education.

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*nique chez les Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes aux XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris, Ligel, 1964.

<sup>16</sup> In a statistical summary of 1873, there is mention also of 182 trainee teachers in Canada, 6 in England and 4 in Egypt, but these are not included in the final total. The yellow forms of these countries make no mention at all of these trainee teachers.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. JB DUROSELLE, *op.cit.*, p. 243ff, 278, 282, 286, 522, 529.

The Superior described these movements as follows: "For a long time we had been aware that once our pupils left school they lost their faith by frequenting bad company. To prevent such a serious misfortune, we tried to form them into societies, and invite them to our house on Sundays and feastdays to make them attend Holy Mass, to give them some instruction, and to make them maintain the principles they had learned when they were younger. The little experience we have acquired from these meetings has proved to us that they would do immense good and save a great number of young people from shipwreck. But we have understood also that we could not extend these meetings unless our Brothers were dispensed from teaching catechism to little children on Sundays and feasts after taking them to the parish services". As a consequence, the Superior asked His Holiness for this dispensation, pointing out to him that the regular pupils already had a daily half-hour of catechism throughout the week <sup>18</sup>.

In the Chapter Register, the subject of the perseverance of former pupils appeared for the first time in 1844. The third of its decisions states: "The Chapter, considering that children are greatly exposed to the danger of losing the good principles they have been taught at school, when they become part of daily life in the world, and knowing from experience that the only way the Brothers have of establishing contact with their former pupils is through schools for adults and apprentices, approves these establishments and authorises the Brother Superior

to draw up customaries for the houses where he will authorise the opening of these schools" <sup>19</sup>. The life of the Brothers, regulated to the last minute, leaves them no means other than those mentioned, which imply already a certain derogation from the Rule. The approval of the Chapter was given to a 14 year old practice, with even older antecedents.

However, if the Institute was to respond to new needs it had to move with the times. In the 1853 General Chapter, the 14th session began as follows: "This day's session began with a short discussion on the usefulness of Sunday meetings for young people, and a commission was appointed to propose the basis on which these meetings could be established.

The commission entrusted with the task of examining the basis on which these Sunday meetings could be established, recognising the difficulty of making general regulations in this matter, proposes to leave this question to the prudence of the Brother Superior". The Chapter approved the proposition of the Commission, and expressed the wish that these meetings be held in houses where this could be done without harming the regularity and order of the community.

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<sup>18</sup> Article 7 of the Bull, confirming the dispositions of chapter VII of the Rule, establishes the 1/2 hour of catechism on working days, and an hour and a half on Sundays and holy days of obligation. For this reason, the Brothers asked the Pope to be dispensed from this part of the timetable.

<sup>19</sup> GA, ED 227: *Chapter Register B*, p.176.



It left it to the prudence of the Superior to specify in the customary the extent to which the Brothers could contribute to these meetings, and the exercises from which the Brothers supervising these meetings would be dispensed”<sup>20</sup>.

The 1858 Chapter could no longer be satisfied with leaving everything to the prudence of the Superior. It was the Superior himself who, in the 19th session, “proposed to establish a faith support organisation for the young people who, on leaving school, find themselves in the midst of the world”. The Chapter considered this proposition and returned to it in three other sessions which resulted in the long article 10 of its final decisions: “The Chapter, considering that the General Chapter of 1853 approved in principle, in its 25th session<sup>21</sup>, that young people who no longer attend our day schools, can be assembled on Sundays in our houses in order to make it easier for them to fulfil the religious duties commanded by the Church on that holy day; considering the good results that, with the help of God, our good Brothers have already obtained by these Sunday meetings; considering that our dear Brothers who supervise these meetings would not have enough free time to perform the exercises prescribed by the Rule and teach catechism for an hour and a half to their pupils, as prescribed by the Bull of Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XIII; considering also that it is necessary to prevent the abuses which could be introduced into these meetings, and even into our communities,

if the Brother Directors could establish Sunday meetings, has decided as follows:

1° The Brother Visitors have the exclusive authority to establish Sunday meetings, in places in which they consider them possible and useful. They must above all ensure they have the agreement of parish priests, and that they subsequently send a detailed report to Brother Superior General so as to obtain his approval for their project.

2° Before establishing each of these meetings, the Brother Visitors will draw up regulations, both for the actual meeting, and regarding the changes to be made in the customary of the community. These regulations will be sent to Brother Superior who will approve them, and make changes he considers appropriate.

3° The Brother Superior General will ask the Holy See for the necessary dispensations, so that in the houses in which Sunday meetings will be established, the Brothers can omit, if there is need, the catechism that our Brothers teach to their pupils on Sunday”<sup>22</sup>. This is what Brother Philippe did the following year in Rome. It is clear that the function of the Brothers during these meetings was restricted to supervision.

The time and space the 1873 General Chapter devoted to this subject were not less. It was, naturally, to try to correct certain deficiencies. And a new word enters the

<sup>20</sup> *Id.* P. 230 and 232.

<sup>21</sup> In reality, it was in the 15th.

<sup>22</sup> *Chapter Register B*, p. 309-312, 314, 319.

Chapter documents. In the 22nd session, a discussion was begun on “meetings for apprentices and youth clubs: some Brothers indicated abuses and difficulties that were finding their way into these meetings, such as: 1° the admission of children who were too young, who had not even made their first communion. 2° mixing of pupils with apprentices, etc.” There is a brief allusion to the subject in the 26th session. But it is the following one which occupies the Chapter much longer: “The attention of the Chapter has been drawn to the faith support meetings, and other works, approved in principle by the Chapter of 1853, and regulated by that of 1858. Far from going back on the decisions referred to above, the present Chapter confirms their wise dispositions, expressing the wish they be always followed when these works were established and organised”. It then draws “the attention of the Brother Directors” to the following points, reproduced word for word in article 11 of the final decisions:

“1° Our dear Brother Visitors and Directors must safeguard the regularity of the house and the community exercises when they organise these meetings. The dispositions made regarding this must be included in the customary.

2° It is important that Brothers involved in the running of these meetings should do nothing during them that might distract them from their mission, which is to supervise.

3° Children from our classes, especially those who have not yet made their first com-

munion, cannot attend these meetings without great difficulty.

4° Great care must be taken to ensure that the meetings do not degenerate into simple games sessions, and that they are always imbued with the Christian spirit, a means of promoting perseverance in religious habits through the frequentation of the sacraments. To achieve this purpose, the presence or, at least, the spiritual direction of a priest is indispensable. The Chapter recommends our dear Brothers to make every effort to obtain this direction and to support it.

5° Brother Directors are strongly urged to make sure that the classes for apprentices and the adult courses are conducted in a way that maintains as far as possible the Christian practices of religious education”<sup>23</sup>.

In this list of activities, in this geographical expansion of the service offered by the Institute, in these repeated calls for regularity, in the tasks entrusted to the Superior to ensure good order everywhere, it is not difficult to perceive a real tension between the wish to face with realism and generosity the educational needs of a world becoming increasingly complex, and the difficulty of remaining within a framework of regulations conceived in view of quite different situations. The importance placed on regularity, every element of which was considered important, revealed its disadvantages when a clearly appropriate mission made it necessary to modify a few details.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.* p. 428, 437, 438, 440, 441, 447.

The General Chapters which dealt with these important matters set aside time also to authorise the use of umbrellas, to allow Brothers to take their razors with them when they changed community, to ask the Holy See if the use of the 6 decade rosary was still permitted, to decide what sort of hat should be worn: as regularity was under-

stood in terms of uniformity and immutability ("the deposit"), all change was dangerous. Between the demands of the times and the limits of a narrow legal framework, the Institute tried to remain faithful simultaneously to God, to the Church, to its tradition and to the poor. And it thought it could do so.

#### 4. BOARDING SCHOOLS

We need to consider this aspect of the Brothers' educational work even if it was not intended for a poor clientele. The existence of these schools became increasingly bound up with that of schools for the poor. During his audience with the Pope in 1859, Brother Superior spoke also of boarding schools, and in rather interesting terms: "Following the example of our venerable Founder, we have opened a certain number of boarding schools, in order to educate in them, in a Christian manner, young people intending to work in industry and commerce, preserving them in this way from the scandals they could encounter in other schools, especially in France.

"When these young people return home, they normally behave well, live on good terms with the clergy, and direct in a religious manner the workers they are responsible for. Our bishops are very pleased with these establishments, and several of them have asked us to open new ones in their diocese". There are certain things we ought to note: the reference to the Founder, the intended clientele, the stress on the good re-

sults, the role of the bishops in the expansion of this type of school.

The increase in the number of boarding schools is noted. In 1838, only the boarding school in Béziers existed officially. In Paris, there were a few boarders living with the junior novices in the Generalate, but they were transferred to Passy after a short while. At the end of 1873, 146 houses in France, and 51 in other countries, indicated that they had 11,500 and 3,550 boarders respectively. There is no need to describe the beginnings and growth of the most important, or of the most typical of these establishments, in the present work <sup>24</sup>. They deserve only a few comments, because some distinctions need to be made when speaking of these 200 houses.

##### Different kinds of boarding schools

There were, first of all, the boarding schools properly so called. Their pupils were drawn mainly from the well-off bourgeois

<sup>24</sup> For France, see RIGAUT 5, especially p. 256-267, 350-352, 387-404, 512-527. For the other countries, RIGAUT 6 passim.

sie<sup>25</sup>. They were located in large towns and took in children and adolescents from quite an extensive area. Their studies provided the pupils with a secondary education without Latin<sup>26</sup>, and were a response to a class of parents who were not satisfied with an elementary education, but neither also with classical studies and university careers. When Minister Victor Duruy wished to explain to his fellow parliamentarians and to the Ministry of Education what the scheme he was proposing consisted in, it was sufficient for him to arrange a long visit for them to the Brothers' boarding school in Passy<sup>27</sup>.

These institutions employed a large staff<sup>28</sup> – teachers, supervisors, auxiliary staff – and, in the case of the administrators and teachers, one that was also carefully selected. In 1873, the Institute as a whole had 66 establishments (of which 44 in France) with 50 or more boarders.

Small boarding schools offered fewer courses, but the equation “the smaller the school, the lower the standard of studies” was not automatically true. All the same, it has to be said that, in several cases, conditions in these small boarding schools were unsatisfactory, and there was no shortage of comments.

In addition, there were the “caméristats”. The Larousse dictionary describes them as follows: “The term “caméristat” is used in connection with establishments vaguely resembling boarding schools attached to primary schools, made necessary in certain

countries where the population is very dispersed, or in those in which roads, especially in the mountains, are blocked by deep snow-drifts”<sup>29</sup>. “Caméristats”, which were limited almost entirely to France, were par-

<sup>25</sup> Bourgeoisie, without going into any detail, but excluding the nobility, the working class, poor peasantry; well-off but not exactly opulent.

<sup>26</sup> “Without Latin”, at least in theory, and in general practice. If, in France, the least suspicion of Latin in the Brothers' schools put school authorities immediately on their guard (because the Brothers were invading in this way the territory reserved to other teachers), in other countries (United States, Italy), a certain knowledge of Latin was indispensable for certain types and levels of schools.

<sup>27</sup> RIGAULT 5, p. 350.

<sup>28</sup> St Joseph's boarding school in Toulouse, one of the 5 large ones, but not the largest, opened in 1840, had in 1873, 477 boarders and 68 day boarders, in 15 classes. The staff consisted of 50 Brothers, who included: 1 bursar (procurator), 2 assistant bursars, 1 cook, 1 person in charge of the refectories, 1 infirmarian, 1 sacristan, 1 porter. There were also heads of year, an art teacher and 2 Brothers in each class. The average number of pupils per class was 36.

<sup>29</sup> Definition from the Nouveau Larousse (later than 1900), which continues: “Children whose home is far away are lodged on the school premises with the authorisation of the Prefect, during the worst months of winter. Their food is provided by their parents, and the teacher or mistress restricts her involvement to having the food cooked for a small price. This deplorable arrangement tends to improve, and such as it is, is preferable to the abandonment of school during winter, the only season during which it is attended assiduously in poor areas”. In France, the person with civil authority over a department is called a Prefect.

ticularly important in the departments of the North East and in the Massif Central <sup>30</sup>.

And so, the total number of boarders in 1873 includes 11,888 called "boarders" from 168 establishments, and 3,181 called "caméristes" from 79. Fifty establishments admitted both kinds of boarders <sup>31</sup>.

### Boarding schools and General Chapters

These establishments, which were regarded with dislike by certain sectors of the public administration, were not approved of by all the Brothers either. While some defended them with enthusiasm, others refused to accept their existence, or criticised the way they had spread, which they considered excessive. Others complained that they were badly equipped, were not well run, caused discrimination among the Brothers, and so on and so forth.

In the Chapter Registers of the 19th century, the subject appears for the first time in 1853. During the 17th session, on June 27th, "the question of the caméristats was discussed. The Chapter tolerated their existence in places where the children lived too far away to come to school each day without danger, because of the bad roads, or for other reasons; but wanted the number of establishments catering for these children to be as few as possible, and not be opened without the permission of the Brother Superior, who would take every means available to assure himself of their need, and ensure that the Brothers who were needed to run them had the necessary resources to live decently. Adopted by 44 votes to 7".

Regarding boarding schools, the declaration adopted during the same meeting was intended to "provide our Brothers with the answer that they ought to give if someone questioned them on this topic" <sup>32</sup>. The definitive version reads as follows: "The Chapter recognises once again the lawful existence of boarding schools, as indicated in:

1° A deliberation of the 1717 assembly, which said: "There can be boarders in the novitiate house, or in a house intended for this, when the Brother Superior, with the advice of his Assistants, considers it appropriate. They will not be taught Latin"; 2° By the 1745 assembly which, after having approved the boarding schools at St Yon, Marseilles, Mirepoix, Die, Montpellier and Montargis...ends its statement by saying: "It will be permissible for the Brother Superior to establish them when he considers it appropriate, and when circumstances require it"; 3° The constant practice of the Institute since its origin; 4° The request for, and the granting of Letters Patent by Louis XV. The

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<sup>30</sup> This coincides, although not entirely, with the regions with the highest recruitment of Brothers. The caméristats served also, in this way, as pre-novitiates.

<sup>31</sup> The list of payable services offered by the Brothers does not end there: in addition to day boarders (½ boarders), there are also ¼ boarders and paid supervision. I have not been able to find out the extent to which these services were meant to support the school or the Brothers. I think that the note addressed to the 1861 Chapter which speaks of 1/8 boarders was written tongue in cheek.

<sup>32</sup> *Circular 192*, dated July 5th 1853, p. 8.

result of this was that, when the Brothers asked for and obtained the Bull of Approbation, they were conducting both boarding and ordinary schools”<sup>33</sup>.

In 1854, there appeared an Imperial decree limiting severely gratuity in public schools. Brother Philippe wasted no time in calling a General Chapter to consider how to face the new situation. The assembly presented the Regime with a list of possible solutions, which included: “The opening of a boarding school, a day boarding school, or a ¼ time boarding school, to which could be added a supervised day school, if it was absolutely necessary, to be able to teach pupils who were too poor to pay. Adopted by 52 votes to 1”<sup>34</sup>.

During the 1858 Chapter, Brother Philippe gave a report on how the solution had been implemented: “We have opened a boarding school in Le Puy and in Orléans for children the town did not want to leave in the [gratuitous Brothers’] schools, but which the parents fought tooth and nail to leave there, even offering to pay. It was difficult to solve this situation without this means”<sup>35</sup>. The assembly spent a short time on the *caméristats* in a way that was more than simply tolerant: “This sort of establishment is considered useful for society and advantageous for the Institute, by the number of candidates it furnishes to the novitiates”<sup>36</sup>.

A note sent by Brother Lucard<sup>37</sup> is full of enthusiasm. He saw boarding schools as the means needed by the Church and soci-

<sup>33</sup> GA, ED 227: *Chapter Register B*, p. 233 and 241. It should be noted that:

1° The deliberation of 1717 does not figure in the corresponding Chapter Register, but in RC 14,13. But the Brothers of 1853 know nothing about them, because none of the editions of the common Rules of the 18th and 19th centuries contain this sentence, but simply mention at the beginning: “It will not be permitted either to admit boarders in school houses”.

2° The 1717 text is in the singular: “the house of the novitiate or the house intended for this purpose”, and it is reproduced as such on page 233 of the *Chapter Register B*. The plural appears on p. 241.

3° The list of authorised boarding schools is in the official documents of the 1751 General Chapter, not in those of 1745.

It may seem strange that, neither then, nor at any other moment, reference is made to the consultation made by Brother Guillaume de Jésus regarding boarding schools, and the positive answer received from the Holy See on March 21st 1825. I suppose that one of the reasons was the secrecy with which the Institute shrouded this event, just as it had many others.

<sup>34</sup> GA, ED 227: *Chapter Register B*, p. 264. The supervision in question presumes that in addition to lessons, the day school provided time for pupils to do their homework or study their school work in school under the supervision of the Brothers. The practice spread subsequently (not without some protests) as a means of making some money for very poor communities, but it had its disadvantages: the tiredness of the Brothers, the negligence of their own pedagogical and pastoral updating, abandonment of spiritual exercises.

<sup>35</sup> GA, ED 229, dossier 18: draft of a briefing by Brother Philippe, Superior General.

<sup>36</sup> GA, ED 227: *Chapter Register B*, p. 310, July 21st session.

<sup>37</sup> At that time, a teacher at the Toulouse boarding school. In the note he stresses his 18 years’ experience as a boarding school teacher.

ety to give a Christian education to the “middle classes” who were to lead the industrial revolution. He exclaims: “What would the Venerable De La Salle say if he were alive today and saw the great good that can be done for society by preparing, under the aegis of religion, pupils for the Central school, the Saumur school, the school of Mines, Arts and Crafts, Veterinary Sciences, for the Post Office, for telegraphs, for the administration and management of factories, railways, road and bridge building, to be captains of merchant ships, businessmen and owners, who bring into the midst of rural populations, as well as into industrial and commercial centres, the example of an active faith, and of the respect one should show for everything that has a religious character!” He then went on to propose a number of measures which would enable these institutions to produce all the fruit one could expect from them <sup>38</sup>.

But a note sent to the same Chapter by Brother Nabort – perhaps not taken into account because of the storm unleashed against its author – <sup>39</sup> was highly critical of boarding schools: “There are more than 30 of them in France, not to mention supervisions, the caméristats, the orphanages and the teacher training colleges. This is a torrent which is dragging us along. Is there not a danger that, if these kinds of establishments continue to increase, the spirit of the Institute, the Institute as a whole, will be, as it were, transformed by them; that the gratuity of teaching, recommended so much by the Rules and by our venerable Superior

General himself, will become difficult to observe, and that a distinction will be created between the gratuitous school Brothers and the boarding school Brothers (this difference has already been noted in some places, it is said); that what was, in the days of the Venerable Founder, simply the complement and the accessory of the institution, will become its principal element; and that, in general, the most instructed Brothers being employed in the boarding schools, the gratuitous schools will suffer as a result?” He concluded by pointing out the lack of balance in the geographical distribution of these institutions <sup>40</sup>.

The 1861 Chapter, faced with special difficulties related to gratuity of teaching, also received some critical notes: “Let us not go looking for new abuses...let us de-

<sup>38</sup> GA, ED 226/2, dossier 10. The Central School trained engineers for the different branches of industry: engineering, construction, metallurgy, chemical industry. The “school” at Saumur trained cavalry officers for the army.

<sup>39</sup> He had been Procurator General (bursar) some years before. In 1858, with other Brothers, he published a document considered insulting to the Superior General and slanderous. This matter occupied several sessions of the Chapter. Rigault does not mention it. I have not seen the document myself.

<sup>40</sup> GA, ED 229, dossier 1, p. 11-12. In the same Chapter, Brother Facile, Provincial of America and future Assistant, spoke out against pleasant and dangerous journeys made by Brothers from boarding schools during the holidays, and which first of all, cause envy among the Brothers of gratuitous schools, and then imitation (GA, LD 252/1, dossier 16).

stroy those that already exist;... caméristats... shadows of boarding schools”. “If I am asked what to do with the caméristats, and 1/4 and 1/8 boarding, I answer: suppress them!”<sup>41</sup>.

In the 1873 Chapter, a commission of 5 members tackled the question of boarding schools. According to its report<sup>42</sup> “the professed Brothers, considering the increase of boarding schools, their undisputed usefulness today for the good of religion, of society and for the honour of the Institute, express the wish that a guide be drawn up for these establishments of the Congregation, a short Conduct which could provide them, in totality or in part, with the advantages that the *Conduct of Schools* has procured for so long for everyone....but especially for our gratuitous schools”. The Commission noted the “relatively severe” remarks contained in some notes on small boarding schools: insufficient staff, regularity gone by the board, petty rivalry between neighbouring boarding schools, and between them and gratuitous schools. That is why some demanded their suppression pure and simple. On the other hand, they demanded that caméristats “be organised on a broader and more solid base, and be able to produce even more abundantly than in the past, numerous vocations , so that they can become so

many junior novitiates for the Institute” As a consequence, they invited the Superiors not to create small boarding schools and even to suppress them, and to improve the caméristats so that there can reign in them a climate “favourable for the strengthening of new vocations among the young people”.

While the Conduct for boarding schools never saw the light, the number of boarding schools steadily increased. It is worth noting already the important place occupied by them in the overall picture of the Institute, even though the number of Brothers teaching there, and especially of the pupils admitted, is very small by comparison with the figures for the Institute as a whole.

Preoccupation with the purpose and the running of boarding schools provided material for discussion for a long time, but in a profoundly modified context, which affected the whole Institute.

Even less is said about day boarders. These followed the same courses as given in boarding schools and were given a meal. In 1857, they numbered 5,700. Normally, they did not have a separate establishment, but were part of a boarding school or a day school. With one exception, day boarders were restricted to Europe and North America.

## 5. DOCTRINAL AND LEGISLATIVE WRITINGS

During the long time Brother Philippe was in office, numerous works were published and re-issued. We shall refer only to

<sup>41</sup> GA, ED 229, dossier 19.

<sup>42</sup> GA, ED 230, dossier 8.



those which concern directly the spiritual enrichment of the Brothers and their knowledge of their obligations towards the poor. First of all, we shall look at a number of writings from a previous period, and then at those bearing the Superior's signature.

#### NEW EDITIONS OF PREVIOUS WORKS

##### The Collection of short treatises

We know of at least 6 re-issues: in 1841, 1844, 1846, 1851, 1859 and 1868, without any important changes vis-a-vis previous texts. The treatise on the obligations of the vows reproduces the 1783 text.

##### The Common Rules

The 1852 edition <sup>43</sup> seems to have been the only one published. It was identical with previous editions. In 1853, or shortly afterwards, two small leaves were inserted with modifications to chapters XXV (prayers for the deceased) and XXIX (timetable for ordinary days) <sup>44</sup>.

The 1858 General Chapter introduced annual vows and modified certain dispositions in force until then regarding admission to vows. Its decisions were approved by a rescript from Rome, dated May 6th 1859. The 1861 General Chapter suppressed everything concerning corporal punishment in school. In the absence of a new revised and corrected edition, booklets were printed in 1862, containing the changes made to the 1852 edition <sup>45</sup>.

What interests us here is the 5th vow. In chapter XVII, it is referred to in the same terms as in the Bull, that is "to teach the

poor gratuitously" and not "to teach gratuitously", as in previous editions. In chapter XVIII, however, there are no changes: "By the vow of teaching gratuitously, and of conducting schools by association, etc". The next Chapter will evoke the casuistry used in times past with reference to this vow.

##### Rule of Government

We know of two editions: that of 1838 (perhaps produced before Brother Philippe's term in office), and that of 1845.

##### The 1838 edition

Chapter 1 begins as follows: "The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is an association or Congregation, whose purpose is to work for its own perfection, and to instruct and to bring up in a Christian manner children, and especially poor children, by conducting gratuitous schools". Article 8 lists the vows: "poverty, chastity, obedience, stability in the Institute and teaching gratuitously. The serving Brothers make the same vows, apart from the one to teach".

<sup>43</sup> The 1858 edition, referred to in RIGAUD 5, p. 433, note 3, did not exist. But it is possible that the same text was reprinted several times. The copies kept in the GA are printed in different formats, the quality of the paper varies, as does the binding, but they all carry the date 1852. A rapid examination shows no typographical difference between them.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, GA, xBO 751, copy 66.

<sup>45</sup> The printing of these booklets had already been decided by the 1858 Chapter (cf. GA, ED 227, *Chapter Register B*, p. 311). But it was done only in 1862 (cf. circular 289, dated July 29th, which accompanied their distribution).

Chapter 5 recalls the “means to preserve this Institute in its primitive spirit”. Article 6 refers to poverty, and varies slightly from the text of article 7 of the 1814 edition: “Poverty should be seen and considered as one of the principal supports, and the contrary vices as its loss and ruin. To make it perfect, Brothers must demonstrate it clearly in their lives, their dress, their furniture and, in general, in everything for their use, and remove from their society everything that appears superfluous. And so, they will not receive any remuneration, nor presents, from the pupils or parents, as schools have to be always gratuitous. They cannot use anything material without permission. This permission, however, should be granted easily, for reasons that are good and not contrary to the Rules”.

### The 1845 edition

With the 1838 edition out of print, the 1844 General Chapter devoted more than 20 sessions to examining the draft of a new edition proposed by the Superior before they approved it. Certain changes, while not fundamental, are all the same enlightening.

The beginning of chapter 1 specifies and completes: “and to bring up in a Christian manner children, and especially the children of the artisans and the poor, by conducting gratuitous schools. [The Institute] can conduct also boarding schools and teacher training colleges, and even supervise and instruct prisoners”. At that time, the Brothers were already present in all these educational fields.

In chapter IV, the vows are described in the following way: “1° In addition to the vows of religion, that is to say, those of poverty, chastity and obedience, those of stability and teaching gratuitously will be made also in this Institute. They will be made first of all for three years and then for life. The Brothers destined for temporal work will not make the vows concerning teaching”. The opening insists on the idea that the Institute is truly a religious congregation. Worth noting is the shift from “serving Brothers” to “Brothers destined for temporal work”, (but in the Common Rules, they continue to be called “serving Brothers”). The transition from the singular to plural regarding the 5th vow is interesting also: at the time, it was usual to think that the vow pronounced, in fact, included several vows.

The “means of preserving this Institute in its primitive spirit” has now become chapter VI. Among them, “the 13th is a great esteem for poverty, considering it as one of the principal supports of the religious life, and the faults against it, its loss and ruin. To make it perfect, the Brothers must make it perfectly evident generally in all that they have for their use. They will not possess anything of their own, they will receive no remuneration from the pupils nor from the parents. They will not be able to use any material thing without permission. This permission, however, must be given without difficulty if it is not contrary to the Rules”. In this formulation, the Institute (represented by a pronoun in the 1838 edition) gives way to “the religious life”; not receiving remuneration

neration (mention of presents is omitted) remains linked exclusively to poverty; and all allusion to the gratuity of teaching is suppressed.

Chapter XXIII is new and describes the things for which the Brother Director will be accountable when he makes his report to the Superior in odd months of the year. Among other things: "3° If something has been given to the house, such as food, linen, cash, or in any other form. Whatever has been given must be specified, and it must be said whether the donor had children in the school or not".

### Other works

In 1783, Brother Agathon had increased the size of the original version of the *Col-lection* by adding a number of his own treatises. New editions of this small work by De La Salle left out these additions but, since they were highly regarded, they were printed in 1841 and 1846. Very much appreciated also were other writings connected with the great Superior of the 18th century, such as, the decisions of the 1777 and 1787 Chapters, the Notices. To these should be added the writings of Brother Barthélemy, and a number of circulars and Chapter decisions from the beginning of the 19th century. These writings were considered to be still valid for the Brothers, and so they were included in the "Thoughts of the Venerable de La Salle" published in 1853 and re-issued in 1893.

The *Explanation of the 12 virtues of a good master* continued to hold its own. A

Jesuit rewrote it for women so that it could serve for mistresses also <sup>46</sup>.

On the other hand, the famous "Instructive Letters" of 1784 and 1785, concerning the vows of the Brothers, do not seem to have been re-issued.

### THE WRITINGS OF BROTHER PHILIPPE

Brother Philippe wrote numerous works, some of them quite long. This is not the place to examine to what extent Brother Philippe was the real author of each one of them. A brief examination, however, will enable us to pick out some small direct allusions to the educational service of the poor.

#### Subjects for meditation for each day of the year

This work appeared for the first time in 1850 <sup>47</sup>. It contains summaries and ideas which are simply mentioned. The love of St Lawrence for the poor is stressed: he considered them to be the riches of the Church. The same thing for St Louis, who served them directly. The meditation on St Vincent de Paul ends as follows: "Let us love above all the poorest children and those who are most ill-favoured by nature". On Satur-

<sup>46</sup> Fr. H. POTTER sj, *Les douze vertus d'une bonne maîtresse*, 9th edition in 1875. In the introduction he says that this work was simply an adaptation of the *Douze vertus d'un bon maître*, a work which he attributes to the Venerable De La Salle.

<sup>47</sup> Announced in circular 171, dated June 30th 1850. In the GA, there are copies of 2 undated editions. There is a copy dated 1853 from St Germain en Laye, and another, also dated 1853, from Namur.

day evening, subjects related to school are proposed. The expression "poor children" appears sometimes, but it should not be understood necessarily in the economic sense.

These summaries were re-issued several times, but from 1866, they were included in a larger work entitled "Summaries of Meditations". This contains a summary referring to the vow of teaching gratuitously (p.231), which is developed in meditation 157 on the religious life.

### **Subjects for particular examen (examination of conscience)**

This new work was published in 1859. Its second edition, issued in 1863, makes good an omission in the first: after subject 300, on impartiality, a subject 300 A is inserted on gratuity of teaching. After recalling the obligations of the "vow of teaching gratuitously" contained in the Rule and the Collection, the text continues: "To act differently would be to neglect fundamentally a duty prescribed by the Rule and confirmed by the Bull of Approbation, art. N°5".

There seems to be here an echo of past controversies. The vow is still called "to teach gratuitously", despite everything. In support of this universal gratuity, the Rule is quoted ("fundamentally", we are reminded in art.1 of chapter VII), and so is article 5 of the Bull. There is silence regarding article 9: "...and to teach the poor gratuitously". As these duties of the Brothers are in the public domain, "the smallest transgression of this rule" would be a scandal. It is said "of this Rule" and not "of the vow".

After these few reminders, there follows the examination: "Is this how we have behaved with regard to gratuity which is personal to us? Have we never received anything for ourselves from parents, which would be contrary not only to the gratuity of teaching, but also to the vow of poverty? Have we not received anything for the house, on a pretext that cupidity could perhaps seek to justify, but which a delicate conscience could never permit?" Two kinds of gratuity, therefore: both somewhat embarrassingly casuistic: the first "which is personal to us", demanded by the vow of poverty and by gratuity (the vow? the Rule? or the what of gratuity?) of teaching; and the gratuity of the house, whose defence is not entrusted to the vow or to the Rule, but to a fragile delicacy of conscience.

The conclusion centres the target once more: "Do we imitate the great Apostle who said to the Corinthians: 'My glory is not simply to announce the Gospel, but to announce it gratuitously'; and in another place: 'It is not your goods, it is you that I seek'. That is why the final prayer asks for the grace never to seek 'either my interests, or any temporal advantage, but solely your glory' and the salvation of children."

Subject 303, on "the importance of the services that a Christian school renders to society", describes the social attitude of a child brought up in a Christian way. His conduct towards the poor is described as follows in the second edition: "Full of tenderness for those who suffer, he will do his utmost to comfort the poor in their distress,

he will seek to console the afflicted, and if he cannot help them in any other way, he will at least say kind words to them, give them good advice, and encourage them to accept for the sake of God and their salvation, the sufferings, trials and the adversity they encounter”.

### **Meditations on the religious life**

There are 200 of these and, given that each one is 6 pages long, they fill two large volumes. The first 100 were published in 1865, and re-issued in 1873, the year in which the second 100 appeared.

Meditation 8 has the title: “The purpose of the Brothers of the Christian Schools”. The author believes he can affirm that, according to the Church, the venerable Founder, the Brothers of the past and all benefactors, the good the Brother is called to accomplish consists in his “*applying himself to whatever concerns the service of God and the preservation of the innocence of the pupils*”<sup>48</sup>; that he will sanctify himself by observing his Rules faithfully; by working for the salvation of the children by forming them in the Christian law; by teaching them their prayers and all that is necessary for salvation; by teaching them to know, love and practise religion; and that he will do this work, not in isolation, or to satisfy his own point of view, but by association with the other Brothers, in union with all the members of the Institute; and he will imitate Jesus Christ in the manner prescribed by the Rules of the Society; and he will contribute to the sanctification of his neighbour by

edification, prayer and work”. This sounds like the description of a group of catechists.

Catechists of children, following the example of Jesus: “Let the little children come to me, so that I may teach them the truths of salvation, so that I may reveal to them the immense love that our adorable Saviour has for them, and I can teach them to love him and serve him”.

Especially the poor: “Jesus Christ...had as his mission to evangelise the poor. This is also the special mission, the purpose of the Brother of the Christian Schools: to announce the Gospel to the poor, to teach them catechism, and in this way to show that all men are called to see the salvation that comes from God”.

Such is our purpose. An excellent and beneficial purpose, for which is promised the evangelical reward: “He who keeps my commandments and teaches others to keep them, will be great in the kingdom of heaven”<sup>49</sup>.

These are ideas heavy with consequences, and with them the Superior wishes to enrich the life of his Brothers: “the Brothers of the Christian Schools”, but, in prac-

<sup>48</sup> The sentence is indicated as a quotation from MD 2,1. It is, in fact, but taken from the 1858 edition. The original edition and that of Langres (1816?) say: “To apply oneself to what concerns the service (of God) and the care of souls”. An example of the freedom with which this edition treats De La Salle’s text.

<sup>49</sup> The reference is not given for the Gospel passage referred to, but it is clear that the reminder in Mt 5,19 has been contaminated by Mt 28,20.

tice, he empties the noun “school” of all meaning. We might even dare to suggest that this is a particular example of a much more general emptiness: that of life today.

From this point of view, present life no longer has true value, or reality: it is a fleeting moment we must take advantage of in order to merit true life, life beyond the tomb. And that truly happy life is earned by constancy in suffering the evils of the present life (provided that one is in a state of grace, otherwise no merit is gained by suffering!), by means of prayers, sacraments and all that. The concrete life of the Brothers is certainly quite different: they teach class, and try to do so well; their schools deserve the praise of the authorities and of the public, and win school competitions; there is pedagogical progress, better equipment in the schools; school textbooks are constantly revised. In a word, in reality, the Institute insists on the importance of the school. And so, the gap between real life and doctrine becomes increasingly striking.

In the middle of the second volume, meditation 157 broaches the subject of “the vow to teach the poor gratuitously” and begins with a quotation from Mt 10,8: “You received without charge, give without charge”. In summary, Jesus Christ entrusted a very important apostolate to the Brother, and wants him to pursue it with ardent zeal and the greatest abnegation: “Every Brother of the Christian Schools, by the sole fact that he is a member of this congregation, is

obliged, as far as he is concerned, to direct all his efforts to the instruction of the pupils, and to do so gratuitously. These are the two fundamental duties of his state...”. This is what the Rule and the *Collection* say: the 5th vow, reflecting the 3rd commandment of the Institute, imposes the double obligation of teaching “with care” and “gratuitously”. Even though only a few Brothers had made the vow, the commandment applied to everybody, including the thousands of “employed novices”. For this reason, the paragraph recalls that “by the sole fact of being a member of the congregation”, the Brother had these obligations; and he had them “as far as he was concerned”, without concerning himself with whatever means the authorities may think up to collect the funds necessary for the support of the schools: the rescript of 1861 produced its effects.

This generous and disinterested zeal, demanded by the very nature of his apostolate, puts the Brother on the path followed by St Paul, Gerson, John Baptist de La Salle, and Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the poor: “Our Institute has as its special end the Christian education of the artisans and the poor...But in practice we cannot be educators of the poor unless we devote ourselves generously to them, without asking, nor receiving anything from them in terms of remuneration, fees or rewards.

“The duty to teach and teach the poor gratuitously is written in our constitutions... it is mentioned in the Bull of Approba-

tion<sup>50</sup> it is, in addition, the object of a special vow” whose obligations are described in the Rule (ch. XVIII,5).

If we want to split hairs, we can say that the language does not encourage clarity. What lies behind the double declaration “to teach gratuitously” and “to teach the poor gratuitously”? Are they, or are they not equivalent? How many vows are there in the 5th? To teach? To teach with care? To teach gratuitously? To teach the poor gratuitously? Some people could be puzzled.

The meditation, of course, speaks of other things: “Let us truly be devoted, methodical and vigilant teachers. Without neglecting the rich, let us give the poor the most attentive, the most constant and the most affectionate care, seeing in them Our Lord who, ‘being rich, made himself poor for us’; who, in their person, makes himself the object of our charity and says to us: ‘what you do to one of these little ones who believes in me, I consider it done to myself’<sup>51</sup>. “Let us deserve (by our fidelity to gratuity) to see in ourselves the fulfilment of these words of the prince of the Apostles: ‘Be the shepherds of the flock of God that is entrusted to you; watch over it, not simply as a duty, but gladly, because God wants it; not for sordid money, but because you are eager to do it...When the chief shepherd appears, you will be given the crown of unfading glory’”(1 P 5,2-4).

There does not seem to be anything else about this subject in these meditations<sup>52</sup>.

## Circulars

There are hundreds of them! The 99th, dated September 8th 1838, bears his signature and those of the other Assistants. It announces the recent death of Brother Anaclet, Superior General. Circular 367A is dated December 1st 1873. On the whole, there are many A’s, a fair number of B’s, and many without any number. They deal with a variety of subjects: announcements of deaths; important administrative decisions or just details; General Chapter convocations and results; spiritual advice and pedagogical guidelines. One can suppose that, in the case of some circulars, the Superior simply added his signature, and this was not always the case. Others are composed entirely by him. A first group of “instructive” circulars came to an end in 1853 with the “Thoughts of the Venerable De La Salle”. These were followed by 20 or so others, published, in 1870, under the title “Instructive circulars of the Most Honourable Brother Philippe”.

<sup>50</sup> The reference is to article 5, and not 9; but the 5th does not mention the poor.

<sup>51</sup> A reference to Mt 25,40. But the “little ones who believe in me” is found in Mt 18,6. Yet another example of approximate or mixed quotation from the Bible. This could be the sign of a particular style.

<sup>52</sup> Meditation 134 mentions the Rule and the Collection as means at the disposal of the Brothers, from their novitiate onwards, to know clearly what their commitments are when they make vows. It would be interesting to know how this information was used in the instructions given to the novices or to candidates for vows.

From all these circulars there emerges an Institute overwhelmingly devoted to the Christian elementary education of the children of the working classes. Sometimes, but not often on the whole, this fact is not explicitly referred to in texts. This should not give us the wrong impression regarding the spread of this service: what happens every day is not news.

Circular 148, dated May 26th 1846, begins by recommending vigilance, because “we are the guardian angels of these poor children”, and then adds “The Venerable de La Salle wished...our work to have as its purpose the renewal among the working classes, by means of a truly Christian education, of the fervour and piety of the primitive Church”. Our duty is to form hard-working and honest workers.

A paragraph in circular 152, dated January 15th 1847, may seem to be a commonplace or a reflection about the situation. Among the means to be happy, it proposed: “8° The consideration of other people’s suffering”, and gave some examples: “Look at that father, surrounded by his little children asking him for a piece of bread, and all he can give them is his tears; look at that infirm old man, who has only a miserable litter on which to rest his limbs, and insufficient remedies to relieve his pain; look at that poor unemployed worker, his cheeks gaunt with hunger, and limbs stiff with cold; look at that mother, a widow with a family she cannot feed; look at those orphans rejected by everybody...These are real

sufferings, and once again, what are our own by comparison?”<sup>53</sup>.

1848, the Revolution. For a time, there seemed to be an alliance formed between the Church and the common people (urban populations, working class, symbolising “all the people”). On March 7th, the Superior wrote: “In all revolutions...two important things survive and remain. God and the Nation; God, whose will we must fulfil, and the Nation, for which we must form educated and devoted children who, one day, will be good and faithful citizens...This task...becomes more serious and more worthy to stimulate all our zeal, under the government of the Republic, which recognises and proclaims as its fundamental principles, the three great principles consecrated by the Gospel: liberty, equality, fraternity”.

“It was our holy religion that first gave men true liberty, by teaching the great and powerful that the small and the poor were their brothers in God.

“It is our religion which commands those who have bread to share it with those who have none, and those who have two coats to give one to whomsoever has none.

“It is our religion which obliges people to come closer to one another, to listen to one another, to love one another, not only as citizens of the same nation, but also as

<sup>53</sup> Quoted from the “Thoughts”, p. 386ff. It seems that this was the longest paragraph, or the only one in the Lasallian writings of the time, to describe the living conditions of poor people in towns.



children of the same Father who is in heaven”.

In the new France that is being born, “the strong will support the weak, the rich will relieve the poor, the educated person will serve as guide and counsellor for those who have not yet had the opportunity or the means to develop their intelligence”. Consequently, “we will carefully remove from our minds any thoughts that might compare the present with the past, or the 1848 revolution with what was distressing in that of ‘92”.

“Tell the parents...that you will redouble your efforts to ensure that their instruction and education (that of their children) are in keeping with the social rank prepared for them by the government, which has raised them all to the dignity of citizens, not simply on paper, but in reality”.

“Tell the workers in the town where you live, that we love them as our brothers, and that our lives belong to them, as far as they can be of use to them, especially at a time like this when, because of the measures taken by the government, they will have more time to devote to the development of their intelligence”<sup>54</sup>.

The circular was addressed to “Our Very dear Brothers”, but included a recommendation that it be shown to the new authorities and to the public. This is understandable. Whether it was a tactical move or not, it certainly reflected an attitude which was widespread at the time in the Church in France, of which “our Fathers in the faith, our Lordships the bishops, have just given

France a praiseworthy example”. But the opportunity vanished, and the Church lost the support of the working class.

Circular 163 on “sanctification” is dated January 15th 1849. It contains the following exhortation: “Let us sanctify ourselves by the fulfilment of our vows”. It speaks of the 5th vow as follows: “Let us sanctify ourselves by the vow to teach the holy truths of religion, which will make us shine in heaven, as the stars shine in the firmament”<sup>55</sup>, meaning that the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously is, in fact, the vow to teach catechism gratuitously. It needs saying again, this conceptual reduction is strange, coming precisely at a time when the Institute, under the energetic leadership of the Superior, is extending and diversifying its field of action and the curricula taught in all schools. And this is not the last surprise.

We have referred already to circular 191, dated July 5th 1853. Providing the Brothers with suitable answers in case they were questioned about boarding schools, it reminds them: “The gratuitous schools are the primary concern of the Institute, but it is no stranger to boarding schools: far from that, they existed at the very beginning. The Venerable founded them in that of St Yon. His last years were devoted to catechising the young boarders of St Yon, and teaching them to pray to God.

<sup>54</sup> According to one of the first decisions of the republican government, the length of the working day was reduced to 10 hours in Paris, and 11 in the provinces (RIGAULT 5, p. 281).

<sup>55</sup> Quoted from the “Thoughts”, p. 410.

“Brother Barthélemy...founded the one at St Omer <sup>56</sup>, and Brother Timothée, the second Superior, opened several, and their successors imitated them.

“These men, as you can very well see, had the spirit of their state, knew its purpose and the elements on which it should work. From this it follows: 1° That boarding schools are part of the good the Institute is called to accomplish; 2° that while we owe gratuitous teaching to the poor, we can receive remuneration from those to whom we give not only instruction, but also all the family care they require” <sup>57</sup>.

One is justified in thinking that these two answers were in response to specific questions. There are indications that these questions did not come only from the Ministry of Public Instruction, or, generally speaking, from outside, but that certain Brothers asked them also. The type of argument used is significant: boarding schools are not defended by showing the good they do, their adaptation to the needs of the times, or by specific reasons. The only arguments put forward are juridical. This must have the area from which the attacks came.

The question of the vows seemed to be a cause for concern for the Superior during this 10-year period <sup>58</sup>. Circular 202, dated June 11th 1854, comments in the passionate and cordial words of Brother Philippe, on the formula for the renewal of vows. The occasion for this was the traditional ceremony of renewal of vows on the feast of the Most Holy Trinity.

Commenting on the vow of poverty, he restricts himself to its internal aspects, without any reference to the world of the poor in which the Brothers exercise the greater part of their apostolate. Then he comes to the 5th vow: “I renew my vow to teach. Teaching is proper to my state, to my vocation. I make it the object of a vow, and I renew it with particular pleasure and a great hope, because it is written that those instruct many in the way of justice shall shine as stars for all eternity (Dn 12,3). I wish therefore to teach children to read, to write, to count, and I wish to teach them the special subjects useful for their temporal lives, but most of all, I wish to teach them to know God, to love him, serve him and deserve the heaven for which they were created, just as I was”. There follows a prolix enumeration of the religious content of teaching, and of the exemplary, edifying, modest, respect-

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<sup>56</sup> Without much historical exactness: the Brothers came to St Omer several months after the death of Brother Barthélemy, who had made all the arrangements, but had not lived to see his work come to fruition. It was only some years later that boarders were admitted (cf. RIGAULT 2, p. 541).

<sup>57</sup> Quotation from the “Thoughts”, p. 536. The text itself of the Chapter decisions was on a separate sheet, to be inserted into the Rule of Government.

<sup>58</sup> The 1858 General Chapter gave special attention to this subject: it called for the introduction of annual vows, and made the conditions for admission to triennial and perpetual vows more stringent. It would seem that numerous requests for dispensation, and cases of Brothers leaving without dispensation, were a cause for worry.

ful and supernatural attitude of the teacher<sup>59</sup>. "In a word, I renew my vow to teach, in order to earn the glory promised to those who, following the example of the divine Model, have done and taught (Mt 5,19). I renew my vow to teach gratuitously. No, it is not self-interest which will guide me; what I seek is not presents or temporal remuneration, but souls! It is for them that I wish to sacrifice myself, that I wish to immolate my life, that I wish to consecrate my existence... And so, I shall be happy to say to the children and to their parents: "Give me souls, and keep the rest for yourselves!"<sup>60</sup>.

If the word "souls" is uttered with blissful, almost ecstatic enthusiasm, the rest of the school is not forgotten: reading, writing, the various subjects useful "for temporal life" in these bodies which are no more than dust and clay.

This preoccupation can be seen again in circular 232, dated May 22nd 1857: "Of Vows and their Observance"<sup>61</sup>. The vow of gratuity is not forgotten: "By our vow of teaching Christian doctrine gratuitously to children, we add something to the merit of the other vows, because we participate in a very real sense in the apostolate of Jesus Christ, and because, like St Paul, we can say that our glory is not only to announce the Gospel, but to announce it free of charge" (p.48).

"Yes, the vow to teach catechism to children gives the merit of the apostolate to those who, understanding the importance of

this work, prepare themselves for it with care, and try to imitate Jesus Christ" (p.49).

"I have made the vow to teach, and yet I am tempted to be lax in this work! To give way to laziness, indolence! To leave the children in ignorance, especially where the teaching of religion and prayers is concerned!

"I have made the vow of teaching gratuitously, and I am tempted to accept presents, gifts, led on by my cupidity; To seek applause in the exercise of my functions, to feed on the praise of men! No! With the grace of God, I shall not give way" (p.57).

There are therefore three elements in the contents of the vow: teaching, teaching gratuitously, teaching catechism (or Christian doctrine, or religion and prayers); and enthusiastic courage if, laying aside the question of casuistry, everything is included in the generous folds of a disinterested gift. But language that is not clearly defined can be dangerous.

A lack of concern for precise terminology can be the only possible excuse for the end of the following paragraph. Describing

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<sup>59</sup> The desire to counteract the dangers of sexual immorality with the pupils inspired the words: "I shall love, not their body, which is nothing more than dust and clay, but their soul which is immortal".

<sup>60</sup> Quoted from *Instructive Circulars*. 1870 edition, p. 16-19.

<sup>61</sup> Complete text in *Instructive Circulars*, p. 42-84, from which these extracts were taken.

in a rhetorical crescendo the stages in the fall of a Brother who is unfaithful to his vows, he concludes: "Soon, disgust for the exercises is followed by disgust for his state. He goes from one illusion to another, till he finally succumbs to the most unfortunate temptation, that of abandoning his vocation and going back into the world, with his vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, stability, and teaching gratuitously the holy morality of Jesus Christ!" (p.67). Unless, of course, he meant exactly that <sup>62</sup>.

The same argument but expressed in even more sober tones. The 1858 General Chapter had been convoked and, on May 29th, circular 244 appeared on admission to vows. Describing the profile of candidates worthy to be admitted, the circular proposes the following characteristic: "Men who, having understood the dignity of children...consider themselves infinitely honoured to be called to instruct them and direct them, and who, according to the spirit of our venerable Founder, have a particular affection for poor children" <sup>63</sup>.

Another aspect of this subject is taken up in circular 284, dated April 10th 1862: "Prize books and monthly rewards". The Superior recalls the indications in the Conduct of Schools: "That these books be well chosen, and if they do not all deal with religion, all should be at least instructive and useful to the children". The circular goes on to put this practice into the context of the present-day apostolate: "The propagation of good books today is one of the most important works...for it is by this means

alone that a great number of workers receive teachings about the truth". These words seem to reflect the "Memoir on Latin" that De La Salle wrote for the bishop of Chartres, but they reflect also the period in which the circular was written, when from inside and from outside the Church, the battle for the working class was raging, and the printed word was thought to be a powerful weapon.

When it indicates the criteria for choice, we find the following: "We shall avoid giving...<sup>5</sup> those which would stimulate in our pupils the desire to occupy a higher rank than the one Providence calls them to occupy in the world, a position which we must generally presume to be that of their parents" <sup>64</sup>. A statement which it is difficult to accept a century later, but quite unextraordinary if compared with the teachings of the day (and even later) on the divine origin of the difference between rich and poor.

In his New Year's greetings for 1865, the Superior wished to help the Brothers overcome the temptation to discouragement. Among the means to achieve this, he suggests they look objectively at the work of their Institute: "Yes, dear Brothers, good is being done, the family of the venerable De La Salle continues the work of this great servant of God. By it, the Gospel is an-

<sup>62</sup> This is Pedro M. Gu's (FSC) explanation in his *Three centuries of Lasallian Identity*, p. 216. It was he who pointed out the text.

<sup>63</sup> In *Instructive Circulars*, p. 101

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235-240

nounced to the poor, and young people in their crowds receive the bread of the soul” (Circ. 313).

In 1870, Brother Philippe, strong and lucid, is a venerable old man. His New Year’s greetings invite the Brothers to “Think of the end”. The vow of gratuity is one reason for doing it with confidence: “By the vow of teaching gratuitously, we have consecrated ourselves to the work of the Christian education of youth, and we have put at the service of the Church all the strength we have, all the health, and all the faculties. But who is there who does not see how important this work is, of what great value it is for families and individuals, what glory it procures God?”<sup>65</sup> in addition to the merits which enrich those who accomplish it as God wills.

By its sobriety, it is one of the better expressions. It is a pity about the obsession with individual merit in order to deserve heaven, and the omission of society among the beneficiaries of the educational work (an omission made up for in other works, as we have seen). But the synthesis is interesting: Christian education, service of the Church, service of persons, glory of God.

From Brother Philippe’s last message to the Brothers, we shall take two significant texts, with which we can conclude this section. They are taken from circular 367A, dated December 1st 1873. It gives an account of the proclamation of the heroicity of the virtues of M. De La Salle by Pope Pius IX, during a session on November 1st, which the Superior had attended.

The decree of the heroicity of virtues mentions also the spiritual itinerary of the Founder: “Having meditated on the words of divine Wisdom: “Come, my children, listen to me, I shall teach you the fear of the Lord”, and this warning of Jesus Christ: “Let the little children come to me, because it is to them that the Kingdom of heaven belongs, he (De La Salle) began to gather together poor and abandoned children, and taught them with care the duties of piety and the rudiments of letters. However, in order that this work, which was so difficult, could develop and produce abundant fruit, he called to himself pious laymen, gave them salutary rules, and made them his cooperators in the foundation of the Institute of the Christian Schools”. Edifying reading, deductive, almost the opposite of the his real spiritual itinerary!

Lasallians are more likely to accept Brother Philippe’s other text in the same circular: “Almost two centuries ago, a minister of the Sanctuary, gave up his riches, his rank and his entire self, to direct a Society devoted to the gratuitous instruction of the children of the common people, which taught them the rudiments of letters, but most especially the duties of the holy religion of Jesus Christ”.

In this way, De La Salle is seen as choosing and involving himself: the “sacrifice” of this priest, “minister of the sanctuary”, includes his own social rank among the

<sup>65</sup> Circular 347A, dated January 3rd 1870. *Instructive Circulars*, p. 398.

things to be “renounced”. His departure from the comfortable life of a cleric enables him to insert himself in a poor lay society, dedicated to the tasks of this world: the social betterment of working class children

through the school which, by opening its doors for them free of charge, prepares them to live as citizens of this world and as sons of God.

## 6. THE SERVICE OF THE POOR IN EVERYDAY LIFE

It is not easy to gather first-hand accounts of the Institute’s commitment to the service of the poor in the thick of everyday life: working class people do not write much, everyday events are not news, and the documentation we consulted for our study was sparse. In fact, almost everything that follows comes from the circulars of the Superior.

One set of first-hand accounts consists of news of missionary journeys or of new kinds of work being undertaken: Brothers leave for La Réunion, Smyrna, Algeria, United States, Ecuador, Malaysia, India...<sup>66</sup> new apostolates begin with prisoners and the deaf and dumb <sup>67</sup>. We can include also here the collections taken up in schools to help the victims of natural disasters: fires and especially floods. Some practical observations reveal the reality of situations: when official inspectors visit a school, particular care is taken about the appearance of the pupils .“as far as their poverty will allow” <sup>68</sup>.

A second set, with more information despite its modest size, comes from obituary notices. The set is modest also in the sense that it says little because many things are taken for granted. Brothers who, on finish-

ing their novitiate, were due to teach in a gratuitous school, normally began in the lowest class, which was often also the most numerous. Many also ended their life there. It makes one shudder to see the number of Brothers who died young, before they were 25 or even 20 years of age. One presumes their health was delicate. Perhaps their death rate was not so different from the overall rate at the time. But very probably they fell victim to exhausting work and living conditions, which certain allusions to local deficiencies imply, or which can be deduced from the large number of pupils in the classes. The devoted work of the Brothers for the poor is rarely mentioned, and yet this is the only thing they ever did.

Fortunately, in some cases, the writer is explicit, and we have some examples.

Brother Florent devoted himself to the poor children of La Réunion...Brother Imam’s zeal for teaching poor children is

<sup>66</sup> For example, circulars 111, 115, 116, 117, 120, 127, 141, 145, 149, 153 (Brothers who go to La Réunion “for the poor blacks”), 185, 196, 251, 256, 295, 320, 348A.

<sup>67</sup> For example, circulars 135, 141.

<sup>68</sup> Circular 143, dated July 24th 1845.

highlighted. In La Réunion again, 400 workers come to the funeral of Brother Alvoid, a much-loved teacher of evening classes.<sup>69</sup>

Brother Odilon had won the affection and respect of the workers and children of Boulogne sur Mer, who would run up to greet him in the street. During the funeral oration, it was recalled that "De La Salle recognised that one of the greatest services for society would be to improve the conditions of the poorer classes". It was known that Brother Romule's only ambition was to spend his life with the children of the poor<sup>70</sup>.

Brother Généreux, "by his economy and his vigilance to ensure nothing was lost, had put the finances of his house on a very solid footing, and had still found the means to provide school materials for the needy pupils. He found them clothing also, and used his inheritance for this good work when the resources at his disposal were insufficient".

And "what can we say about his zeal (writing of Brother Simplide, in La Réunion) for the Christian instruction of the children and of the slaves? It was the newly freed slaves who showed most grief at his funeral. 'We have lost our father!', they cried bitterly. They were right: dear Brother Simplide looked upon them as his children, and it was for them that he reserved his greatest affection", before and after their emancipation; and he would gather them in great numbers, because he had a great talent for attracting them and instructing them.

As he put all his energy into this work, he was told he was tiring himself out, but

he replied: "How can I spare myself...when every day I see 100 or 150 unfortunate and ignorant creatures, who come to me despite the shortness of the break they are given, and who for the most part walk more than two leagues everyday to receive the bread of the word! Can I refuse it to them?" And he added: "In any case, we will have all eternity to rest!" He was not given the same reception in another school but "nevertheless he worked with the same zeal, kept the day school going successfully, and restarting the evening classes, which had been interrupted because of the lack of interest on the part of the local adults, and already he had succeeded attracting 80"<sup>71</sup>.

Brother Ildefonse started, in the Faubourg St Antoine, in Paris "courses for adults and apprentices which made an important contribution to the improvement of the working class". Brother Leminus also worked with apprentices in an excellent manner: the group he taught was composed almost entirely of abandoned children. There was also Br Thomas who organised evening classes in Paris for workers in 1831: "He left his day class to look after these, to organise them and to teach in one of them" (the condemnation that the 1858 Chapter was due to mete out to him was in fact silenced). In Arras, Brother Mellon, in addition to opening, by subscription, three schools which were subsequently taken in

<sup>69</sup> Circulars 160, 162, 166.

<sup>70</sup> Circulars 172 and 174.

<sup>71</sup> Circulars 177 and 179.

charge by the municipality, also promoted evening classes for adults. At his death, it was said that "he had devoted 46 years of his life to the happiness and well-being of the working class"<sup>72</sup>.

Other Brothers are singled out for their work with orphans. There was Brother Urbice: "In Troy, as in Baltimore, his main concern was for the orphans"; and Brother Luigi Maria, who looked after them at Termini (Rome) and in Sinigaglia; and Brother Servus Rei, who loved the most needy children with special affection, and devoted especially his later years to caring for them at the orphanage in Orléans. Brother Giacomo was called "the father of the orphans" at Forli, while Brother Macédoine de Jésus was noted for his devotedness to the orphans of Paris and Marseilles<sup>73</sup>.

At the funeral of Brother Lézer, there were more than 700 workers, and many workshops stopped work that day. This was not a unique case: "The workers themselves, despite the work and the awkward time, left their workshops to attend" the funeral of Brother Louis Casimir of Clermont. The funeral of Brother Milhau was attended by workers in their working clothes, and by poor mother with their children in their arms. At Cherbourg, "the mortal remains of Brother Adrias...were accompanied to the cemetery...by a great number of young people and workers who had decided to stop work that day to come and bid a solemn farewell to one who had been their father and friend"<sup>74</sup>.

Brother Onésime "abandoned the world at an early age to consecrate himself entirely to the instruction of the children of the working class, because, anxious to join an order famous in education, he never ceased saying: "Let me, let me teach the poor"...he showed ingenuity in finding food, clothing and even school materials for the poor". Brother Eustache, who came from a very honourable family, informed his parents when he was 20 of his desire to join the Institute "to teach poor children the road to salvation"<sup>75</sup>.

Brother Alrich had set out on a priestly career. At the age of 23 he gave it up to join the Brothers and there "he devoted himself to the modest functions of teaching the artisans and the poor". In the same way, Brother Médard, "after some studies in preparation for the priesthood, felt himself drawn to dedicate himself to the education of poor children" and joined the Institute<sup>76</sup>.

Rome witnessed the great love of Brother Savisse for the poor. In Dijon, Brother

<sup>72</sup> Circulars 188, 247, 267, 319.

<sup>73</sup> Circulars 246, 248, 292, 334, 323.

<sup>74</sup> Circulars 210, 315, 331, 343.

<sup>75</sup> Circulars 223, 279. In the first, Brother Régis is mentioned also: "In Lyons, our Brothers were persecuted and received only half of their allowance: there was a terrible destitution in the community which recalled Vaugirard, and which threatened their lives. And then Brother Régis went out to solicit the pity of people for them; he knocked on the doors of the rich, and weeping, begged and obtained from them the help his suffering Brothers needed".

<sup>76</sup> Circulars 224 and 331.



Manuel became famous: after 1830, people thought that the Brothers would have to go away, but as “the poor loved them and above all had great need of them”, the means was found to keep 5 or 6 of them, even in some poverty. “Two or three hundred poor children came to them for a Christian and gratuitous education”. Brother Manuel aroused the enthusiasm of the population and renovated everything. When he arrived, the six Brothers had a problem surviving; at his death, 18 Brothers ran gratuitous schools, and 14 a boarding school <sup>77</sup>.

At the funeral of Brother Anselme, the Inspector of Schools gave a eulogy which was reproduced almost entirely in his Institute obituary notice. His understanding of the Brothers’ vocation deserves a long extract, even though the lofty ideas are understood better in the original language: “Our age...has recognised that the Brother of the Christian Schools is, par excellence, the teacher of the working class. The working class, that is, nearly the whole human race, is the poor person, stripped bare of every resource, just as God made him, or rather, just as bequeathed destitution disfigured him. This is the person that Jesus Christ preferred, without any redeeming feature of wealth, art or knowledge. Well, it is to this person that the Brother of the Christian Schools holds out a compassionate hand. It is to him that he brings his share of human enlightenment, made greater and purified by the light of God. This humble religious...has first of all to transform the child of the working class into an intelligent worker. With

this as his aim, he gives him refuge in his heart, he makes him spiritual and rids him of that brutal force which would make him one day a fearsome enemy or a criminal, and in its place he puts that divine sweetness which will be his virtue and his glory. He gives him this great and moral preparation which was unknown in pagan antiquity; perhaps he brings to light in him the inventor, if God wills to send down on the head of this enlightened worker one of those sudden illuminations which he holds in reserve, as much for the disinherited orphan bereft of worldly goods, as for the son of an opulent family.

“It is not only intelligence in work, it is not only progress in results that the Brother of the Christian Schools ensures by the gratuitous instruction that he gives the working class child, but also his daily bread for the future, and the bread for his family when he becomes a father. To nourish working class people, prepare food for them, ensure for them the support of their material lives, what an immense task, but also what a boon when the problem is solved!

“But I would be unjust to these teachers of the working class, if I did not hasten to say that, above all, they are Christian teachers. Precursors of the priest, brothers of the worker, apostles of little children...they teach doctrines which bear immortal fruit, above all to the working classes.

“All these children...they teach to be loyal citizens, respectful sons, husbands who will

<sup>77</sup> Circular 229.

help their wives to bear the burden of life, enlightened and esteemed fathers of families, submissive Christians, who will find in celestial hope courageous resignation and a remedy for all their problems"<sup>78</sup>. We have here the words of a cultured man, involved in education, and who wishes to praise an institution which he esteems, in the presence of a population which esteems it also. It is equally clear that these are not the words of a "son of the working class"<sup>79</sup>, and that one could find fault with his sociology, anthropology and his theology. One of his colleagues says something similar at the funeral of Brother Othmar: "In the midst of this frightening disaffection of the working classes, it was left to him to inspire these poor people with patience and the will to work; to inspire these children with obedience and respect; and these young workers, crushed by the heat and the weight of the day, the strength born of holy resignation and the spell of immortal hope"<sup>80</sup>. Was it only the civil service class who thought like this? Was this really what the Brothers did? Was this the benefit that people expected from popular education?

Brother Adrien, a Director, died in Lille. Many years before, "sent at his request to the Ile Bourbon (La Réunion) in 1817, he acquitted himself with great zeal, teaching children of both colours..." till 1822. In Lille, the mayor and the municipal councillors, recognising the services that Brother Adrien had rendered the working class, wished to pay the cost of his funeral, "his name will be repeated with admiration in

Lille, in the attics and in the houses of the rich". "Good Brother Honoré has a place in the hearts of all our good workers", we read in a St Omer newspaper. The local bishop, speaking of Brother Menée, recalled that in 1833 "he established in Beauvais a free primary school, and the families of our dear workers, who are, as it were, instinctively attracted to the good Brothers, hastened to entrust their children to them"<sup>81</sup>.

With the permission of his Superiors, Brother Albéron founded in Brest and La Rochelle mutual help societies for apprentices and workers, whom he gathered together each Sunday and on feastdays. At his funeral at La Rochelle, the various workers' societies, and especially those of the apprentices, which he had founded, and that of the arts and crafts, numbering 300 workers, attended as a corporate body: "his charity knew no limits, and he had a deep affec-

<sup>78</sup> Circular 230.

<sup>79</sup> *Chapter Register B*, p. 179, contains another interesting contemporary account: at the end of the 1844 Chapter, the capitulants, went to Rouen, as a corporate body, to pay homage to the relics of the Founder, who had recently been made "venerable". The general administration of the railway between Paris and Rouen, taking into account the services our Institute renders to the working class, offered all the capitulants free transport to Rouen and back. In this case also, it was not the workers who called for this, and nothing is said about the lead-up to this offer of free transport. Despite its limitations, the text is valuable as an example of the social position attributed to the Institute.

<sup>80</sup> Circular 335.

<sup>81</sup> Circulars 234, 306 and 309.

tion for working class children". The funeral procession which accompanied the remains of Brother Claude followed a long route: "The parish priest of St Aubin...wanted the procession to go along the main streets of his parish so that the population could render a final homage to the man who, for 27 years, had contributed to the education of working class children"<sup>82</sup>.

Writing about Brother Théotique, who had died while Assistant, after having been a successful Director for many years of the boarding school in Passy, Brother Superior said that "he did not limit his zeal only to the instruction of well-off children. Profoundly imbued with the spirit of our holy Founder, whose principal aim was the gratuitous instruction of the poor, he created, with our authorisation, and at the cost of the boarding school, a free school for all children of this large town, and in this way freely shared with them the precious benefits of a Christian education. Shortly afterwards, he completed his work by opening a school for adults, in which a great number of workers, acquiring the knowledge their situation demanded, were formed in the love and practice of religion. These divers institutions which our dear fellow Brother bequeathed to his worthy successor, continue to bear, under his skilful direction, the most consoling fruit"<sup>83</sup>.

Almost at the other end of the scale, there was the resplendent charity of Brother Ursmer, a member of the boarding school community of La Motte Servolex in Savoie, where he taught the class of the older pupils

in the parish school: "What a beautiful death, martyrdom is! The happy certainty of salvation! In the absence of this happiness, if I could die teaching catechism to my dear little poor children, I would consider myself sufficiently sure of my place in paradise". This almost happened to him, in fact, because "his whole life-force could be resumed in his love for the poor: put in charge of perhaps the poorest children of the whole Institute, his delight was to care for them and instruct them. He was prouder to be the teacher and friend of these poor little children than the tutor of the King's children could ever have been. Regularly, twice a day, he made a tour of the playgrounds, the refectories and the changing rooms, to collect any bread that was left over, or clothes and shoes, which he would then give to his adoptive family: for them, he would have sacrificed his last mouthful. In a word, it was the passion of his heart, the purpose of his life. And so our boarders, touched by his charity, did not wait for him to come and beg from them, but were happy to sacrifice some of their pleasures to please this worthy father of the poor".

A similar thing happened elsewhere in similar circumstances: Brother Valérianus: "every day, he was seen making the rounds of the refectories and playgrounds of our boarding school, and collecting scrupulously the pieces of bread left kindly by the pupils in places his charity led him to inspect...The

<sup>82</sup> Circulars 239 and 290.

<sup>83</sup> Circular 250.

boarders edified by this admirable charity, often used some of their pocket money to help the poor children looked after by Brother Valérianus. At Thones, as at La Motte, he was the friend of the poor”.

Similar things are said about Brother Esdras: “he would be seen running with a holy haste to the refectory, where he would go from table to table, collecting carefully all the left-over food, in order to give it to the poor. Each time he collected food, his joy was in proportion to the amount he found: for him, it was a source of great happiness to be able to do something for the indigent”. Brother Nahum collected “whether in the house, or in the classes, things that appeared to have no value. For him, these things constituted his reserve stock, either for his own use or for that of the poor children. His heart was broken whenever he saw someone destitute or suffering. The commiseration he felt led him to offer, if nothing more, words of affection and consolation.”<sup>84</sup>

In Paris, Brother Hortulan, “having often had the opportunity to see little children known as “little chimney sweeps”<sup>85</sup> doing their hard work without the advantage of any spiritual support, had pity on them. God having inspired him with the thought of helping them, he informed the appropriate authorities of this and, armed with the authorisation he had sought, began gathering these poor children together in the evening, to teach them catechism, instruct them, console them, and induce them to fulfil their principal duties”. Brother Isidorus Marie

was his companion in this apostolate: “It was a pleasure for him to find an appropriate place in the church for these unfortunate little children to hear Mass under his charitable supervision, and to devote himself each evening to the religious education or the instruction of these poor children”<sup>86</sup>.

Savoy benefited from the work of Brother Procle. The town of Rumilly witnessed “his wholly paternal solicitude for the relief and support of orphans, for whose benefit his feelings of commiseration led him to appeal constantly to public charity. In fact, all poor people, without distinction, were dear to his heart, and his great consolation was to be able to help them, as far as our customs allowed him...During those years (1851-1857), as in 1847 before them, it was so difficult to survive, that the poor had good reason not to expect to find even the bare necessities, and even to die of hunger...In answer to his cries for help, the town of Rumilly was lavish in its charity to help the needy, and all survived this trial, blessing God and the charity that had saved them. Thanks to the solicitude of dear Brother Procle, each year, the poor children due to make their first communion were provided free of charge with a suitable and complete set of clothes. Each winter, those of

<sup>84</sup> Circulars 257, 332, 307, 335.

<sup>85</sup> Circular 334: many young chimney sweeps, originating from Savoy, were exploited in the capital. Pages 21-26 of the circular are worth reading. The figure of the Savoyard chimney sweep has its place in French literature.

<sup>86</sup> Circular 350, as in the following note.

his pupils who had no shoes, were given a pair through the good services of their charitable headmaster”.

And here is what a former pupil said at the funeral of Brother Lubès: “enlightened and unprejudiced men raise their hats when the Brothers pass, and the working class people they taught, and who quickly came to esteem and love them for their service, surround them with their gratitude and their respect”. Another former pupil recalls the difficult beginnings of a school where Brother Juvat had toiled: “As was required by the statutes of the sons of the Abbé De La Salle, pupils were admitted free of charge. The upkeep of the Brothers, reduced to the most modest proportions, was assured by voluntary subscription, provided by the parents of children who were better-off than the others who attended the school”<sup>87</sup>.

“One of the functions to which dear Brother Asclépiodore applied himself particularly, was teaching catechism to poor children, who had been sent to work before their first communion, and to young workers who had not yet made it. Despite all the difficulties that are inevitably encountered when one tries to make such poorly prepared hearts accept Christian truths, he succeeded, by dint of patience, kindness and perseverance, in obtaining very consoling and even unhoped-for results. Several times during

the year, he was happy enough to have 20 or 30 of these children or young people prepared to make their first communion”<sup>88</sup>.

Friends of the poor, of the indigent, of the workers, of the orphans and of street children; acclaimed at their funeral by crowds wishing to render homage to those who shunned, but who deserved it so much; exercising their apostolate often with an abnegation which went beyond what their formation had taught them. We conclude this evocation with one final example of faithful dedication to an obscure task, which held out little hope of success: Brother Odilide worked in four establishments for the deaf and dumb, whom he loved with the tenderness of a father, to whom he devoted all his time, sometimes even without obtaining very good results<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>87</sup> Circulars 350 and 359. This latter text refers to 1837, a long time before the Rescripts.

<sup>88</sup> Circular 360.

<sup>89</sup> Circular 360. As Circular 290 (August 20th 1862) was already at the printer's when the news of the death of Brother Bénilde arrived, and because few details of his life were known, barely half a page was devoted to him. In these, his simplicity and his humility were stressed, as was also his holy and regular life (p.26). This short text did not feel the need, however, to invite the reader to appreciate the devotedness of the saint to the children of a poor village. One can say the same thing about hundreds of other cases.



## CHAPTER 6

# GRATUITY IN SCHOOLS

Gratuity in schools, which the Brothers considered “essential for their Institute”, was the source of many problems in the 19th century, and brought about a high level of tension during the generalate of Brother Philippe.

The desire of the Institute to keep schools completely gratuitous clashed with a number of practical factors. In its public schools, which were the majority, it came up against legislation which provided gratuitous education only for the poor (France, Belgium); in its private schools, it had to take into account the increasing difficulty of maintaining them, not only in missionary countries, but also in Europe with its Catholic traditions.

The government of the Institute did its best to preserve the “deposit” of gratuity, but the time came when this was no longer possible. It took the course of appealing repeatedly to the Holy See for dispensations from the Bull of Benedict XIII, dispensations which it always thought would be temporary.

In the pages that follow, we shall describe the fight of the Brothers to preserve the gratuity of their public schools in France. It was a struggle that had great influence on the formation of the conscience of the Institute, and there is a great deal we can learn from it. In the second part of the chapter, we shall speak of the repeated and little-known negotiations that led to the papal dispensations from gratuity.

### 1. THE FIGHT FOR GRATUITY IN FRANCE

Although gratuity was enshrined in the Rule, in the Bull of Approbation, in the Statutes approved by the University, and in the Prospectus that each new educational foundation had to submit, the Institute led by Brother Philippe knew that it constituted a potential area of conflict with the State. By giving its approval to the Institute, the State made it subservient to itself; and while con-

tinuing to make use of its services, it fully intended to treat it as a body of civil servants subject to its bureaucracy.

The Institute accepted this situation. We cannot really expect it to have foreseen all its benefits and all its disadvantages. And there were both. On the one hand, there was legal security, which ensured tranquillity and prestige; and on the other, the discom-

fort of having to reconcile fidelity to an apostolic mission with the demands and conditioning of a public civil service.

If, under the protection of legislation, the Brothers were opening more and more private schools, the majority of its establishments continued to be municipal public schools. It was around these latter schools that the fiercest battles for gratuity were fought, battles which reached their bitterest point in the years 1854 to 1861.

### **Under the July Monarchy and the Second Republic**

Despite the limits imposed by the Guizot Law, the Institute managed to impose its policy of complete gratuity in the schools entrusted to it. This was not always easy, as can be seen from certain letters. But relations between the Congregation and the Government were good, and it was possible to resolve situations without detriment to traditional practices. If agreement could not be reached, the Brothers gave up the public school. Sometimes, they took revenge by opening a gratuitous private school in the same locality, funded by some benefactor or a voluntary subscription.

At the beginning of the Second Republic, Carnot's project to have gratuitous and obligatory elementary education was a dead letter<sup>1</sup>. The Falloux Law limited gratuity in public schools to poor pupils only, but recognised the right of the municipality to set up completely gratuitous schools, on condition they could support them with their own resources (art. 36, §3).

Taking advantage of this proviso in the law, the Brothers continued to ask and obtain from municipalities permission for the schools they directed to be completely gratuitous. Discouraging any divergence in this matter, circular 175, dated January 19th 1851, reminded Brothers of an old Chapter decision: "The practice of towns or founders accepting even the smallest remuneration from pupils must not be tolerated. Establishments where such abuses occur will be suppressed"<sup>2</sup>.

About this time, the gratuity of the Brothers' schools began to be publicly defended<sup>3</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> The Regime of the Institute called it a communist plan. Obligatory education was seen as a usurpation of public power; universal gratuity, an expense which was beyond the scope of the State. To forbid a teacher to teach catechism and oblige him to teach the rights of man was antireligious and very imprudent, because it was going beyond the knowledge needed to be a teacher. And if the appointment of assistant or auxiliary teachers is reserved to the minister alone, as the text indicates, "such an auxiliary teacher will probably be sent from Paris, having been trained in a special school for the whole of France, a school whose students will consist partly of young persons without a post or authorisation, of young persons without a future, communists, people who will teach the poor not to allow themselves to be eaten up by the rich" (Cf., for example, GA, EE 277/3, dossiers 11 and 14).

<sup>2</sup> The same words can be found in circular 191, dated July 5th 1853. The repetition is useful: the 1854 Chapter was to discover that, among the schools which existed thanks to a subscription, there were some in which even the parents of the pupils paid.

<sup>3</sup> GA, LD 252/1, dossier 21, undated, but after December 1850. As it does not refer to the decree of



again and again, reference was made to the "difficulties associated with the collection of remuneration from pupils, especially in towns". These difficulties were described as follows:

1° The disturbance it immediately caused in all the educational establishments, created and maintained at the cost of immense sacrifices; 2° The impossibility of making the collection; 3° The envy it would arouse among the pupils, and the uncomfortable position in which it would put the Brothers; 4° The decrease in primary instruction; 5° The blow it would deal to now ancient practices, the violation of acquired rights and the displeasure it would cause among the population; 6° The difficulties involved in collecting the remuneration; 7° The conflict that would break out between municipal and private schools.

On the other hand, gratuity avoided all this, encouraged the spread of education, safeguarded the honour and independence of the teacher, made rich and poor live together, with attendant advantages for both classes and for society as a whole. The wide diffusion of this defence shows that the battle had already begun <sup>4</sup>.

### Under the Second Empire

The Brothers do not seem to have objected to the re-establishment of the Empire, because it gave the impression that it supported order and religion. And Napoleon's government does not seem to have caused the Brothers any concern: they were, after all, the apostles of a religion which promoted

order and respect for authority, or at least, it was perceived to do so. And so the Brothers hoped they could continue to operate in familiar territory, fighting municipalities if necessary, but relying on the benevolence of the crown. But there was in existence a legislative document, and if we add to this a zealous minister and a government in chronic financial difficulty, we can see that any hopes that existed were very much in danger <sup>5</sup>.

On July 2nd 1853, the ordinary General Chapter concluded its work at the Generalate. A note addressed to it said: "that we should not touch this fundamental element of our Institute (gratuity), and that through the difficulties that this point may cause us in some place, God seems to be warning us not to spread too much, and to strengthen ourselves by taking greater care

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December 31st 1853, one could suppose it came before, but this argument is not conclusive.

<sup>4</sup> The official position of the Institute on this subject overall is absolute gratuity in the schools entrusted to the Brothers, a condition included in the Prospectus which every municipality agreed to respect when it asked for Brothers for its schools. The Institute did not wish to impose gratuity on the government, as Carnot claimed, or as will be stated officially in 1881. The term "socialists" or "Carnotists" applied sometimes to the Brothers by officials of the Emperor's entourage, because of their defence of gratuity, were not correct.

<sup>5</sup> The ministers of Public Instruction were successively: Hippolyte Fortoul (1811-1856), from December 3rd 1851 until his death; Gustave Rouland (1806-1878), from 1856 to 1863; and Victor Duruy (1811-1894), from 1863 to 1869.

of our candidates, so that our communities and classes are models. By doing this, our Institute will be more honoured and stronger, even if we have fewer establishments or fewer poor children to instruct”<sup>6</sup>. Despite everything, it does not seem that the Chapter gave all this much attention. At the June 18th session, it simply thought it would be worthwhile to hand over to the municipality a number of foundations in exchange for an official commitment to support some gratuitous schools and their teachers. Circular 191, three days after the Chapter, mentions this and adds “but this is the last time!” – a pious hope already mentioned earlier.

### **The Imperial Decree, dated December 31st 1853**

In the month of August, a highly confidential piece of information reached the Generalate, according to which, a decree opposed to gratuity was being drawn up. After a preliminary enquiry, the Superiors decided they could do nothing else but wait<sup>7</sup>.

In fact, the decree was published on the last day of the year. Articles 13 and 14 established the mechanism and limits which governed the provision of gratuitous education for pupils in public schools<sup>8</sup>. Two days later<sup>9</sup>, in circular 197, Brother Philippe called another General Chapter for the following March 2nd. There was no time to lose.

### **The 1854 General Chapter**

Its deliberations continued until the 14th. Circular 200, dated the following day, gave

a report that was rather low-key: “The Chapter...thought...that given the high protection of the government...and the benevolence of the local authorities, we would not have to make any changes, at least for the moment, in our established practices, and in the teaching that we give our children”.

<sup>6</sup> GA, ED 229. Dossier 14: Note from Brother Tempier, Montpellier, dated June 13th 1853. Brother Tempier continued to fight for the same cause for several years.

<sup>7</sup> Report and defence in the opening speech of the 1854 Chapter. GA, LD 252/2, dossier 16. In the imperial entourage it was said that the system of gratuity for everybody was an idea of the socialists and of the followers of Carnot; that the Brothers misinterpreted their statutes when they invoked them in defence of gratuity for all their pupils; that a General Chapter and a possible recourse to Rome could help them abandon their mistaken attitude; finally, that, because the other teaching congregations were complying with the remuneration, the Brothers would not be able to resist the general trend and, if they tried, they would have everything to lose and nothing to gain.

<sup>8</sup> Article 13: “At the end of each school year, the prefect...or the sub-prefect fixes...the maximum number of children that can be admitted free of charge in each public school during the following school year.

“The list of non-paying pupils...must not exceed the number fixed. Once the prefect approves this list, the teacher will issue an admission ticket to each child on the list. No pupil will be admitted free of charge to a communal school without presenting this ticket”.

Article 14 gives the norms for drawing up each month the list of pupils who have to pay.

<sup>9</sup> But on the same day of publication, dated December 31st, the decree appeared in the press on January 2nd 1854.

It recommended the respect due to the authorities, and repeated the indications given some days earlier to Directors (circular 199), if municipalities wished to impose remuneration in accordance with the decree.

According to the Chapter documents, the Chapter proceedings were less calm. Previously, certain Brothers had said that the Superiors supported remuneration. As a consequence, Brother Philippe felt it necessary to defend his involvement and that of his Regime in this matter<sup>10</sup>. The Chapter received notes from a certain number of Brothers. During sessions 5 and 6, notes in favour of the maintenance of absolute gratuity were read out, and in sessions 8 and 9, the others.

Despite the small amount of documentation preserved<sup>11</sup>, we have a reference to a confrontation of opinions. In answer to "It is said that article 9 of the Bull indicates that we must instruct free of charge only the poor", we find the reply of the supporters of gratuity, who say: "but article 5 makes no distinction", when it forbids accepting remuneration or presents from the pupils or their parents. As for the others, the various notes all refer to the same passages in the Bull and the Rule to prove that, as far as the obligation of gratuity is concerned, there is absolutely no doubt!

Various tactical differences can be seen in the discussion: maintaining gratuity at all costs, so that the poor see us as their only true friends; gratuity makes our schools one of the purest glories of Christianity<sup>12</sup>; considering as an honour the persecutions we

encounter because we do not wish to accept money from our pupils: being aware that the general feeling is in favour of overall gratuity. These were the views of the die-hards.

The other attitude was to propose a possible practical way forward: in order to maintain completely gratuitous public schools, open paying day boarding schools or day schools, so as to compensate for the loss of salaries in these schools; or give way in part to the demands of the authorities, if there is no other means; but in this case, the authorisation of the Holy See would be necessary for any infringement of what was stipulated in the approbation of the Institute<sup>13</sup>.

In line with this, the Chapter drew up a list of possible measures that it would have to apply if the civil authorities hastened to implement the decree: the Superior would help communities whose allowance had been reduced in order to maintain gratuity,

<sup>10</sup> GA, LD 252/2, dossier 16, draft of opening speech of the Chapter

<sup>11</sup> GA, ED 229, dossier 15: Note attributed to Brother Lin; dossier 19: note that should be attributed to Brother Tempier and for this Chapter. LD 252/2, dossier 15: memorandum submitted by Brother Léon, Secretary General. The Chapter Register does not give further details.

<sup>12</sup> Quoting the archbishop of Algiers, who calls them also "a second Providence for the working class family".

<sup>13</sup> The overall picture is not complete, because we do not know what was in the notes opposed to the maintenance of gratuity. For the following General Chapters, the information is more plentiful.

and a sum of 120,000 francs had been allocated for this purpose; to concentrate only on the poor; open boarding schools and half boarding schools; ask municipalities to entrust the collection of the retribution to the Brothers, given that they were resigned to the loss of the allowance if they did not do so; have recourse to subscriptions by charitable persons, etc. The recourse to these means was left to the judgment of the Regime. In the final analysis, the Chapter was confident that, by dealing with each case prudently, gratuity could be properly maintained in a form that had always been understood and practised.

But situations, where it was impossible to respond in these ways, could not be ignored. Consequently, the Chapter decided that the Superior General should ask the Holy See for permission to tolerate for three years the collection of remuneration in schools where, after trying all the means suggested by prudence to keep them gratuitous, there was no other way of avoiding their closure. In the case of schools maintained by subscription, a dispensation would be requested if subscribers were included among parents. Finally, because of the special situation in America (United States and Canada), permission would be asked for this District to limit for ten years the application of the vow of gratuity to the poor only.

In any case, the Chapter had enough confidence in the courage of Brother Superior and his Councillors to continue the fight in support of the traditions of the Institute.

By way of example, here is a letter to a Brother Director: "The law invoked by the Inspector to impose a retribution on the pupils, does not mean at all what people would like it to mean: it neither adds nor takes anything away from what was allowed or commanded by the 1850 law. At that time, and even before, and ever since, towns which wish to offer gratuitous education can do so, without anyone having the right to ask them to account for their conduct. And so, the administration of St Affrique can, if it wishes so, allow complete gratuity in your classes. I would even say, that it should, since it was only on this condition, on its insistence, that we opened the establishment that you direct today. We have fulfilled our promises, we have kept our word, that is to say, that we have not only opened the schools, but we have conducted them to the satisfaction of the whole population. And so, it is just for us to ask the town to grant us what it has promised, what it has granted us for the last 16 years, that is to say, the gratuity of teaching". Taking up a different line of reasoning, it goes on: "Tell these Gentlemen that for the few francs that will receive, they will bring disturbance and displeasure into all the families; that they will cause the school to be abandoned 1° by the rich because, as far as paying is concerned, they would be happy to go to a day school; 2° by the less well-off, who would find it difficult to pay; 3° by the poor, who would not like to hear it said that they attended a charity school; 4° and we would be forced to make a decision which would break our

heart". He ends the letter by indicating what a really voluntary subscription was <sup>14</sup>.

No doubt regarding this matter is discernible in circular 202, dated June 11th, which comments on the formula of vows.

New Year's greetings for 1855 (circular 213) are full of hope: "Let us pray for the Institute...so that it can continue usefully its charitable work for its neighbour...so that it can always do it gratuitously, as we have always done, as we are still doing, and as we shall always do, as is our right to hope and even expect, thanks to the benevolence shown to us everywhere".

Circular 214 adopts the same tone two weeks later, referring to the Most Blessed Virgin, whose Immaculate Conception had just been proclaimed as a dogma: "When the cleverly disguised revolutionary passions provoked the tempest of 1818 against us, and when they attacked, in 1833, the fundamental principle of the gratuity of our schools, Mary made us triumph over all these tribulations. Today, we have the sweet consolation of being able to tell you that our Institute now is the same as it was 20 years ago, and we hope to be able to pass it on to our successors such as we received it, as far as the integrity of its rules is concerned".

Circular 216, dated April 5th 1855, has a more prudent tone, but devoid of all panic: "We ask our Brother Directors...3° Not to ask the authorities for new classes, for fear of bringing up the question of remuneration; 4° To admit only children from the commune: as municipal authorities are lit-

tle inclined to admit free of charge children to whom they owe nothing, they could be led to make them pay, and then, they might think of making the others pay also". They are invited also "not to spend money unless absolutely necessary...so as not to find themselves obliged to ask for extra funds from the authorities, because this could raise again the idea of remuneration" (p.22).

### Difficulties with Minister Fortoul

The firmness of the Institute, and the reasons why its enemies considered it insane, are reflected in the correspondence – respectful but uncompromising – exchanged between Minister Fortoul and the Brother Superior General regarding the school at Elbeuf <sup>15</sup>.

In this town, the Institute had offered the commune the property of the school and the funds to run it, provided by a foundation. In exchange, it asked the commune to agree to maintain it completely gratuitous, and provide for the upkeep of the Brothers teaching in it. This had been decided by the 1853 General Chapter. The town agreed: all it needed was the authorisation of the minis-

<sup>14</sup> GA, EE 227/3, dossier 29: copy of the letter to the Brother Director of St Affrique, dated May 23rd 1854.

<sup>15</sup> Copies in GA, LD 252/2, dossier 22: letter from Minister Fortoul to Brother Superior, dated July 6th 1855; dossier 23: reply of Brother Superior to the Minister, dated August 16th. Some time later, Brother Philippe used this correspondence to defend himself against those who accused him of having called for the suppression of gratuity (*Chapter Register B*, p. 294-295).

ter who, however, refused to give it because of the gratuity involved.

In the words of the minister, the gratuity of schools, taken absolutely and applied to all without distinction, had many grave disadvantages. It was painful for him that this gratuity, without motive, opposed to legislation and hardly compatible with the sense of dignity of a father of a family, should be propagated by respectable teachers to whom, for many reasons, the country owed esteem and gratitude. This gratuity was, in a word, counter-productive: deprived of the resources which the well-off families could provide, municipalities had to increase their own revenue by imposing taxes on the poor and the rich, or give up the schools which could not be maintained any longer. All these reflections led him to hope that the Brother Directors of schools would stop their illegal opposition to the imperial decree, opposition about which the minister had repeatedly received complaints.

In his reply, Brother Philippe invoked the Rule, the Approbation of 1808, and the fact that the Brothers joined the Institute because of its gratuity. If it were infringed, many might feel that they were no longer bound to the Society, since it was no longer the one they had joined.

This provoked another letter from the minister. After repeating the disadvantages he saw in absolute gratuity, he concentrated his attention on the terms of the 1808 Approbation: there was no mention in it of gratuitous schools <sup>16</sup>. What, in fact, did the Brothers call gratuity? If their renunciation

of money and presents from the pupils, or their parents, was praiseworthy, and if the remuneration they received from public funds should not be condemned, did they think they had the right to judge and to decide what the origin should be of the funds with which municipalities maintained schools and teachers?

According to the minister, the whole problem lay there, and it was enough to see it in these terms to solve it. That was why he was confident that these explanations would put an end to all these difficulties. He recalled that all teachers throughout the Empire had to fall in line with the decree of December 31st, and that, as a consequence, no child could be admitted into a public school without an admission ticket from the mayor.

It seemed that neither side would give way. The Brothers published in 1856 a "Notice historique" <sup>17</sup> which contained an extract from the 1810 Statutes and the "Conditions for the creation of an establishment". "The Institute has as its purpose the education of children, especially that of the children of the artisans and the poor, by the conduct of gratuitous primary schools. The

<sup>16</sup> This is certain. But it was said that the Grand Master would accept their internal Statutes. These Statutes, approved in 1810, open with the first article of the Common Rules which speaks of gratuity. Putting the two texts together, the Brothers were convinced they were right.

<sup>17</sup> "Historical Notice on the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools". Announced in circular 225, dated May 15th 1856.

Brothers of this Institute can conduct also schools for adults and apprentices, orphanages, boarding schools and day boarding schools, conduct teacher training colleges and even instruct prisoners” we read in the Notice. The first article of the Statutes recalls that “The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a Society in which profession is made of directing schools gratuitously”. The 9th mentions among the vows, that “of teaching children gratuitously”. The 15th says that “the Brothers will conduct schools everywhere gratuitously, and that is essential for their Institute”. And the first article of the “Conditions for the Creation of an Establishment” is especially categorical: “The schools conducted by the Brothers of the Venerable De La Salle must be perfectly gratuitous, conformably to their Statutes, that is to say, that neither the pupils nor their parents must pay, to whomsoever it may be, any school remuneration”. Note the expression “to whomsoever it may be”.

The repercussions of the dispute outlived the minister, who died in 1856. In September, one of the Assistants went to the ministry to collect the annual grant of 8,400 francs which, since 1830, had not been withheld from the Institute. The grant was for the care of the old Brothers and for the central administration. The Assistant was told that the deceased minister “was displeased by the fact the Brother Superior did not agree to remuneration in school” and that it was for this reason that M. Fortoul had suspended the instructions to make the grant. His dis-

pleasure had been exacerbated by the affirmation of the Prelate members of the Council of State, that the Brothers could very easily turn a blind eye, without infringing their Statutes, to a collection intended for the municipal treasury, but instead they maintained their obstinate resistance.

### **Difficulties with Minister Rouland**

Two months later, the Brother Superior and the new minister came face to face. Fortoul’s replacement had studied all the documentation on the case. He had consulted informed persons, and had read the official reports of the Imperial Council for Public Instruction. He had, therefore, some very clear ideas about the question: the Brothers were misinterpreting their Statutes, their scruples were exaggerated (as several bishops had said, letting it be understood that it would not be difficult to reach an agreement with them); and the Emperor, tired of this dispute, wanted it settled once and for all.

The Superior and Rouland offered whatever concessions they could. Brother Philippe declared “that we accept to admit only poor pupils in our schools”, an idea which the minister thought worth trying. He, in his turn, suggested that a Brother could join the mayor and the parish priest in drawing up a list of the children to be admitted free of charge to the primary schools, “but, as this measure, while a sign of the great benevolence of the minister, would not prevent a certain number of our pupils from being obliged to pay a school fee, the Supe-

rior expressed to the minister the sorrow he felt at having to refuse his offer”<sup>18</sup>.

On January 28th 1857, the minister gave the Brothers the grant they had requested, “in order not to cause disruption in the administration of the Order”. He took the opportunity also to speak in a somewhat aggrieved tone of the tenacity of the Institute with regard to gratuity: “You are not unaware of the financial problems that have arisen in the budget of primary education over the last few years. You are aware also that the cause for this can, in part, be justly attributed to the harmful influence exercised by the schools of your Order regarding the gratuity of teaching, resulting from an erroneous interpretation of your Statutes, and the non-execution of the decree of December 31st 1853, concerning admission tickets for gratuitous pupils. You know how much my predecessor was sorry not to have found in you the docility to the views of the government in this matter, which he had every right to expect. And I myself have not left you unaware of how much I find your persistence in pursuing this mistaken course until now, quite regrettable”<sup>19</sup>.

Given that nothing had changed, the minister refused a grant requested by the Brothers for a school they conducted in Saintes, saying that it would not be necessary if they had agreed to collect the small fee prescribed by the law<sup>20</sup>.

To continue the battle, one has to be sure of one’s ground. And so, the Superior never tired of saying: “We must not ask the authorities for extra classes, nor for any major

work, without having obtained permission from the Regime: any other course of action can bring to mind the idea of remuneration”<sup>21</sup>. Other instructions regarding the course to take when dealing with the local authorities concerning gratuity, include the obligation to inform the Superior immediately, who alone has the competence to take the final decision.

### The 1858 General Chapter

The Chapter held from July 10th - 25th 1858 devoted time to this same matter also. In his opening address, Brother Philippe recalled that the 1854 Chapter had chosen, by 51 votes to 1, to maintain gratuity as it had been understood and practised until then. This belied a certain rumour, which stated that there existed a majority against gratuity, and a minority in favour of it<sup>22</sup>.

After referring to the means this Chapter had put at the disposal of the Regime, he

<sup>18</sup> GA, LD 252/2, dossier25: Brother Calixte, Assistant, gives a report on the two meetings, stressing that neither of the two civil servants could find any promises made by Brother Superior to adopt the point of view of the minister.

<sup>19</sup> GA, ED 227, *Chapter Register B*, p. 294-295.

<sup>20</sup> GA, LD 252/2, dossier 27.

<sup>21</sup> Recommendations and advice taken from the circulars....1857, p. 54; id. 1860, p. 60.

<sup>22</sup> The rumour that the Superior was negotiating with the government to introduce remuneration into the schools conducted by the Brothers did not disappear completely. In a short printed text – a copy is inserted between pages 294 and 295 of *Chapter Register B* – Brother Philippe gives a spirited answer to this calumny.



gave a report on the discreet use that had been made of them: "Thank God, there are very few houses where the allowances of the Brothers have been decreased. In the towns where we have had the most serious conflict, we asked to admit only poor pupils, and in some large towns (Orléans, Boulogne, Le Puy) it appears our offer has been accepted. Things are slowly becoming normal again. In Le Puy, Orléans and...., we have opened a boarding school to admit children whom the town did not wish to leave in the classes (of the gratuitous schools), and whom the parents were desperate to leave there, even volunteering to pay for them. It was difficult to cope with this situation without having recourse to this means. We have not needed to make any requests to the Holy See, nor, as a consequence, have we had to wait for replies. As for the sum of 120,000 francs allocated to help houses in difficulties, we tried to give something, but we quickly realised the abuses that this would lead to. The news would have spread by word of mouth, and in no time all the houses would have asked for help. Instead, we preferred to close five or six houses". His conclusion was nothing if not confident: "For the moment, nothing appears to make it necessary to make even the slightest modification in our Rules" <sup>23</sup>.

The Chapter documents mention simply that, following the reading of a number of memoirs on gratuity and some discussion, the Chapter renewed the vote of confidence the Chapter had given the Superior General and his Council in 1854 <sup>24</sup>.

But Brother Facile had prepared a long document on the subject to present to the Chapter <sup>25</sup>. In it, he disqualified without any attenuation, as being contrary to the practice of the Founder and to the most elementary common sense, the interpretation given until then of gratuity. According to him, the Bull of Benedict XIII imposed the vow of teaching gratuitously "the poor"; and to make a vow of teaching gratuitously "conformably to the Bull" meant, where the Brothers were concerned, limiting its application only to the poor. The Rule of "accepting nothing from the pupils or their parents" applied to individual Brothers, but the community could, and in fact did, receive the salaries of its members, and these salaries included the taxes paid by the parents of pupils. If, in boarding schools, the Brothers made the pupils pay for both movable and immovable goods, and for specialised services, why should not municipalities ask the pupils to pay for the equipment and maintenance of the school buildings? And as for the Brothers who demand their upkeep from the municipality, what right do they have to refuse to let it use legitimate means to raise money to meet its costs?

<sup>23</sup> GA, ED 229, dossier 18. The affirmation of the Superior General regarding a recourse to the Holy See is surprising. The negotiation certainly took place and obtained a favourable response in a rescript dated January 26th 1855. Perhaps Brother Philippe wished to make it understood that it was not necessary to apply it in France.

<sup>24</sup> GA, ED 227, *Chapter Register B*, p. 312.

<sup>25</sup> GA, LD 252/1, dossier 16, p. 1-32.

After that, he addressed his words to his fellow capitulants: "But we, my very dear Brothers, who love our Institute, who wish to see it honoured and worthy of its purpose, let us show that we are truly inspired by the spirit of our Venerable Father Monsieur De La Salle. Let us dedicate ourselves to saving his work; let a firm decision enlighten minds and silence all doubts. It seems to me, that any reasonable person, despite all that has been said to the contrary, and despite the shortcomings of our education regarding this point; it seems to me, I repeat, that any reasonable person will agree, that it has been demonstrated, that our vow of teaching gratuitously has nothing to do with what municipalities do to meet the cost of their schools; and that to maintain the contrary opinion is to be in the wrong, it is to mistake the way and, consequently, to work for the ruin of the Institute".

No Chapter document reveals how the Chapter faced this challenge. In any case, the line of reasoning used, and the direct address, reappeared later, separately or together. For America, where Brother Facile was Provincial, the situation continued: the Chapter instructed the Superior to obtain from the Holy See a renewal of the indult obtained in 1855.

### **Tension increases between the Institute and Minister Rouland**

In the meantime, the political authorities had no intention of relaxing their determination. This does seem to have been through bad will towards the Institute, at least at the

higher levels of the administration, but rather to ensure that the law was respected, or at least, one interpretation of it. At a lower level, the change in political thinking was quite noticeable. There was a new feeling abroad, permeated with anticlericalism, which, each time, put more and more pressure on municipalities to rid themselves of teachers from religious congregations, and replace them with lay people. This marked the beginning of a process of secularisation which reached its most intense point after the death of Brother Philippe.

For the present, the government confined itself to ensuring that the law was observed, as is well illustrated by what happened in Amiens. In this town, the Brothers had refused to admit into the schools they conducted, children whom the municipality wished to force to pay fees. The minister could see no justification for this attitude, since the Brothers would not have to be involved in their collection, and their allowance would continue to be paid in full from municipal funds. In addition, there was no need for them to concern themselves about the means used by the municipality to make up the sum needed to fulfil its obligations.

As the Superior replied by invoking the obligation of gratuity imposed by the Statutes, and his decision to withdraw the Brothers from schools where remuneration was required, the minister replied by referring to two situations which, in his opinion, rendered null and void the line of reasoning taken by Brother Philippe: 1° If the Brothers teach gratuitously in their private

schools, this is not the case (and consequently they do not respect their so-called Statutes) in the public schools, in which the teachers have the municipality pay them<sup>26</sup>; 2° Nor is teaching in boarding schools gratuitous: what the pupils are made to pay is much higher than what can be justified in terms of food costs, heating and lighting, and brings in clear financial benefits for the Congregation, which cannot be reconciled with the interpretation the Brothers put on their Statutes<sup>27</sup>. Brother Philippe's answer is not known, but its contents are not hard to imagine.

In 1861, the Prospectus was re-issued: it included the same article 1: "The schools conducted by the Brothers of the Venerable DE LA SALLE must be perfectly gratuitous, conformably to their Statutes; that is to say, that neither the pupils nor their parents must pay, to whomever it may be, any school remuneration"<sup>28</sup>.

But government pressure increased so much that the Superior and the Council could no longer bear it on their own. On April 29th 1861, in a very embarrassing interview, Brother Philippe heard the minister give vent to the indignation of the government in the face of the Brothers' continued insistence on the absolute gratuity of their schools. Their attitude upset the finances of the municipalities and of the State, engendered inadmissible divisions between the category of the rich and that of the poor<sup>29</sup>; and in addition, taking refuge in the imperial approbation of March 17th 1808, they open private schools and boarding schools

which are not mentioned in this approbation. In short, approved by the State and for the good of the State, the Brothers turn their back on the interests of the State. That is why, for the last time, the State orders them to submit to the law – and, in more concrete terms, orders them to cease their resistance to school remuneration – failing which, they will lose their privileges and will be treated as rebels and as insubordinate<sup>30</sup>.

On May 27th, the minister sent a circular to all the Prefects of departments, in which he urged them to speed up the implementation of the dispositions in force regarding school remuneration. He gave as his reasons that, since gratuity for the poor was safeguarded, it was counter-productive to dispense families from their most sacred duties and make them completely the responsibility of the public administration. Complete gratuity filled the classes with rich pupils, to the detriment of the poor, lowered the salaries of the teachers, and deprived the municipalities of the real means

<sup>26</sup> With the logical consequence that the gratuitous teaching is not given by the Brothers but by the municipalities. The Brothers belonged to a category of civil servants paid by the State.

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Minister Rouland to the Brother Superior General, dated April 18th 1859. Copy in GA, LD 252/2, dossier 29.

<sup>28</sup> Copy in GA, EC 203, dossier 7, with the following handwritten remark: "before the 1861 Chapter".

<sup>29</sup> Certain towns accepted the suggestion of the Brothers to teach only the poor children, and to send those who paid to other schools.

<sup>30</sup> A long account of the interview in GA, EE 277/1, dossier 14, or in LD 252/3, dossier 3.

to extend the benefits of instruction. He then devoted a few lines specifically to the case of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who misinterpreted their Statutes. These did not oblige them to conduct schools that were exclusively gratuitous, but to conduct them gratuitously, that is, charitably, without receiving any payment personally. The said Statutes did not give them the right to interfere in the way the municipality raises its funds. Bearing all this in mind, municipalities will avoid involving the Brothers in the collection of fees, so that they can feel completely free before their pupils, not knowing who pays school fees and who does not. Finally, as “in reality, it is not the Brothers who give the population gratuitous education, since this sacrifice is entirely shouldered by the communes...”, there should be no fear that the teaching Congregations will feel the slightest repugnance at “accepting loyally and completely the terms of the 1850 law”. Such submission is nothing if not advantageous for them<sup>31</sup>.

Finally, on June 10th, he sent the Superior General a copy of his circular. In the accompanying letter, the minister began by drawing his attention seriously to the grave consequences which would result from any resistance on the part of the Institute to the views of the government, and then went on to express the following hope: “I should like to think that, better advised, your Institute will not persist in sheltering behind an erroneous interpretation of its Statutes, an interpretation which would not last an instant in a discussion by intelligent persons,

and that the government will be able to treat it with the benevolence which otherwise it would be obliged to refuse it”<sup>32</sup>.

### The 1861 General Chapter

Faced with this dangerous situation, Brother Philippe convoked the 22nd General Chapter, in circular 276, dated July 2nd. The meetings, begun on September 4th continued until the 22nd. Speaking about gratuity, the main reason for the convocation, the Superior described the present state of the question in a detailed speech. He explained how the problem had first arisen with the 1833 law, and the relative ease with which it had been possible to overcome it until recently. He once again went through the means the 1854 Chapter had suggested, and mentioned how rarely they had had to use them, given their practical disadvantages<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> GA, LD 252/3, dossier 4. According to a note in the same dossier, the Brothers in fact complied with the instructions in the circular, and remuneration was established in a great number of schools. It is not easy to know how many exactly did so. The minister’s letter recognised that towns which had established gratuitous schools “can continue with this gratuitous system, given that the law permits it, and I would look with displeasure on any attempt to make them discontinue it”. The remark was sincere and not simply a tactic. But he called this situation an exception. If it actually was, the law does not say so. Handwritten comments by Brother Cyprius in one of the copies of the circular.

<sup>32</sup> GA, LD 252/3, dossier 5.

<sup>33</sup> Following on from what had been said in 1858, the Superior pointed out the bad consequences that would have followed a recourse to the Holy See to authorise the collection of remuneration for a period of 3 years. See *Chapter register B*, p. 352-353.

He emphasised the constant and unremitting battle the Regime had had with the municipalities<sup>34</sup>. These constant battles, fought over a period of 30 years had almost always ended in victory, and the Institute could boast of never having been unfaithful to its traditions. But now things had changed: the national government, which had been favourable, or at least tolerant, towards the Brothers, was now on the opposing side in this battle. The Institute had not yet said yes or no, but it could not wait any longer before doing so.

The assembly, invited to act with total freedom and with a spirit of faith, studied first of all the official documents (the April interview, the May circular and the June letter), in order to understand thoroughly the terms in which the problem presented itself in France. The assembly then studied the memoirs in which certain Brothers expressed their point of view and their exhortations<sup>35</sup>. There was no consensus among the points of view expressed, and reasons put forward were not all of the highest quality. The arguments put forward by the two sides must have been widely publicised outside the assembly, because in certain notes there were allusions, repetition and refutation of what other notes of the same period contained.

The following motives were given for the maintenance of the practice of absolute gratuity in municipal schools: complete gratuity was essential for the Institute (RC 7,1), and accepting school remuneration would be an attack on the work of M. De La Salle,

because it would change its nature; if another Institute replaced the present one, certain Brothers would want to be faithful to the first, and this would cause a schism; gratuity was possible in accordance with the law and the circular of the minister; this was what the vow imposed, according to already ancient legislation; it had been the constant practice of the Institute, and its glory and its strength in its two centuries of existence; there was no difference between the Brothers collecting the remuneration and the municipality doing it for them; it was a glory of Christianity, because gratuity made the Brothers friends of the common people, while remuneration reduced their popularity; remuneration would give rise to feelings of envy and cause the loss of many wavering vocations; concessions to the changing times were pointless acts of treachery; to suffer persecution for gratuity would be an honour and a benefit for the Institute which, in this way, could purge itself of undesirable members (at least 1,000, one note said); persecution could not last a long time; to give in regarding this matter would be to work for the ruin of the Institute.

The following reasons were given for accepting changes: the vow of gratuity ap-

<sup>34</sup> The list of 52 names of towns with which he had to fight ends with, etc... And almost all the houses in Savoy and Belgium. If the Superior wanted to impress his audience, he was not short of material!

<sup>35</sup> Some of them can be read in GA, ED 229, dossiers 15 (Brother Lin), and 19 (Brothers Lucard, Cyrille, Tempier); LD 252/3, dossiers 1 (more copies from Brother Lucard), 7 (Brother Lorique), 8 (Brother Symmaque), and 9 (Brother Imidonis).

plied only to teaching the poor, and consequently, it was not violated by doing what the minister wanted; gratuity was a means, not an end; insisting on it prevented the aim from being accomplished (the Christian education of the common people), and so it should be abandoned; M. De La Salle and the Brothers who came after him, did not practise absolute gratuity, as was shown by the continued existence of boarding schools since St Yon; to lose municipal schools would mean leaving 3,000 Brothers in France, working in 800 schools, at the mercy of the elements, and depriving all their pupils of religious instruction; it had to be understood that the world had changed, and that when the Founder drew up his rules, he could not foresee new situations; not to take them into account, and become trapped in a tradition which did not evolve, would be to work for the ruin of the Institute.

As a way of keeping things moving, at the end of the 9th session, the Superior called upon the assembly to vote on the following question: "Does the Chapter recognise the need to examine, seriously and in depth, the question of school remuneration which, in his circular of May 27th, the Minister for Public Instruction has decided can be collected in our public schools, and the refusal of which (in the terms of the letter accompanying the above-mentioned circular to Brother Superior), would seem to bring down inevitably the full weight of the law on the Institute? (58 votes for, 3 against). A few sessions later, a similar majority gave

an affirmative answer to the following question: "Does the Chapter think that the demands of the government regarding school remuneration, and the danger the Institute could run, if we refused to allow it to be collected, oblige us to modify something in the practice of gratuity, such as it is established in our schools?"

The following session was devoted to the attitude the Brothers should adopt. The question was phrased in the following manner: "Is the Chapter convinced, on the basis of the documents which have been communicated to it, and after examination and discussion, that, in order to ensure the survival of the Institute in France, we must accept the decisions of the ministerial circular dated May 27th last, until we can re-establish the practices which it obliges us to infringe?" By 60 votes to 2, the Chapter decided "that it would be proper to abstain from all interference connected with the imposition and collection of school remuneration in our public schools".

Finally, considering that such an attitude ought to be legitimised by a decision of the Holy See, the assembly carefully drew up a text requesting a rescript. In this document we find some of the theses sustained in certain memoirs, and which the Chapter had adopted as its own:

\* According to the terms of the Bull of Benedict XIII, the 5th vow is to teach the poor gratuitously;

\* The rule to accept nothing from pupils or their parents applies to Brothers as individuals <sup>36</sup>;

\* There remains no other alternative for the Brothers except to submit to the law or to abandon the schools, since the government does not want schools exclusively for poor pupils.

\* But it is to be feared that some Brothers will see in this acceptance of school remuneration, even if passive, a transgression of the vow, or at least of the rule of the gratuity of teaching.

In its letter to the Holy See, the Chapter asked two questions:

“1° Can the Brothers of our Institute, without transgressing the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously, continue to conduct public schools where communes will demand and collect for their own use school remuneration from pupils who are not poor?”

2° Can the Superior General accept, in the name of the Institute, the direction of new schools made available by the communes, to which the poor will be admitted free of charge, while, from pupils thought to be rich, school fees will be collected for use by the communes, which will pay the salaries of the Brothers, teachers and employees?”

On November 15th 1861, “His Holiness, having considered the proposed questions, has permitted the Brothers of the Christian Schools, for as long as the mentioned circumstances persist, to maintain a passive attitude to the measures of which it is question”

In reality, this was already anticipated in the first decision in the closing statement of the Chapter: “The Brothers will conform to to the dispositions of the ministerial circular, dated May 27th 1861, regarding school remuneration, until we can re-establish the practices which these dispositions oblige us to infringe”.

“They will therefore make a list of the pupils for the authorities which request them, but will abstain from any direct or personal involvement in the imposition and collection of the said school remuneration, if it is demanded of some of their pupils”.

The Chapter made also a few modifications in the Brothers’ Rule. In the 22nd session, it “has decided that article 1 of chapter 1 of the Common Rules will be replaced by article 1 of the Rule of government, which will end with the words: “for which schools are conducted gratuitously”.

Article 5 of the first chapter of the Common Rules was suppressed as being superfluous.

During the 27th session, “on a second reading of the Rules, article 1 of chapter 1 was changed to read: “The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a Congregation in which profession is made of working at one’s perfection, and of conducting schools gratuitously”. The Chapter has

<sup>36</sup> The petition submitted to the Holy See includes another line of thinking from the imperial government: “It is not for the Brothers to seek to discover from where the funds come, with which municipalities pay their salaries.”

decided that the suppression of article 5, already voted, is confirmed”.

But in the final list of decisions we find only: “Article 8: “The Chapter instructs a Commission composed of five of its members to put the Common Rules and the Rule of Government in perfect harmony with the Bull of Benedict XIII. The work of the Commission will be submitted to the next General Chapter”. Article 9 (new edition of the two texts) was not implemented till some years later: in 1875 for the Rule of Government, and 1886 for the Common Rules <sup>37</sup>.

### After the 1861 Chapter

The nature of the problem and the state of the negotiations called for discretion. Circular 278, dated October 1st, communicated the following to all the Brothers: “Regarding the questions mentioned in our circular of convocation, the assembly, after mature discussion, has asked Brother Visitors to give, where needed, the necessary instructions to our dear Brother Directors” (p.5).

In January 1863, there was another exchange of notes on this matter between the minister and the Generalate. Minister Rouland wrote: “Regarding the particular form of gratuitous teaching you wished to see practised in your schools, you have, I am told, given instructions to your Brothers; and I have learned that in some communes, they have, in fact, ceased to oppose the views of the municipal administrations which wished to collect a school remuneration from children from well-off families.

“I should like to know, in a positive manner, what has been done in this regard, and I ask you to be so good as to inform me of it as soon as possible”.

In a brief response, Brother Philippe gave him the information he sought: “I hasten to inform you, Sir, that our Brothers have been ordered to comply, in everything and for everything, with the prescriptions of the Circular of May 27th 1861, and I have reason to think that they will make a point of executing this order” <sup>38</sup>.

What were the consequences of this defeat, if it was one? “In fact, the Brothers complied with the ministerial instructions, and the system of school remuneration was established in a great number of their schools”: that was the final comment of a

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<sup>37</sup> The “superfluous” article 5 says: “To procure these advantages (the instruction they need, and a good and Christian education) for the children of the artisans and the poor, this was the purpose for which the Christian Schools were established”.

In 1862, with the new edition of the Common Rules not considered yet sufficiently mature for printing, certain pages of the 1852 edition were replaced: modifications were made to chapters VIII, IX, XVII, XXV, XXVI and XXIX (mistakenly written as XXIV), which dealt with punishments, the conduct of the Brothers in school, the vows, prayers for deceased Brothers, travel and the daily regulation. The formulation of article 5 of chapter XVIII, which explains the matter of the vow of gratuity, is also slightly modified. Chapter 1 was not modified.

<sup>38</sup> GA, LD 252/3, dossiers 18 and 19. Although the copies available today are dated May 21st, the circular mentioned is actually dated May 27th 1861.



short note <sup>39</sup>. In future, Prospectuses omitted article 1 which proclaimed absolute gratuity.

Some 70 years later, commenting on the third commandment of the Institute, the Superior General, Brother Adrien, affirmed: "It seems that the capitulants of 1861 exaggerated the danger in which the Institute found itself regarding the question of gratuity". After giving the example of Clermont, which was the first to apply the decision of the government, he returned to things that were known, and concluded: "The schools of Clermont, therefore, continued to be gratuitous, according to our traditions and our Rules. The same thing must have been true in a number of other places" <sup>40</sup>.

In April 1867, a law proposed by Minister Duruy, extended and improved the freedom of municipal authorities regarding gratuitous teaching <sup>41</sup>.

For his part, Brother Philippe, looking back on the past 12 years, gave a short report at the opening of the 1873 General Chapter: "The measures taken by the last

Chapter concerning gratuity, and the Rescript from the Holy See, were meant to be very useful in warding off the annoyance that certain authorities could and wanted to cause us. However, we have to admit, that only a few of our establishments found it necessary to take advantage of them. as, generally speaking, municipalities were not much concerned about the school remuneration, once higher authorities ceased to put pressure on them.

These measures, however, have been very useful for us since 1870, and may become even more so in the future, especially if communal allocations continue to be withdrawn from our Brothers" <sup>42</sup>.

A realistic and serene view of the future, but also a feeling that it would be different. Less than 10 years later, France decreed gratuitous education in public elementary schools, and the Brothers could consider the outcome of all their battles to be very satisfactory. But in less than 20 years, French public schools would be closed to religious congregations.

## 2. RESCRIPTS CONCERNING GRATUITY

As we saw earlier, it was in 1854 that the Institute realised that it was impossible to maintain, always and everywhere, the absolute gratuity of its schools for the common people.

In France, municipal schools were subject to the prescriptions of the law of 1850, and of the imperial decree of 1853, whose

implementation depended on the greater or lesser zeal of civil authorities to expedite it.

<sup>39</sup> GA, LD 252/1, dossier 24: "gratuity and school remuneration".

<sup>40</sup> Circular 278, dated January 8th 1933, p. 43-44. Regarding the case mentioned and others, see RIGAULT 5, p. 379.

<sup>41</sup> RIGAULT 5, p. 354-355.

<sup>42</sup> GA, ED 230, dossier 1: opening speech.

Private schools, more commonly known as free schools, had to survive on foundation funds or subscription. What could be done when the funds from these sources were not sufficient to pay completely for the upkeep of the teacher and the maintenance and running of the establishment?

Outside France, the problem was less acute: the Institute had spread to areas where the majority of the population was non-Catholic or non-Christian, and where it was unlikely, if not impossible, that the running of public schools would be entrusted to it. To refuse the resources that the families of pupils could offer, as the Brothers' tradition and constitutions required, would so restrict the number of funding sources that the work of Catholic education, in many places, would be condemned to never taking root or developing.

A similar situation existed in traditionally Catholic countries where the government (as in Belgium and Italy) was in conflict with the Church at a particular time. In such situations, where the Brothers had been established for a long time, they had to adapt to the new circumstances or disappear.

The Institute was not happy to abolish gratuity. Each time that it had to relinquish it, it did so with regret, and sought the authorisation of the Holy See to adopt, because of the circumstances, a practice that was so contrary to its long history, its Rule and a vow. And it always did so in the hope of returning to "our traditional practices".

The Petitions addressed to the Pope in the time of Brother Philippe were 11 in

number, and spread over a period going from January 1855 to January 1874<sup>43</sup>. These texts throw an interesting light on the situations the Congregation had to face, and on the doctrinal transformation which took place in it (or in part of it) regarding the interpretation of gratuity.

### January 26th 1855: France and America

The double geographical reference of this first request came from the deliberations of the 1854 Chapter assembly. The Superior General presented their respective needs in the following terms: "...Founded on the letter and spirit of our Rules, and especially on the Bull of Approbation, ..our Institute has always made profession of conducting completely gratuitous schools. It even made this gratuity the object of a special vow.

However, an imperial decree...seems to oblige us to leave the path we have followed until now.

In fact, this decree says literally: "The Prefect of each department fixes the number of children who can be admitted free of charge" to schools, which proves that the others have to pay school fees. The text adds: "At the end of each term, the list of fee-paying students will be drawn up. It will

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<sup>43</sup> Text and some details in GA, EL 552/2 and 552/3, dossiers 35, 45, 49, 50, 51, 56, 68, 76 and 81. Typed copy (not lacking in errors) in EL 552/1: *Special rescripts*, p. 101-137. The indult dated January 1874 was requested by the Brother Assistants after the death of Brother Philippe.

include all the children in the school, showing how many monthly fees each one owes” – that is, those who will not be admitted free of charge.

“It is probable that, despite these dispositions, many towns will continue to take advantage of their right to have completely gratuitous schools, but this did not change the fact that others will want well-off pupils to pay a remuneration, and that we will have to tolerate this practice or abandon these schools”. In view of this, he asks the Pope to “grant dispensation from what could infringe the vow of teaching gratuitously in the following cases.” He asked:

“1° That, having used all the means prudence could suggest, and rather than close the schools, which would deprive the children of the Catholic education we give them, our Brothers should be allowed to give the civil authorities the list of their pupils, even though they knew this list would be used to impose school fees on the said pupils.

“2° That the benefactors of the free schools directed by our Institute, may be allowed to receive some help from the parents of our pupils, when other resources are seen to be inadequate.

“These two dispensations are requested for a trial period beginning now and ending September 1857 inclusively, and on condition that our Brothers will continue to accept nothing personally from their pupils or their parents.

“3° Also, Most Holy Father, our Brothers residing in America need to be able to receive some remuneration from their well-off pupils, so as to be able to look after a larger number of poor pupils, by withdrawing them from Protestant schools, which are almost the only ones existing in these missionary countries.

“This authorisation is requested for 10 years beginning with the day on which it is granted”.

The response was typical of the Curia: “From the audience granted by the Holy Father to the undersigned Secretary for the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, January 26th 1855: His Holiness, given the special circumstances, has deigned to reply affirmatively to the two first articles above, for the period ending with the last day of September 1857.

Regarding the third article, His Holiness grants the requested faculty for 5 years only, on condition however, that the Brothers receive the said retribution through the intermediary of the person of a benefactor, as they say, and not personally. Moreover, the Superiors of the said Institute will take care that no abuse comes from this, and the Brothers do not in any way lose the spirit which should inspire them, in conformity with the aim of the Institute regarding the gratuity of instruction, notwithstanding all things to the contrary”.

The request makes a clear distinction between the three cases: French municipal

schools, French private schools and private schools in America<sup>44</sup>. From the doctrinal point of view, the 5th vow is formulated as a vow to teach gratuitously. Nothing is said of boarding schools, day boarding schools or caméristats which exist already. In the eyes of the Superiors of the Institute, their existence does not have to be justified with regard to gratuity. Nothing is said of the situation in other countries.

The granting of the authorisation says nothing about the obligation of the vow, but takes for granted the spirit which should inspire the Brothers regarding gratuity. We should note the restrictions put on article 3: 5 years (because America is far away. For Europe, not more than 2 years would be granted), and the intermediary of a person. It mentions also the attentive vigilance that Superiors must exercise to avoid any possible abuses.

The formal arrangement of this first negotiation will be repeated in the majority of the other cases.

### **December 16th 1859: America**

The indult was not applied in France. It was not necessary, if we are to believe the words of the Superior at the 1858 General Chapter: "We did not need to make any request to the Holy See, nor, as a consequence, did we have to await any answer". But in America, it was applied. And the collaboration of benefactors in the collection of remuneration did not prove very satisfactory. That is why, at the end of 5 years, with circumstances unchanged, Brother Superior

used the authority of the Chapter to request the prolongation of the dispensation and the simplification of the procedure. The need for remuneration was reiterated ("despite their Rule and the special vow to teach gratuitously") for the Brothers' schools, which were "so useful also in preventing the herodox education of the children". The Superior then turned to the method of collection: "Experience has shown that, in the majority of cases, it is almost impossible" to have recourse to benefactors: the clergy are few and have a great many other things to do; among the laity, there is great indifference, and it is extremely difficult to find persons prepared to take on the worry of supporting a religious house. For all these reasons, Brother Philippe begged His Holiness "in his goodness to prolong the same favour until such time as the religious houses find a permanent form of subsistence; and to allow the Director of each house, or some other Brother expressly designated by the Visitor of the Province, to collect directly the fees paid by the parents of the children". The response was as follows: "His Holiness has deigned to agree to the prolongation requested for the said indult for another 5 years, unless in the meantime a suitable endowment is received", and "instead of the intermediary benefactor, to allow the Superior of the house, or another Brother del-

<sup>44</sup> The Brothers' Province of America included the houses in Canada and the United States. The situation described in the petition existed especially in the second country. But, as a blanket term, the word "America" was useful.

egated by the Visitor of the Province, observing in everything the form and the terms of the previous decree..." to be made responsible for collecting the money.

The petition, presented in Italian this time, continues to refer to the Rule and to the vow of teaching gratuitously. The Brothers are coming closer to handling money. The time, vaguely referred to in the petition, is specified in the answer as another 5 years.

### October 6th 1861: England

The bishops of Southwark and Birmingham wrote to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, in Rome, to obtain Brothers to work in their diocese. They supposed that difficulties associated with gratuity could be dealt with, by applying in England, the indulgt they knew was in force in the United States.

Cardinal Barnabo, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation, was of the same opinion, and had a petition prepared, which he sent to Brother Philippe, asking for his advice. The text included the prescriptions of the Rule on the obligation of the vow of teaching gratuitously, recalled the dispensation in force in America, and described the needs of England, where the bishops were obliged to accept, that in the poor schools, the less poor children had to pay a certain sum every week. That was why "the bishop of Southwark, in whose diocese the said Brothers worked with great zeal, as well as the bishop of Birmingham, to whose diocese Brothers were due to be sent to work

in the poor schools, begged...to apply to these two dioceses the dispensation or interpretation of the vow given to the United States in 1859"<sup>45</sup>.

The Brother Superior answered him that "our Lord bishops of England are unable to make the government adopt the schools of our Institute, except on the indispensable condition that the pupils pay a certain sum each week to cover the minor expenses of the premises and the cost of the repair of the furniture. Until now, we have considered that this remuneration was contrary to our practices and we have refused these classes". But if His Holiness wishes it, the Brothers will go without delay. And so that everything should be in order, he enclosed the text of the petition (different from the one sent to him by the cardinal), and entrusted it to his Eminence<sup>46</sup>.

In his petition, the Superior mentioned the urgent requests of the English bishops to which "up till now, he had not thought it possible to accede because of the gratuity which had always been professed in the Christian Schools, and which it would be impossible to observe in schools in England, given that the government, in accordance with the laws of the country, would not undertake to provide the salaries of the teachers, except on the express condition that the

<sup>45</sup> GA, LD 252/3, dossier 6.

<sup>46</sup> GA, EL 552/2, dossier 49. Draft of a letter sent on September 21st; petition; indulgt, dated October 6th 1861. The General Chapter took place in Passy from September 4th – 22nd. The Brothers came to England in 1855 (See RIGAUULT 5, p. 232).

pupils paid "a few pence" each week, for the maintenance of the premises and the repair of the furniture". With things as they were, he begged His Holiness to have the goodness to accede to the requests of the bishops, but "on the express condition that the collection of this small remuneration be entrusted to the parish priests, or to some pious persons designated for this purpose".

In answer, the Pope allowed the Brothers to open their schools in England, with the consent of the bishops, and authorised them to accept the small tax prescribed by civil law for the buildings and the furniture of the classes, on condition that the administration of this tax be entrusted to a man of proven virtue, chosen by the local bishop.

No time limit was given for the validity of this authorisation. It is also the only rescript of those mentioned here, which was not negotiated with the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

### **November 15th 1861: France**

After a laborious process of drawing up the text, in which Brother Irlide seems to have played a major role, the General Chapter approved the petition the Superior General was to address to the Pope:

"The laws which govern education in France oblige communes to maintain public elementary schools, where poor children are admitted free of charge, but where the communes can impose on all the other pupils a monthly or annual remuneration, and this takes place in the majority of schools.

"Until now, the Brothers had generally come to an agreement with the communes, whereby they did not impose the school remuneration on the pupils, even on the rich ones, who attended the public schools confided to our Institute. But a ministerial circular, dated May 27th last, has decided that our schools must not be exempted from the general rule, and that the communes which pay the Brothers' salaries, can demand the school remuneration from all the pupils who are in our public schools, unless they are officially listed as indigent.

"The General Chapter, which the Petitioner recently convoked, has examined the obligations imposed upon us by §9 of the Bull "In Apostolicæ dignitatis solio" of Benedict XIII, of holy memory, which reads: "Quod vota fratrum sint castitatis, paupertatis, obedientiæ et permanentiæ in dicto Instituto, necnon pauperes gratis edocendi", and has thought that since our vow of teaching gratuitously includes, in the terms of the Bull, only the poor, the school remuneration paid by the other pupils, in the public schools, does not seem contrary to the vow we make to teach gratuitously.

"Turning now to the Rule concerning gratuity which is found in §5 and which reads as follows: 'Quinto: Quod ipsi fratres gratis pueros educant, neque præmium aut munera a discipulis vel eorum parentibus oblata suscipient', the Chapter has thought that this Rule forbids us, it seems, in general, and without distinction between rich and poor, to accept either payment or rec-

ompense from our pupils or their parents, for our teaching.

“After examining these two articles of the Bull ‘In Apostolicæ dignitatis solio’, and after long discussion, the Chapter:

“Considering, on the one hand, that the obligation concerning the absolute poverty of our teaching, as it is stated in article 5 of the Bull, concerns the Brothers as individuals, and, on the other, that the school remuneration imposed by the communes, will not be collected by the Brothers, whose salary, on the contrary, will be paid out of municipal funds, into which, however, school remunerations will be put, with all the other revenue of the commune;

“Considering that our Brothers have no means of preventing communes from establishing school remunerations, and we would have no alternative but to abandon the conduct of the schools where the said remuneration was imposed, since the government does not wish to authorise public schools reserved exclusively for poor children;

“Considering that by accepting in a passive manner the prescriptions of the already quoted laws of the ministerial circular of May 27th last, our Brothers do not seem to contravene either their vow to teach gratuitously, whose obligation extends only to the poor, nor the Rule, nor §5 of the Bull, which concerns only the payment or recompense offered to the Brothers by pupils or their parents;

“Considering, however, that the contrary practice having been generally followed and

looked upon, as it were, as a Rule of our Institute, there could be Brothers who would think that the school remuneration, although imposed and collected by the commune, would be a transgression either of their vow to teach gratuitously, or of the Rule of gratuity, and that this could give rise to anxiety and problems of conscience for individuals, and even more, murmuring, disturbances and divisions in the Institute;

“The Chapter has decided that the Superior General should be instructed to submit the following questions to our Holy Father the Pope, begging him in his goodness to resolve them by his apostolic authority:

“1° Can the Brothers of our Institute, without transgressing their vow of teaching the poor gratuitously, continue to conduct public schools, where communes will demand and collect for their use the school remuneration of the pupils who are not poor?

“2° Can the Superior General accept, in the name of the Institute, the conduct of new schools offered to him by communes in which, although the poor will be admitted free of charge, school remuneration will be collected from pupils considered rich, for the use of the commune, which will pay the salaries of the teaching and non-teaching Brothers?”<sup>47</sup>

The Latin version was entrusted to a Monsignore in Rome. He thought it neces-

<sup>47</sup> GA, ED 227. *Chapter Register B*, p. 369-371, corresponding to session 18, held on September 12th 1861, in the afternoon.

sary to arrange the contents in a different way and made a suggestion. The Brothers in Paris trusted him, but insisted the text preserved its nature. It was not a request for a dispensation, but for a definition which would ease consciences and give the Regime the necessary freedom of movement in order to govern.

The definitive text begins by defining French educational legislation (gratuity solely for the poor in public schools). Next it quotes articles 5 and 9 of the Bull together, and continues:

“The manner in which the Brothers have always understood this vow and this rule has been such, that they have never allowed their pupils, even those who are not poor, to give them anything in compensation for the instruction they receive. Considering this interpretation as a rigorous law, they had always until now prevailed upon municipalities that all their pupils without distinction were considered exempt from this remuneration.

“But a recent ministerial circular makes this now impossible and, what is more, since the government no longer authorises schools solely for the poorer classes, the Brothers are obliged either to accept the application of this law, or abandon schools wherever the law is enforced”. The General Chapter which has studied the situation believes that the law in question “is contrary, not so much to the vow and the rule referred to earlier, as to the interpretation given to them until now. In reality, this vow and this rule concern Brothers as individuals, and in the case

of the municipality collecting this remuneration, the Brothers receive nothing directly from the hands of the pupils or their parents. With regard to this remuneration, their attitude is passive, as if it were no concern of theirs. It is true that the upkeep, or living allowance given the Brothers in its place by the municipality, comes in part from the remuneration paid by their pupils, but it is not for the Brothers to try to discover the origin of the funds used by the municipality to pay for their upkeep.

Not being able to distinguish between the real poor and those who are not, either because of the inherent difficulties of making this distinction, or because of the will of the government; and not being able consequently to continue conducting schools while observing the vow and the rule in question, understood in a broader sense, as in the past, the Chapter has thought it better to confine itself to the literal sense of the rule, rather than suppress, to the great detriment of the population, the work of Christian instruction.

Nevertheless, since the old interpretation has become established and deeply rooted by such long practice; and since the new and less stringent one could cause some Brothers problems of conscience, and provide an excuse for some ill-intentioned ones to stir up trouble and distressing dissension, the General Chapter has decided to instruct the Brother Superior General to ask the Holy See to resolve the following questions:

1° Can the Brothers of the Christian Schools, without transgressing in any way



their vow to teach the poor gratuitously, continue to conduct schools, where the poor are admitted free of charge by the municipality, but where, in order to pay for the poor, the municipality demands remuneration from pupils not considered to be poor; and can these same Brothers accept a grant coming from the same municipal funds into which this remuneration is paid?

2° Can the Superior General accept in the name of the Congregation, new schools where the municipalities would enforce the above-mentioned law regarding remunerations?

One can see that the translator has done more than move things around. He has put articles 9 and 5 of the Bull in the same paragraph, thinking that the latter was simply an explanation of the former. Having done that, he felt obliged from then on to quote the vow and rule together, and he ended by saying that the vow and the rule concern the Brothers individually. This was to pre-judge, perhaps too quickly, the intentions of the Bull, or of those who asked for it. It is true that this way of thinking was more or less in vogue among some Brothers, but this was not the slant given by the Chapter, which treated the article separately, and limited the use of "individually" solely to §5. Another detail: it is perhaps a pity that in the formulation of the first question, the noun "schools" appears without the adjective "public". However, the mention of "municipality" should have been enough to dispel any doubts on the matter.

For the moment, however, these were not things that concerned Brother Philippe and his Assistants. What they were interested in was simply "a decision by the Holy Father which would close the door on all anxiety of conscience and all possibility of division". They received the following answer: "His Holiness, after having pondered over the questions submitted, has permitted the Brothers of the Christian Schools, for as long as the circumstances mentioned continue, to adopt a passive attitude to the measure in question".

For the Brother Procurator General, this was a bitter disappointment: the rescript defined nothing; it was more like a dispensation. A monsignore, well versed in the bureaucracy of the Curia, consoled him: "These things are granted always as if they were a favour from the Throne... You ought to be happy with what has been granted, since you can go ahead, without worrying about this one or that. You have not been given a dispensation. You have been told: 'Do not give up your schools, and let the authorities get on with their business'. There was no need to renew the request. There was agreement at the Generalate: they could go ahead."

**November 15th 1861: France, Belgium, England, Prussia**

On the same day, another rescript came under consideration, regarding the situation of private schools maintained by subscription. "Groups of pious lay people have been

formed in France, Belgium, Prussia and England with a view to providing a Christian education to a large number of children born of Catholic parents, who are likely, unless provided for, either not to receive any education at all, or to seek it in heretical schools, to the great danger of their faith and their innocence.

“This good work involves considerable expense, which these pious groups are finding difficult to meet. They would like permission to ask for a small remuneration from those children whose parents could afford it without too much trouble”.

The Superior requested therefore “authorisation to conduct schools of this kind, and accept similar ones in the future, on condition, however, that the remuneration was collected by the founders, without any involvement on the part of the Brothers”<sup>48</sup>.

The Brothers, for their part, protest that they wish to observe their vows faithfully, and not accept, either from the pupils or their parents, any salary or remuneration, conformably to article 5 of the Bull”.

The “heretical schools” were not only the Protestant or Anglican ones, but also non-denominational public ones, and in competition with these, more and more private schools were springing up. Worth noting is the explicit reference of article 5 of the Bull (the Rule), and none to article 9 (the vow). To obtain the fidelity of the Brothers, it was better to quote the Rule, with its refusal of all gifts, than the vow with its obligation extending only to the poor. The strict inter-

pretation formerly endorsed by the Sorbonne (“to receive through the intermediary of another is to receive it oneself”) was relegated through a need to survive.

At first sight, the inclusion of England among the beneficiaries of this rescript may seem perplexing, because it had received one only very recently, and it had no time limit. Perhaps, the permission previously granted was valid only for schools which received staff salaries from the government, while the new rescript applied to strictly private schools.

The response from the Holy See reflects the other rescript given on the same date, and needs to be interpreted in the same spirit: “Given the special circumstances, His Holiness authorises, for two years, the Brothers of the Christian Schools to adopt a passive attitude with regard to the remuneration mentioned in the question”. In other words, the Brothers were to maintain the schools, and let the founders do their work. The matter would be discussed again in two years’ time<sup>49</sup>.

### **June 27th 1862: America, England, Near East, India**

The 1859 rescript granted to America was still in force, but as the situation was being repeated in other “missionary countries” where the Institute had recently ar-

<sup>48</sup> Correspondence exchanged: GA, EL 552/2, dossier 51.

<sup>49</sup> What we read in RIGAULT 6, p.128, is strange: Belgium was omitted from the 1866 petition, but not from those of 1861 and 1863.

rived, the Brothers wanted the indult that had been granted to be extended in time and place.

The new petition begins by recalling the needs that led to the authorisation granted to America in 1859. Next, the Superior, “considering that the situation of the said establishments had not changed, begs from Your Holiness the extension, for ten years, of the said permission. In addition, he requested the same permission, for analogous reasons, for the establishments conducted by the Congregation in England, and in the missions in the Near East and India<sup>50</sup>, with the faculty to extend it to establishments offered to the Congregation in the future, for other missions in the countries listed above”.

Given the special conditions, His Holiness “grants the prolongation requested of the rescript in question for another five years, maintaining its content and form, as well as its extension to the other places mentioned in the petition, on condition that they are outside Europe”. England, therefore, is not included in this indult, but it has two others, dated the previous year, one of which without a time limit.

### **July 3rd 1863: France, Belgium, Prussia, England**

As the expiry date was approaching of the rescript obtained in 1861 for the private schools of this country, and “considering that the circumstances which led him to make this request have not changed”, the Brother Superior asked for “the extension

for five years of the authorisation given by the said rescript”. The request was granted, but only for two years.

### **June 1st 1866: France, Prussia, England**

This was the renewal of the preceding one. The Brother Superior recalled the purpose of these schools: to withdraw many Catholic children from the danger to their faith and innocence presented by heretical schools. As the circumstances had not changed, he asked for an extension for five years of the authorisation given in the previous rescript.

The answer was favourable: “His Holiness is pleased to grant the extension of the indult in question, as requested, on condition that in everything else its terms and its form are observed”.

Two things are worth noting: The date, first of all: almost three years have passed since the previous rescript. And so, for a year, given that “the circumstances had not changed”, the Institute had continued to use the expired authorisation, but neither in the text of the petition, nor in any other docu-

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<sup>50</sup> “Levant” was the term used in the original French text (Near East in this text), which included at the time the houses of the Brothers in Turkey, Egypt and some Greek islands. “Inde” (India) represented the rest of Asia: India, Singapore, Malaysia. But in the 1859 Papal audience, Brother Philippe explained the word “Levant” in an aside, which included countries from the east Mediterranean to the Pacific: Cairo, Alexandria, Smyrna, Constantinople, Sira, Mangalore, Calcutta, Penang, Singapore.

ment, is there any request for sanation for an unintentionally incorrect procedure.

The other surprise is the absence of Belgium in the list of countries mentioned in the petition. And yet, the indult was needed there now, more than at any other time before.

In any case, the newly extended authorisation was given as a prolongation of the previous one. Perhaps, the Regime, having noticed these omissions later, saw in the terms of the new authorisation a confirmation of the one it had already, including its extension.

### January 11th 1867: Italy

The Kingdom of Italy was moving towards the inclusion of the whole peninsula in a single State. The process of unification included measures opposed to the influence of religion in the lives of the common people. The Brothers were expelled, or felt that they were in danger of being so, from the majority of public schools. It was in this context that the Procurator General made his request: "With his religious in the Kingdom of Italy in danger of being expelled from this commune or that, so that their schools could fall into the hands of secular teachers", he explained that "on the one hand, his fellow Brothers wish to continue, as far as they can, the ministry of education entrusted to their Institute, and not make it impossible for themselves to do good which, with the grace of God, they have until then; and that, on the other, they know how much the majority of the parents of the children

entrusted to them, wish these same to continue to benefit from the pious education they receive in the Christian schools". However, to make this possible, and in order to continue to pursue their vocation, in case they are expelled from the public schools, "they see no alternative but to request permission to open free schools, in which everybody can pay a remuneration"<sup>51</sup>.

"However, as this is contrary to the Rules of the Institute", he requests the Pope "in these exceptional circumstances, to authorise them to use this means to counteract, with the benefits of a Catholic education, the corrupting education which, unfortunately, is only too common in secular schools".

He stressed that he was taking this step only "to obey a good number of bishops, vicar generals and high-born persons, who do not wish to see the children abandoned into the hands of men little suited to raising them according to the principles of our holy religion.

"The exceptional faculties in question would end at the same time as the circumstances which oblige him to request them".

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<sup>51</sup> The petition was submitted in Italian, and this sentence reads: "aprire delle scuole libere con pagamento ove tutti possano intervenire" (to open free schools with payment to which everybody can contribute). The French version reads: "the opening of free schools with payment, to which everybody can come", and is not correct. The temporary dispensation requested, I think, was to be able to make the pupils pay, and not to make it possible for everybody to attend a paying school.

The answer was favourable: "His Holiness, taking into account the circumstances because of which the indult is requested, has deigned to grant permission for schools to be opened according to the terms of the petition, but not beyond the duration of the circumstances and, in each case, with the consent of the respective bishop".

No precise time-limit is given, in the hope that the circumstances will change, but the bishop must give his consent in each case. The petition referred to its mandate to enable the Brothers to set out along a road that "was opposed to the Rules of the Institute".

### **August 12th 1870: America, England, Prussia, Belgium, Near East**

Setting the scene by referring to almost everything the Institute had outside France, and recalling the good accomplished in those countries by the Brothers' schools, as was attested by the bishops, and the paucity of the means at their disposal, the Brother Superior begged His Holiness to permit:

1° parents of children who frequent these schools, and other schools which may be created in the future in these missionary countries, to pay a small remuneration into the hands of the benefactors of these establishments;

2° that, in the absence of benefactors, the Brother Procurator of the community can replace them to collect the remuneration;

3° that the effect of this favour should continue so long as the circumstances remained the same".

The authorisation read: "His Holiness...is happy to grant the faculties requested in the petition, to the extent it requires them. The conditions expressed in analogous indults already granted to certain houses of the Institutes are to be observed".

A comparison with previous rescripts reveals similarities and differences. America and the Near East <sup>52</sup> are regulated by a rescript renewed for 5 years in 1862; if the rescripts were taken at their face value, these countries had been breaking the law for 3 years. England and Prussia were within the law: they obtained their rescript in 1866. Article 2 extended to all the countries listed, a possibility from which only America benefitted before. Belgium reappeared, having been omitted inexplicably in 1866, but now it was included under the general heading of "missionary countries".

### **January 30th 1874: France**

The impression of prolixity left by certain of the preceding rescripts, especially by the last, is nothing if not strengthened by the one which follows. Brother Philippe died piously on January 7th. During the period of his last illness and the suffering which accompanied it, someone informed him that the private schools in France conducted by the Brothers were no longer covered by any rescript: the 1886 one had expired, that of 1870 made no mention of France. The Re-

<sup>52</sup> In French, "Levant" does not include India this time, but it must be considered to be included in Levant, understood in a broader sense.

gime immediately set about making good this omission: "By pure inadvertance, not having thought to ask for the extension of the said concession (that of June 1st 1866), with the remuneration continuing to be collected nevertheless since June 1st 1871..." That is why "Your Beatitude is earnestly begged to have the goodness to absolve and validate this omission.

"Especially, as, since the year 1866, the situation has become noticeably more serious, and impiety has constantly increased its efforts to render more difficult the existence and creation of Catholic schools, and especially those directed by religious congregations, so as to force children and adolescents to frequent impious and atheistic schools, which certain societies, individuals and even some public administrations have opened and maintained at great cost".

As a consequence, the Pope is asked to be so good as to "grant, for as much time as circumstances will demand, that the houses and the schools of our Institute existing at present in France, and those which will be subsequently established, can legitimately be maintained, in the absence of sufficient gifts and foundations, by the following resources:

1° Subscriptions and alms that charitable persons will provide for this purpose, even if they have entrusted the instruction of their children or other relatives to our Brothers;

2° The remunerations paid by the parents of rich or well-off pupils who will frequent our schools.

"The above subscriptions, alms and school remunerations will be collected by our principal benefactors, the Brother Directors of our houses and by their delegates".

And once again the Brothers were within the law: "His Holiness, taking into consideration the special circumstances, and validating first the past, benignly grants, for another five years, the extension requested, if the causes last so long. This concession extends to all the houses in France, whether already existing or still to be established in the future. Preserving the form and the terms of the preceding indult, notwithstanding the said Constitutions of the Institute and other things to the contrary".

Care would have to be taken five years later, where France was concerned. The other countries where the Institute existed had permissions without a time limit. On the other hand, it is noticeable that the language, different from Brother Philippe's, gives the impression of a persecuted Church. The militant secularism which characterised many sectors of the French Third Republic, extended beyond its national frontiers and was reflected in the image of the Vicar of Christ confined within the walls of the Vatican.

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Any attempt to conclude these two chapters by some kind of balance sheet of the service rendered to the poor by the Institute at the time of Brother Philippe would be, to

say the least, rash. The assembled facts, however they may be perceived are clearly incomplete. The relationship of the Institute with the life and thinking of the period, has hardly been mentioned, and in no detail.

The changes in the practice of gratuity had an influence on the doctrine of gratuity, but the opposite must also be true.

The government of the Institute concentrated its efforts in the area where the battle was fiercest, and this explains probably why it insisted so much on gratuity in school, and so little on dedication to the poor. The latter was not in doubt; the former was fought. What is most remarkable, perhaps, is that in this battle, the arguments put forwards in favour or against gratuity refer principally to the juridical aspects of the Institute (fidelity or not to its own rules), and to its own continued existence or ruin as a social body. On the other hand, they say very little about the great or small effect of gratuity in a service intended as a priority for the poor.

What is true in this respect of the government of the Institute is not so when applied to the Brothers as a whole. They did not receive much official information about these battles; and as for Papal rescripts, we

can say – and prove – that they knew absolutely nothing about them<sup>53</sup>.

It remains true that the Institute wished overall to maintain its service to the common people, and it did so on the basis of what it knew best: gratuitous primary schools.

It is clear also that variations in the referential context made it accept, whether it liked it or not, a variety of meanings for the same word: public school, private school funded by a rich benefactor, private school funded by numerous small alms (subscriptions), and finally schools – private or public – funded directly, or at least in part, by its clients.

But these are not, despite everything, the only “cases”: orphanages, prisons, schools for the deaf and dumb, adult courses, courses for apprentices, courses for conscripts... demonstrate a capacity and a will to serve in the various situations experienced by the world of the poor.

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<sup>53</sup> The 1891 and 1907 editions of the Collection of Bulls, Briefs and Rescripts, as well as the 1907 “Supplement”, keep total silence about them. They give only the consultation of February 1901.





## CHAPTER 7

### THE LAST PART OF THE 19th CENTURY

We are going to treat the 30 years which followed the death of Brother Philippe in one chapter. Once this great Superior had died, after a mandate which had lasted 35 years, the Congregation had to face current challenges in a new way – at least, in part. After all the efforts that had been made, after all the merits that had been accumulated, in 1904, the Institute was destroyed by legislation which, in France, forbade religious congregations to be involved in education.

During this period, the Institute's educational work expanded; it spread throughout the world and became even more diversified. One result of this is that we cannot go into too much detail in this chapter. We shall content ourselves with highlighting a number of facts and policy decisions which exerted most influence on the work of the Brothers as a whole, and which reveal the meaning and motivation of the Brothers' work for the poor.

The Institute spread to more and more countries. And yet, at the beginning of the 20th century, roughly speaking, two-thirds of the Brothers and their pupils were to be found in France. This is enough, although it is not the only reason, to explain why the Brothers of the time paid so much attention to what was going on in the country to which the majority of them belonged.

A few words about society and the Church at the end of the 19th century will help us to put the service of the Institute to the poor into a context: it was a service that was affected also by changes taking place in the Congregation. An idea of external and internal conditions will help us to understand better the policy decisions made at the general assemblies of the Congregation or by Superior Generals. Some statistics will give us some idea of the extent of the Institute's work for the poor.

#### 1. A FEW WORDS ABOUT SOCIETY

##### \* The secular State

The long process of change which led the State to assert itself as an entity complete in itself, independent of all religious

subjection, had already brought about tangible and lasting changes, even as the process accelerated. The process, however, was not a smooth one: it provoked a variety of

reactions among the citizens, some of which were sometimes contradictory. Conflict is not exempt from excess and injustice. Fights are won and lost: there are victims, and sometimes the victors take their vengeance on the losers.

Different countries develop at different rates. This is true also of different social groups in the same country. To give its independence a solid foundation, the State became militantly secular, setting up a form of inquisition in reverse, and organising its own witch-hunts. Under the banner of Liberty, Democracy and National Identity, procedures were set in place that were clearly sectarian. This was quite evident throughout the "belle époque". If we consider typical what was happening in the French Third Republic, we can say that the tide was coming in on all sides <sup>1</sup>.

This process did not take the form only of belligerent action: it was a sort of atmosphere. The State and society interacted: the Secular State was the sign and promoter of an increasingly secular society. Society conformed more and more with a secular State, until it reached the point when it wanted one. Under these conditions, a body which, in order to justify its existence, presented itself as the exponent of a religious mission, ran the risk of not being considered functional by the State or society, even if before it had been <sup>2</sup>.

### \* Educational policy

All over the world, States attached more and more importance to education and

wished to have a hand in it. The result of this was the proliferation of schools: the aim was to ensure that all children, boys and girls, went to school and remained there as long as possible.

For this, money was needed, teachers had to be trained, diversified curricula had to be drawn up, laws had to be passed. Through this whole process, States certainly tried to transmit to the population certain values, social virtues, a vision of life...which they considered important in order to create a particular type of society.

In this connection, it would be useful to recall a few important pieces of educational legislation in France at the time, because this legislation had profound consequences for the Brothers' Institute, and was widely imitated outside France.

The law of July 12th 1875 lifted restrictions on teaching at university level. The French Republic was in the hands of conservative forces, and this new law followed the line adopted by the Falloux law. But when the Republic was taken over by the Republicans, and especially by the most

<sup>1</sup> In France, after 1870, the Republic consolidated its position gradually as a stable form of government. Support for the monarchy, prevalent among the clergy and many Catholic lay people provided the republican State with motives or excuses to strengthen its opposition to all forms of Church influence.

<sup>2</sup> A topic treated competently by Pedro M. Gil in his *Three centuries of Lasallian Identity*, ch.7. There is nothing important I could say which is not already said and better said in his work.

radical groups, legislation tended explicitly to reduce the place of the Church in education.

In 1879, the decision was made to create a teacher training college in each department for men and women primary school teachers. Two advanced training colleges (at Fontenay aux Roses and St Cloud) were set up to train school executive staff.

In 1880, some decisive laws were passed. One of them reorganised the Higher Council of Public Instruction. The bishops were excluded from membership. The Council now had 53 representatives from the public sector, and only 4, appointed by decree, from the private. Another law, reducing the freedom granted by that of 1875, gave public universities the monopoly of conferring university degrees.

In June 1881, gratuity for all public primary school teaching was approved, and all teachers were obliged to have an official certificate of competency (the so-called Brevet)<sup>3</sup>. In March 1882, a law was passed which secularised all public schools and made primary school education obligatory<sup>4</sup>:

The law of October 30th 1886 confided all public schools, whatever their level, exclusively to secular teachers. The law was to be fully applied within 5 years. The same law dictated the conditions under which private schools could exist: the ten-year contract, which dispensed teachers from military service, could be taken out only in public schools.

This last small privilege disappeared with the military law of July 16th 1889: all teachers were obliged to do military service, one year for seculars, and three years for members of religious congregations<sup>5</sup>.

During this same period, changes were taking place in secondary education. In 1880, public secondary education became available for girls in secondary schools for girls. A university level institution was set up to train teaching staff. In March 1882, a decree granted the title of "batchelor" to those who had followed the "special studies" organised by Victor Duruy. Until then, this title had been reserved exclusively for those who had successfully followed the secondary classical course with Greek and Latin. In June 1891, a decree laid down the form of the modern baccalaureat, without classical languages, and with two options: arts or science. In 1902, a new decree completed the unification of the baccalaureat, which now offered four different courses:

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<sup>3</sup> Teachers were given up to October 1884 to obtain it. Those who were headmasters on January 1st 1881 were exempt from it, as were their deputies, if they were 35 or over and had taught for 5 years before 1881. These latter were not allowed either to become headmasters or to obtain the Brevet.

<sup>4</sup> Parents were obliged to ensure their children were educated. They were not asked - in theory - to send them to school.

<sup>5</sup> Article 50 made it possible to obtain exemption from military service for those who, before the age of 19 took up residence outside Europe and their situation was regular. If they returned to France before the age of 30, they were obliged to do it.

Latin and Greek, Latin and sciences, Latin and languages, sciences and languages.

During this same period also, teaching congregations continued to be harassed. A law passed in July 1901 expelled members of unauthorised religious congregations from teaching <sup>6</sup>. Finally, on July 7th 1904, "teaching of whatever level or kind is prohibited in France for congregations" <sup>7</sup>.

This simple enumeration of laws, with all the weight of their consequences, shows how the French State imposed its ubiquitous presence in education, by pushing aside all competitors.

Around this time also, the legislative or administrative decisions of other countries reveal a similar interest in education on the part of the State. These decisions aim to create or improve a national educational system. Consequently, they impose a certain uniformity by defining the mechanism of the operating system. In general, the tendency is to make a minimum of instruction (each time greater) obligatory for everyone. General programmes are drawn up, the careers of teachers become uniform, there is greater insistence on official diplomas and other conditions are made necessary for the exercise of the profession, budgets are created to finance the system. Within certain limits (which can be very narrow), the right to the freedom of education is recognised, but the control of the State over all aspects of education is strengthened, including over the private sector. In many cases, religious instruction disappears from the curriculum.

As a consequence, denominational education is very often relegated to the private sector <sup>8</sup>, with all the consequences that this implies.

### \* Colonial policy

The Institute's work of educating and evangelising was conditioned also by the European policy of expansion, either territorial in nature, aiming to consolidate colonial empires, or through political, commercial or cultural influence pursued by the various ministries of foreign affairs.

While Spain suffered the loss of her last possessions in America (Cuba) and in the Pacific (Philippines), Great Britain and France did all they could to acquire as much land as possible in Africa, Asia and Oceania.

The struggle to exercise most influence was particularly fierce in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the Balkans. In the Medi-

<sup>6</sup> Congregations were given three months to set in motion a process to obtain legal recognition. All those who asked for it were refused in 1903.

<sup>7</sup> Ample information in RIGAULT 7, 180-220; 330-333; 493-513.

<sup>8</sup> The terms "public schools" and "private schools" (in France and in some other countries "free schools") ended up by being more convenient than exact, to the extent that the freedom to provide education became a reality. When private schools accepted the curricula and controls of the State, and awarded officially recognised diplomas, they were just as "public" as the public schools properly so called. It might be more accurate to speak of "public schools run by the State" on the one hand, and "public schools run by social groups" or "privately run" on the other.

terranean, Italy tried to oppose the two great European powers. In the Balkans, Austria and Russia were at war; but further south

down the peninsula, almost all the Great Powers were present and viewed one another with great suspicion<sup>9</sup>.

## 2. A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE CHURCH

Most of the period in question coincides with the pontificate of Leo XIII (February 20th 1878 - July 20th 1903). The Pope's policy was to consider secular society as an adult engaged in dialogue with the Church, and not as a minor subject to a guardian. Without abandoning language typical of a Church under seige, which characterised his immediate predecessors, and without managing to solve the thorny problem of Rome (the solution did not depend on the Pope alone), he viewed the world with realism, had a sense of what was possible: he did not simply cling tightly to his principles.

Leo XIII will be remembered by history for many reasons. Among these, is his approach to social questions and, in particular, to the plight of the workers. His encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (May 15th 1891) recognised the existence and significance of social questions, and the fact that they were worth taking into account. This recognition of the dignity of everyday reality – although not expressed in these terms – in itself constitutes a message, one that is, perhaps, as important as the message contained in the document, and certainly more innovative at that time.

*Rerum Novarum* is a most important landmark in the development of the Catho-

lic social movement, but, as we already know, it had begun earlier<sup>10</sup>. The concern of Catholics<sup>11</sup> for the situation of the poor gave rise to a body of teachings and numerous institutions throughout the length of the 19th century in a variety of countries, each conditioned by the situation in these countries and by the character of the promoters.

Without wishing to write the history of social catholicism, we should like to mention three things which come back frequently in its writings, and which at the same time indicate its limitations. One of them is paternalism: it supposes that workers will

<sup>9</sup> For the Brothers's Institute, in those days, new or recent colonial forays by Germans, Belgians or the Dutch, had little significance.

<sup>10</sup> Among the previous documents in which Leo XIII speaks of the workers' question, we find: encyclicals "Quod apostolici muneris" (28.12,1878) and "Auspicato concessum" (17.09.82)); speeches "It is with special satisfaction" (24.02.85), "Great is the joy" (16.10.87) and "Two years ago" (14.03.90). After *Rerum Novarum*, the speech "Great is our joy" (19.09.91), the letter "Nihil nobis" (06.08.93), the letter to the US episcopate "Longiqua oceani" (06.01.95), the speech "It is for our heart" (08.10.98), the encyclical "Graves de communi" (19.01.1901) on Christian democracy.

<sup>11</sup> Names such as Kolping, Mermillod, von Ketteler, Manning immediately spring to mind as precursors.

be capable of assuring their own well-being, only if they are guided and led by the more wealthy and enlightened classes. Another is public assistance: correct the faults of the system with charity, but without calling into question the system itself. The third idea is the illusion of returning to the mediæval Corporations, with their ideal workers' organisation, but not taking into account the specific and lasting characteristics of the industrial revolution. One effect of these limitations is that the generosity shown by certain Catholics towards the workers, was found much less attractive by the latter than the propaganda and the movements inspired and led by the socialists<sup>12</sup>.

For the rest, during the time of Leo XIII, the Church continued to concentrate on its internal consolidation, and its expansion in the whole world. Both on the level of their internal mission and of their mission *ad gentes*, Catholic schools were considered to be a very important tool. That is why, at all levels of the Church, a great effort was made to establish and maintain educational establishments, even in places where the secular State was creating increasingly serious difficulties.

The missionary impulse throughout the world, already vigorous under Gregory XVI, ran parallel with the colonial expansion of European countries, but was not exclusive to the Catholic Church. Many European missionaries carried the Gospel of Jesus Christ to faraway lands. A good number of them carried it "wrapped in the flag of their country". They could be per-

<sup>12</sup> Not all Catholics were very much in favour of the spread of the workers' movement. G. Rigault speaks of this on an important page where he gives the reasons for the anti-Brothers attitude of the 3rd Republic: "It is not difficult to see in the shortcomings and blunders of French Catholics the reason for the prompt victory of their adversaries. Political disputes occupied the attention of many believers for too long: considerable energy was expended in ensuring the return of the 'king'. The problems raised by the discoveries of industry and capitalism, which concerned Ketteler in Germany, had not stimulated any serious examination of the question on this side of the Rhine and of the Vosges since the articles of M. De Coux in the far-off days of the 'Avenir' newspaper, or since Frédéric Ozanam in his 'New Era'. The 'social vocation' of Count Albert de Mun was awakened only after his meditations in captivity and the Paris revolution. Workers complain, and rightly, of their misery: they feel all the injustice of their fate. 'Right-minded persons' never hear these complaints or, if they hear something vague about them, they become frightened and angry: they want to take our wallets! The world is threatened by frightful upheavals: Proudhon gathers around himself those for whom 'property is theft'. The clergy itself, worried, puzzled and very vaguely informed, restricts itself to recommending to the rich to give alms, and to the poor to be resigned. In certain dioceses, the catechism 'does not say even one word in support of the rights of inferiors or of the duties of leaders'. The gap was widening between the pastors of parishes and many of their flock. Neither side spoke the same language: eyes avoided meeting; shared hopes were disappearing. Heavenly expectations: daily worries stifled them in thousands of souls. Terrestrial expectations: many ecclesiastics placed them in the restoration of the monarchy, in the re-establishment of the temporal power of the Sovereign Pontiff; these problems did not affect the masses, nor were they seen by them as obstacles to the changes they hoped for" (RIGAUULT 7, 175).

fectly sincere with regard to both. And so, one can understand secular governments which, within the frontiers of their own country, opposed the action of the Church, but which, on the contrary, supported missionaries, whom they regarded as effective agents of their foreign policy.

### \* A harassed Institute

Our brief survey should be sufficient to show that, during this period, the Brothers' educational mission to the "children of the artisans and the poor" underwent a major transformation with reference to its social context. At first sight, at least, this transformation was the forerunner of worse things to come.

The successors of Brother Philippe at the head of the Congregation had no difficulty in adopting the language of an "Institute under seige", reflecting the image of the besieged Church<sup>13</sup>. The reasons for this were not lacking. In France, in the last days of the Second Republic, certain authorities had tended to replace religious by secular teachers in public schools. Under the Third Republic, this tendency spread rapidly and culminated in the total ban we have described. To this, and to the obligation of military service, we must add the imposition of some very heavy taxes, and the court case involving the town authorities of Paris regarding the ownership of the Generalate building, to speak only in general terms.

Outside France, we need to mention the difficulties created for the Institute in Italy after the achievement of national unity; the

closure of all the communities in Germany on account of the Kulturkampf<sup>14</sup>; the disastrous education law of 1879 in Belgium (amended in 1884); the difficulties in Saigon and Ecuador. Without actually being able to speak of persecution, foundations in India and Singapore, whose future was thought guaranteed, were lost, causing much sorrow; and there were difficulties in founding houses in England, and some problems in Ireland, etc.

Despite all this, on the surface, the overall picture could be said to be very satisfac-

<sup>13</sup> The Superior Generals between 1874 and 1904 are:

1. **Jean Olympe** (Joseph Just Paget), born 1813, elected Superior 9.4.1874, died 17.4.1875.
2. **Irlide** (Pierre Jean Cazaneuve), born 1814, elected 2.7.1875, died 27.7.1884.
3. **Joseph** (Joseph M. Josserand), born 1823, elected 18.10.1884, died 1.1.1897.
4. **Gabriel Marie** (Edmond J.A. Brunhes), born 1834, elected 19.3.97, resigned 16.5.1913, died 25.10.1916.

As the circulars of the Superior General contained almost exclusively obituaries, Brother Irlide changed the numbering for those of an instructive or administrative nature.

One can find references, sometimes very long, to the persecution of the Institute in circulars 22,24,25, 25 supplementary, 26,27,28,30 (all from Br Irlide), 38a,39,41,47,48,51, 55,57,62, 64,69,72,73 (from Br Joseph), 79,90,115a,128,131,133,135 (from Br Gabriel Marie). This list is not exhaustive, and circulars were not the only means of communication. The subject was discussed constantly.

<sup>14</sup> The last Brothers left Prussian territory in 1879. In 1902, they were running an orphanage in Lorraine, which was also incorporated into the Prussian Empire.

tory. It is true that there were fewer pupils, especially in France, than there had been 30 years previously. But the number of Brothers had not ceased to grow despite fluctuations in the novitiates<sup>15</sup>; houses were opened in new territories<sup>16</sup>, some of which quickly gave signs of vitality and growth. Their work obtained numerous prizes in international exhibitions. Requests for Brothers' communities to take charge of various kinds of schools came in from all sides, causing great difficulties for the Superiors. Above all, the long-desired glorification of the Founder by the Church finally came about: Leo XIII beatified John Baptist de La Salle on February 19th 1888, and canonised him on May 24th in 1900.

Inside the Congregation itself, great efforts were made to improve the formation of its members. Brother Irlide encouraged the creation of junior novitiates and scholasticates<sup>17</sup>. Faces with the need for official diplomas, Brothers in France sat official

<sup>15</sup> In an appendix can be found some statistics on public and private schools, and on the numbers of Brothers in the Institute at given moments during the period in question. Despite a number of imperfections, especially in the classification and naming of countries in the various continents, the growth of the Institute can be seen sufficiently clearly.

<sup>16</sup> Territories, not always States. The Brothers arrived in China (Hong Kong) in 1875, Chile 1877, Spain 1878, Ireland 1880, Palestine 1882, Bulgaria 1885, Lebanon 1886, Greece 1888, Argentina 1889, Colombia 1890, Hungary 1892, Bohemia 1898, Romania 1898, Nicaragua 1903, Malta 1903, Panama 1904, and a fleeting presence in Luxembourg 1880-1881.

<sup>17</sup> In 1873, there does not seem to have been any other junior novitiate apart from the one in the Generalate, and the junior novices are included with the novices. In the years that followed, various Districts set them up (Cf. RIGAUULT 7,88-102). From 1873, they are given a separate column in the annual Institute statistical summary.

The scholasticates had already implemented the wish expressed during the 1837 General Chapter to have some special schools for the training of the Brothers. The 1844 Chapter, after establishing how to finance them, indicated that provisionally they would be in Paris, Lyons and Toulouse, with the possibility of establishing some also in foreign countries. But the 1853 Chapter spoke of them as if they had disappeared, seeing that "a member of the Chapter asked for a training college to be set up in Paris, to which Brothers would be called from all the Provinces located outside France, and from all the Districts inside the Empire. The Chapter, after accepting this proposition unanimously, declared it would leave it to the prudence of the Superior General to decide when this project would be implemented, and regarding the choice of means to ensure its success". The request was repeated at the 1873 Chapter: during the 14th session, the idea was considered to be a good one, but it was declared unfeasible for the moment (cf. *Chapter Register B*, 147, 177, 231, 421).

In addition to a number of false starts, especially in Avignon and Toulouse, before 1850, it is certain that an institution of this type was functioning at the Generalate before 1873: in the personal files of some Brothers of the time, consulted at random, it is noted that they attended this "training college". The statistical summaries mention scholasticates from 1888 onwards. They give the number of scholastics from 1892 onwards in a note at the bottom of the page, and in a separate column, from 1896 onwards.

In RIGAUULT 7,133, we read that the 1834 Committee asked for them, but there is nothing in the corresponding Register. The subject is mentioned among the decisions of the 1837 General Chapter, in arti-



examinations, and by the second term of 1881, more than 1,000 of them had obtained the certificate. In 1875, the 30 day retreat was established as a preparation for perpetual profession. In 1882, a 20 day retreat was established for Brothers preparing to make their first vows.

During the Generalate of Brother Joseph, the second novitiate was created. Some 50 Brothers from various countries followed the first "Hundred Days", from August 4th to November 15th 1887. The experiment was immediately institutionalised.

For the intention, in particular, of the younger Brothers, and as a contribution to their initial formation, the same Superior encouraged the publication of the "Instruction on the vows", usually called "Catechism of the vows", and above all, that of the dif-

ferent volumes of the "Explanation of Christian Doctrine". He also established annual examinations on these books.

In general, the General Chapters of this period reflected on a topic that did not vary: the Institute was conscious that the only way it could face the challenges of the times was to improve even more the means it had at its disposal.

And above all, in the face of the persecutions from outside the Institute, the Superiors redoubled their efforts to ensure great and profound regularity among the Brothers, convinced that this was the only effective rampart against all the attacks of their enemies: regularity was the way religious took God's side by accepting his will. When they did this, God stayed at their side, and he was all-powerful.

### 3. BROTHER JEAN OLYMPE (1874-1875)

Changes in the overall context, especially in France, in which the Institute operated, forced it to make decisions which modified, to a certain degree, its relations with the poor. Reflection on events, with their demands, their opportunities and their threats, led the Institute to build up a body of teaching which tried to state clearly the traditional thinking of the Brothers and to adapt it to new situations. In the pages that follow, we shall speak of the most important areas of this teaching and of the most important decisions made at the highest government level of the Institute, that is, by Superior Gener-

als and General Chapters. There will be references also to other sources, by way of digression.

No substantial changes were made during the short period Brother Jean Olympe was in office. His teachings reflected what

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cle 2. A precedent, about which it would be interesting to have more details, may have existed before 1829: in the biography of Brother Calixte, he is described as being in charge of student Brothers at the Generalate from October 1828 till the end of January of the following year, when he was appointed Director of the Rouen training college.

was already known, as we can see from the following lines: "A number of notes refer to matters which appear to be infractions of our practices, our constitutions and perhaps of our vow of teaching gratuitously. We refer to presents received from pupils or their parents, to work done free of charge, in a word, to remuneration, more or less disguised.

"You know, my very dear Brothers, under what circumstances, and with what regret, the 1861 General Chapter and our venerated predecessor had to have recourse to the Holy See, in order to be able to maintain and open schools, despite certain requirements which, according to our ancient practices, were an obstacle to this.

"We must remain strictly within the limits of the concessions obtained and, what is more, come closer as far as we can to this absolute gratuity, which is one of our finest claims to the esteem of even people of the world.

"Therefore neither Directors nor inferiors should think themselves authorised to accept presents, and above all to keep them either for their own personal use, or for any other. Nor must they organise paid supervi-

sion periods or special lessons, etc...Our dear Brother Visitors were instructed by the 1873 General Chapter to report to the Regime "houses which do not comply with the conditions set out in our Prospectus, so that measures may be taken, if necessary, to suppress these establishments" (Decision VII §1) <sup>18</sup>.

References to the 1861 rescript shows that it was still necessary. Not all the municipalities in France had adopted total gratuity in the Brothers' public schools.

There is a paragraph in the circular, in which the Assistants (the Superior having died) ask the pupils to show solidarity for the victims of a flood in the South of France, which gives an idea of the kind of pupils the Brothers had. They said: "You will make these requests known to the pupils...We know that most of your pupils are poor, but say to them: "Be charitable in any way you can...if you have little to give, at least give willingly what little you have". You will ask even the indigent, reminding them that it was the alms of the poor widow that Jesus Christ himself judged to be more valuable than the largest offerings made by the rich" <sup>19</sup>.

#### 4. BROTHER IRLIDE (1875 - 1884)

##### \* The first steps

The new Superior was very much aware of the current difficulties of the Institute, and of their tendency to increase. The General Chapter which had elected him must

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<sup>18</sup> Circular 368a, dated May 5th 1874, which reports on the recently held General Chapter, p.19-20.

<sup>19</sup> Circular, dated June 28th 1875, p.4.

have known that "Several governments forbid all religious symbols in public schools and all pious practices during school hours. Some even, or at least certain municipalities, go so far as to forbid the explanation of the catechism to the pupils, and do not allow them to be taken to Church offices, etc. The Superior General asked the assembly what line of conduct should be adopted in the circumstances...Should these schools be kept? Should new ones be accepted under these conditions? The assembly gave an affirmative answer. When he asked it: «How long will it take before normal conditions are restored?», the Chapter left the answer to the prudence of the Superior General, who is accurately informed by the Brother Visitors" <sup>20</sup>.

On the other hand, nothing new was said about gratuity: "In accordance with the wishes of the Chapter, we expressly recommend to our dear Brother Visitors and Directors: ...5° to refuse, and ensure they are refused, all presents on the occasion of the feasts of the patron saints of the Brothers, whatever the responsibility or work of the latter, or whatever the circumstances, since these presents are opposed to the principle of gratuity, and expose the Brothers to the danger even of infringing the virtue and vow of poverty" <sup>21</sup>.

Regarding the school clientele, the Superior wrote: "Thank God, more than ever before, children are flocking eagerly to our schools. It is among them that we must accomplish, with all the dedication and application of which we are capable, the noble

and important mission entrusted to us by the Church in the following terms, which we feel necessary to recall here: «The Brothers must above all take the greatest care to instruct children, and principally poor children, in all that they need to know in order to live good and Christian lives. Zeal to bring up young people according to the rules of the Christian law must be the principal quality and, as it were, the spirit of their Institute»" <sup>22</sup>.

The poor constituted the majority of the Brothers' pupils, as Pius IX recognised when he received the offering made to him by Brother Irlide in the name of the Institute <sup>23</sup>. The fact of having these poor children led Brother Irlide to make the following reflection: "Always and everywhere, it is not only unwise, but very dangerous to stimulate the pride of children, to flatter and encourage the ambitious illusions of parents on the basis of successes that are as brilliant as they are ephemeral, because it serves only to encourage a change in social status, that is one of the main causes that torments and throws modern society into convulsions"<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> GA, *Register C*, p.80-81.

<sup>21</sup> Circular, dated August 1st 1875, on the recently held General Chapter, p.8-9.

<sup>22</sup> Circular 11, dated January 5th 1878, p.17. The Superior returns several times to this article 1° of the Bull, Circulars 16 (p.8), 21 (p.16), 25 (p.15).

<sup>23</sup> Circular, dated January 6th 1876, p.18.

<sup>24</sup> Circular 384 (later 10), dated November 16th 1877. Even though it invites the Brothers to participate in the Universal Exhibition of 1878, it does not fail to express its opposition to all forms of exhibitionism.

### \* The 1879 rescript

The time was coming when the 1874 rescript would cease to apply. Brother Irlide, who had his own ideas about Lasallian gratuity<sup>25</sup>, believed it was time to implement two of his own plans: to obtain official approval for his thinking, which would immediately bring it into force throughout the Institute, and simultaneously, to simplify the procedure to obtain dispensations from the Rule of gratuity.

### Preparation

The timing and the sense of the steps taken are clearly explained thanks to an abundant correspondence between the Superior and Brother Floride, the Procurator General to the Holy See. The ideological content was entirely Brother Irlide's, as is shown by extracts from his letters to his representative in Rome in the last months of 1878.

October 12th 1878: "Next January, the permission granted by the Holy See will expire, to accept school fees in schools which do not have necessary and sufficient income. It is becoming indispensable for us, more now than ever before, to know exactly what we are obliged to do by the vow of teaching gratuitously, conformably to the Bull...

"According to the text of the Bull, the Brothers make the vow to teach only the poor gratuitously, and this obligation is a personal one: the Congregation does not profess to teach gratuitously in the same way

as the Franciscans profess poverty specifically for the Order and for each house.

"Article V of the same Bull forbids, it is true, the Brothers from accepting money or presents from the parents of pupils, but does this prohibition include the community?

"The Jesuits who, according to their Constitutions and their vows, must exercise all their ministries gratuitously (including teaching young people), make a distinction between the individual religious and the Society. The religious cannot accept anything, but the houses, on the contrary, can accept the presents and the alms they are offered after, for example, Lent or a retreat preached by a Father. The same is true of parents whose children attend the colleges of the Society.

"It would be good if you could persuade Mgr de Luca or some other member of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars to examine the Bull of Approbation, and obtain a consultation or an opinion as to how to obtain a response to the doubts we would submit to the Sacred Congregation.

"After examining this matter seriously, it seems to me that, strictly speaking, we have no need for a dispensation from the

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<sup>25</sup> The Superior had great confidence in the accuracy of his own ideas in this domain and as regards juridical questions in general. While recognising his superior intelligence, all his closest collaborators and those not so close did not share his optimism.

Pope in order to continue collecting fees for the community <sup>26</sup>.

“Show the text of the Bull, unofficially first of all, to some competent persons, and see if, like myself, they think that:

“1° The Brothers are obliged by their vows to teach gratuitously only the poor;

“2° Houses or communities, however, can receive payment for the gratuitous teaching of the poor;

“3° The Brothers cannot accept money or presents from well-off or rich pupils, or from their parents;

“4° Houses or communities can accept alms, or even remuneration, from rich families who send their children to our schools.

“What is said above is practised by the Jesuits, who have the same obligations as we have, both by their vows and their constitutions” <sup>27</sup>.

October 31st 1878: “I am waiting for you to give the opinion of several good theologians and Consultants of the sacred Congregation regarding the strict obligations which are imposed by the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously:

“1° On the Brothers as individuals, since they are the ones who commit themselves by this vow and that of poverty.

“2° On the houses which, in my opinion, contract no obligations and, consequently, can stipulate conditions with municipalities or families regarding admission of pupils, whether poor or rich, on the understanding, however, that the poor are always admitted free of charge”.

December 13th 1878: “It is good that you have consulted three theologians or canonists, but this is not enough. We need an official interpretation of articles V and IX, and only the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars can give it to us”.

In what seems to be the second page of this letter, the questions awaiting a solution are clearly stated:

“I. Does article V of the Bull forbid houses of the Institute to accept help in the form of money, and presents that parents of pupils in their classes offer them?

II. If houses cannot accept the alms and presents from pupils and their parents, what should we understand by the term ‘parents’ (in French, “parents” means either parents or relatives, Translator <sup>28</sup>)? Do we mean the father and the mother, or all the relatives, and to what degree?

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<sup>26</sup> This sentence sums up perhaps the whole position of the Superior. The vow of teaching gratuitously is a personal obligation which does not affect in any way either the communities or the Institute. Consequently, while the money would be collected by the community and not by each Brother individually, there would be no problem, at least as far as the vow was concerned.

<sup>27</sup> A wholly personal position. Many Brothers will refuse to admit that, in the matter of poverty, “the Jesuits have the same obligations as ourselves by their vows and their constitutions”.

<sup>28</sup> The problem comes from the fact that, in this text, the Latin “parentes” is translated by “parents” in French, in which this word can mean father and mother, or relatives. The whole of this question illustrates the importance attached to casuistic details.

“III. The Bull includes also (cf. Art. IX): Does this last vow, ‘*pauperes gratis edocendi*’, forbid houses to accept remuneration from pupils who are not poor?”

“IV. Does the vow ‘*pauperes gratis edocendi*’ oblige houses or only the Brothers ‘*ut singuli*’ who pronounced it?”

In those days the post was efficient! On December 16th, Brother Floride replied: “I was not satisfied simply to question Mgr de Luca and five other theologians or canonists orally: I gave them written copies of the doubts you were so good as to send me with your letter of the 13th instant; I gave them a copy of the Bull so that they could study it.”

“Mgr de Luca and the five others, questioned separately, were unanimous in their opinion that article V... is a rule which the entire Institute had wished to impose upon itself when it presented it to the Pope, asking him to approve it... In virtue of this rule... neither the Brothers nor the community can accept money or remuneration from them (the children) or their parents in the guise of payment for teaching...”

“As for article IX, which concerns the vows made by the Brothers individually, the words ‘to teach the poor gratuitously’ cannot authorise the Brothers or the community to accept remuneration from the rich. If they did so, they would violate the preceding law (article V) which enjoins the gratuity of teaching without distinction of both the rich and the poor”. The Procurator then goes on to explain the steps he will have

to take in order to work legitimately in two directions: to provide himself with the indispensable means for his upkeep, and to obtain from the Holy See the necessary authorisations for urgent or exceptional cases.

The next letter from the Superior was not long in coming: it arrived on December 20th 1878: “In response to your letters of the 16th and 17th instant, I have to say to you:

“1° That the five theologians you consulted seem to me to have understood our obligations well regarding the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously and the rule relating to gratuity. I said exactly the same thing at the 1861 General Chapter.

“There is no doubt that our vow to teach gratuitously is approved by the Bull, and as a consequence, is obligatory but only in the case of poor children.

“And so therefore, if remuneration is accepted from rich families, it is not the vow which is violated, but the rule contained in article V, if this rule concerns not only individuals but houses also. In fact, it is with this last meaning that it has been generally understood: it has always been accepted that houses cannot demand anything from families for the lessons their children receive in the Brothers’ classes.

“You say that the theologians are unanimous in recognising that communities can accept the alms given to them by the parents of their pupils, because of what is said towards the end of the Bull, that is, that the Brothers are authorised to receive the offerings of the faithful. It would be good,

however, to submit this point to the Sacred Congregation by a specific question.

2°(After referring to the various rescripts in force and to their different characteristics):

“It seems to me that it would be better to have a single rescript for the whole Institute, permitting the acceptance of remuneration for the maintenance of schools and communities without sufficient resources, wherever the Superior General thinks fit, and for as long as circumstances require it”.

Among the various points to be included in the Petition, he indicated: “Each house would have to have the permission of the Superior General to establish and collect remuneration, so as to avoid all abuse, and so that this remuneration be established only in the houses which really needed it.

“As this remuneration did not violate the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously, and concerned only the rule written in § V of the Bull, the Superior General, having the necessary authority, according to the Rule of Government chap XI, 7, «to exempt, and for some time, from the observance of certain rules», it is probable that the rule of gratuity is included among those from which the Superior General can prudently exempt, and for some time, but it would be good to let the Sacred Congregation once again rule on this point”.

There follows a draft copy of the Petition. It was all pure casuistry. On December 28th, he sent him further instructions <sup>29</sup>.

### The rescript

In order “to fulfil exactly the orders of the Superior General”, Brother Floride submitted the doubts and asked that “for the tranquillity of conscience of the Brothers”, His Holiness would deign to give an official ruling and make the necessary announcement.

After recalling rules 5 (gratuity of teaching) and 9 (vow of the Brothers), the petition gives a long quotation from the paragraph of the Bulle concerning goods: “We wish also, that the properties and any goods the said Institute possesses already justly and canonically, or which, with God’s help, it will acquire henceforth, by concessions from the Popes, the generosity of Kings and Princes, gifts from the faithful, and in every other way legitimate, may remain stable and in all their integrity, and that the present dispositions be always and remain in perpetuity in force, and obtain and produce their full and entire effects, etc”.

With such premisses as a backdrop, the situation is explained:

“In practice, the Institute has instructed gratuitously until now all children, poor and rich alike, in houses supported by funds from their foundation, or in others for which municipalities provided upkeep.

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<sup>29</sup> Letters from Brother Ilide to Brother Floride in the Generalate, Procurator General’s archives, box VII, dossier 130. Also the opinions of several theologians consulted. Letter from Brother Floride, dated december 16th 1878, in GA LD 252/4, dossier 3.

“But as the Institute, spread out almost all over the world, is being persecuted in one way or another everywhere, as is the case of other congregations involved in education, and in addition, is refused the subsidies it needs for the upkeep of the Brothers, for the evil purpose of making them abandon their schools, to the great detriment of Christian children, there is as a consequence an urgent need to know exactly the precise obligations and rights of the supplicants regarding gratuity in the instruction of children, and in what sense rules 5 and 9, mentioned above, should be understood”.

There were five questions:

“1° Although, in virtue of article 5, the Brothers, as individuals, cannot accept money or presents offered by the children themselves or by their parents, can communities accept gifts made by parents of pupils, not because of the lessons given, but as alms, in the same way as they can accept them from other faithful, in virtue of paragraph 24 of the said Bull?

“2° In places where the necessary resources are lacking for the upkeep of the Brothers, either because of persecution, or because salaries are being refused, or because not enough is provided by the founders, can the religious community, in order to be able to continue to instruct the children, accept and legitimately keep money raised by subscription and alms, even there are parents of pupils among the donors?

“3° In article IX we read: That the vows of the Brothers are of chastity...and of teach-

ing the poor gratuitously. Does this vow oblige individuals only or the communities themselves?

“4° In virtue of the said article IX, which imposes the gratuitous instruction of the poor, can the community (but not the Brothers individually), when resources for their upkeep are exhausted, accept remuneration from rich parents, to make up what is lacking from the foundation, either because its endowment has diminished or has been completely depleted?

“5° The Rule of Government of the Institute, chapter XI, 7, rules that the Superior General can exempt prudently and for a time, from the observance of a rule. This is what it actually says: «He will grant exceptional permissions, such as exempting prudently, and for some time, from the observance of certain rules»...In virtue of this Rule, are religious communities obliged to ask the Superior General for the authorisation to receive from parents of rich pupils a suitable and equitable remuneration, and can the Superior General grant the said authorisation for as much time as the indigence of the communities lasts?”

Up to this point, the petition expresses faithfully the thinking of the Superior General and is similar to that of 1861.

The response was as follows: “During the audience granted by the Most Holy Father to the undersigned, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, on January 10th 1879, His Holiness, after having examined the Doubts submitted, has ordered me to reply:



"To the first, second, third and fourth doubts only, AFFIRMATIVELY, so long as the present circumstances continue to exist.

"Notwithstanding all things to the contrary,

"Given at Rome...January 15th 1879"

Cardinal Ferrieri, Prefect.

With the same diplomacy as in 1861, the Roman Congregation leaves the doctrinal question to one side and grants a dispensation which will make it possible to live with a tranquil conscience <sup>30</sup>.

On February 19th, when the Procurator General gave the text to the Superior, he showed no disappointment: "Although the Holy Father replied affirmatively to only the first four doubts, and left the 5th without an answer, the concession is as broad as you could have hoped for, seeing that these 4 articles apply to all cases, to the whole Institute, for all the time that the cases mentioned in the petition persist, and in all countries" <sup>31</sup>.

At a time when the dedication of the Institute to the poor could not be doubted, attention is centred solely on juridical aspects, in order to bring about "peace of conscience". At stake is a peaceful conscience when circumstances make it necessary to collect money from pupils, in order to survive and maintain the service to the poor. Despite everything, the real effects will not be restricted to those sought by Brother Irlide.

## Consequences

Without any limits of time and place, the rescript of January 1879 <sup>32</sup> left the Institute plenty of room to manoeuvre. The practical application of the rescript was the first point that called for decisions. The Superior wanted to avoid abuses at any cost. As a consequence, and even though the rescript makes no mention of this, he reserved to himself the right to give the appropriate authorisation in each case. On March 19th, he sent the bilingual text of the rescript to all the Brother Visitors, accompanied by an explanatory circular (which was not to be publicised in any way) and an example of the permission which he reserved to himself the right to give.

The circular said: "Several of our communities have requested and obtained, in various circumstances, temporary permissions which dispense to a lesser or greater degree from rules or practices of the Institute regarding gratuity of teaching. Perhaps even zeal, which was not strictly so, but which was thought legitimate, led to cer-

<sup>30</sup> As a consequence, in the printed version of the rescript, only the first lines of the 5th question are given, followed by "etc", which makes it difficult to trace the complete text. The Latin text can be seen in GA LD252/4, dossier 3, and in French in LD 252/2, dossier 20.

<sup>31</sup> GA LD 252/4, dossier 9.

<sup>32</sup> Sometimes its date is quoted as January 10th, the date of the audience. Other times, as the 15th, the date on the document from the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars.

tain works being undertaken without permission, works which could not survive without resources from irregular sources.

“On the other hand, the budgetary allocations for the support of our establishments have been suppressed in certain communes, and although we are convinced that, in the interests of the Institute, it is necessary to close some schools, in order to assign the Brothers thus freed to systematic and prolonged study, to prepare for either the elementary or advanced Brevet examination, we believe it is our duty to do all in our power to ensure that these budgetary suppressions do not necessarily result in the future in the closure of all the establishments affected <sup>33</sup>.

“It was for the double purpose of being able to regularise the situation of certain works, more necessary now than ever before, for children and young people, and in the expectation of greater difficulties which might arise in this or that place through the loss of subsidies from the commune, that we wish to obtain an official interpretation of our vows and of our Rules, as well as of the strict obligations which they entail, both for the Brothers and for their houses.

“You will find enclosed, my very dear Brother Visitor, a document which will inform you of the answers given by the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, to the doubts submitted to it, and a copy of the permissions we might give to houses which need or will need to have recourse to them.

“It will be on the basis of a special report on each house prepared by you that the permissions will be granted to your District, and you will be careful that they receive no publicity outside the Institute. They can be mentioned to confessors who ask what they are”.

The Superior is stubborn: he had asked Rome for an official interpretation of points that were in doubt and he persists in seeing it in this light, and not simply as a dispensation. The same line of thought appears in the permission form, drawn up in the style of a legal document:

“We the undersigned, Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools,

“Given articles V and IX, and paragraph 24 (“we wish that in addition all the goods”) of the Bull of Approbation of our Institute;

“Given the interpretive Rescript concerning these articles and this paragraph, given at Rome on January 15th 1897, by the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars;

“Considering that (according to the report sent to us by our dear Brother.... Visitor of the District of ..., dated.....) our community in... does not have enough income for

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<sup>33</sup> The need to send Brothers off to do studies systematically was necessary for two reasons: inside the Institute, it was felt the Brothers were not sufficiently trained (a result of the excessively rapid expansion of the previous period); outside the Institute, the very predictable official requirements for qualifications. The Superior considered the two reasons with cold objectivity.

the upkeep of the Brothers and the classes; that, as a consequence, there is a need to make provision for it, in accordance with article 7 of chapter XI of the Rule of Government of our Institute, and in virtue of the concessions contained in the above mentioned Rescript...

“Authorise our said community in... 1° To accept alms, subscriptions and gifts, offered by charitable persons, even if they have children in our classes; 2° To accept even, if this is necessary, a small remuneration from the pupils belonging to well-off or rich families”<sup>34</sup>.

On July 26th 1883, another circular to the Visitors reinforces the defence measures against a too easy abandonment of the principle of gratuity. Both circulars were periodically referred to by the successors of Brother Irlide in an attempt to remind Brothers of the existence of this dispensation, which seemed to be taken advantage of with excessive ease and on an exaggerated scale.

As one might expect, a catalogue was drawn up at the same time of the towns in which the Brothers were authorised to use the rescript. Up till April 18th 1880, 24 towns were listed: 4 in Italy, 3 in Algeria, 2 in Tunisia, and the rest in France. But the list stops there...<sup>35</sup>.

On the other hand, there developed in the Institute a body of writing on the gratuity of teaching in general, for internal use only, and to which we will refer briefly later on.

## The 1882 General Chapter

In the midst of ever-increasing external difficulties, 1880 brought the Institute the joy of the 200th anniversary of its foundation. To prepare the Brothers spiritually for this occasion, the Superior reminded them that also De La Salle and his first companions were obliged to pacify enemy forces. They did so by, among other means, their “zeal for the Christian instruction of poor children”. He gives the example of Brother Barthélemy: “Hearing that a new community had been established at the gates of Paris, and that the Brothers, in return for the care they took of the poorest and most abandoned children, received only insults and contempt, he was overwhelmed with joy, hoping that he could find there the means of satisfying his ardent desire for mortification, poverty, insults and frugality...” “Generosity and gratuity of teaching” are among the supports and effects of the spirit of faith which Visitors and Directors must not allow to waste away<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Although the term “affirmative” on the rescript did not cover the 5th question, the Superior continued to use article VII of the Rule of Government, hiding, perhaps, behind the fact that the rescript did not use “negative” regarding the same question. It could be taken as a sign of a particular style.

<sup>35</sup> GA LD 252/4, dossier 1, contains the printed rescript, the confidential circulars dated March 19th 1879 and July 26th 1883, and the catalogue.

<sup>36</sup> Circular 18, dated May 24th 1880, p.6, 20, 25.

However, no feast can disguise harsh reality: even before a law was passed, and even ignoring legislation still in force, many municipal and departmental authorities hurried to replace religious by seculars in public schools. In the space of 4 years, the 1,024 Institute public schools, with their 219,545 pupils, were reduced to 540 schools with 104,193 pupils, and the trend seemed to be accelerating.

The first reaction of French Catholics was an extraordinary and touching effort to create and maintain private Christian schools to replace the secularised public schools<sup>37</sup>. The State took up the challenge and passed the 1881 and 1882 laws, making official qualifications for teachers obligatory, and opening secular and gratuitous public schools.

These measures, which did not catch the Superior unawares, inspired some guidelines he gave the Brothers. He did not forget to mention article V of the Bull “which obliges us to teach gratuitously, without any one of us being able to accept, and even less demand, remuneration or alms, as personal payment for lessons we have given. This obligation, which makes our function more honourable and meritorious, gives our teaching, as far as religion is concerned, special authority and effectiveness which, being of great benefit to souls, is highly esteemed by the Church”<sup>38</sup>.

The difficulty into which these laws – and others which were expected – put the Institute, added to other urgent needs, led the Superior to call a General Chapter which

opened on October 21st 1882<sup>39</sup>. Only one note has been preserved referring to the gratuity of teaching and the service of the poor: “It seems that in the past we have moved away enough from the spirit of our holy Rules regarding gratuity. By means of the rescript granted to us by the Holy See because of the difficulties of the times, and

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<sup>37</sup> Circular 24, dated January 3rd 1882, mentions among the more encouraging aspects of the year 1881, “considerable capital has been raised for the creation of free Christian schools. Their maintenance is assured either by foundations, or by subscriptions to which the rich contribute from their abundance, and the poor themselves claim the honour of adding the mite they cannot afford” (p.5). Circular 30 also, dated January 4th 1884, offers for the consideration of the Brothers the generous response of Catholics to the Church’s appeal for aid for schools (p.4).

<sup>38</sup> Circular 25, dated April 7th 1882, p.15. This applied only to private schools: in public schools, a law had just made gratuity obligatory in public schools, and had banned the teaching of religion.

<sup>39</sup> Circular 26, dated June 2nd 1882. A paragraph recommended the future Chapter to be sober regarding novelties: “After two centuries, our Institute must close the period of experimentation and new experiences. Henceforward, the circumstances we encounter will be similar to those that occurred in the past, and it is in the past that we should look for the rules of conduct for the future, instead of making new rules. However, if it seems absolutely necessary to make some new decisions, they should be for our Rules and our Constitutions what columns and buttresses are for buildings, that is, supports and bearings which consolidate what already exists, without damaging the unity, nor the character of the original plan” (p.45). This paragraph was re-issued a number of times during the 20th century.

only on a temporary basis, our schools are becoming paying schools too easily. To school fees is added the income from paid supervisions, and the presents from parents which are accepted very easily.

“It seems that, even taking into account the present serious circumstances, it would be possible to maintain intact gratuity, the essential principle of our Institute. For this to be possible, the Brother Visitors would have to make absolutely sure that a school was not fee-paying unless it was absolutely impossible for it not to be. 2° They would have to ensure, while bearing in mind the rescript, that the good tradition of our old Brothers, who refused to accept the smallest gift from the parents, was maintained. 3° They would have to keep close watch on the paid supervisions so that communities did not benefit from them in an unauthorised way.

“In all these cases, it would be useful perhaps for the Chapter to stress that the dispensations from our vow of teaching gratuitously are only temporary, and that the principle of gratuity is maintained in our Rules in all its integrity.

“On this same point also, it would perhaps be useful for the Chapter to recall the true principles to our Brothers, and point out to them the abuses which have crept into certain schools, so as to prevent the return of these abuses, and maintain intact the glory of our Institute which is enshrined in the absolute gratuity of its teaching”<sup>40</sup>.

In the Chapter documents, there is no sign of a commission, debate or decision regarding gratuity, but it is recorded that Brother Irlide spoke twice on the matter.

“Regarding the gratuity of teaching, the Brother Superior believes that if we are obliged to abandon it, we should do so only partially and little by little. The preservation of the public schools means that gratuity is preserved in principle; whereas the free schools, in the form in which they are generally established at the present time, tend to compromise this gratuity and make it an illusion. In fact, if schools are entirely gratuitous initially, it is to be feared that they will soon be transformed into paying schools.

“Parish committees impose real sacrifices on themselves in order to maintain free schools, and so it is proper we should impose some on ourselves also. As a consequence, the Brothers must reduce their expenses to what is strictly necessary, not allow themselves anything superfluous, and even impose some sacrifices on themselves regarding their upkeep. By doing this, we will be doing nothing more than following the example of many Christian families, who save money in order to help the schools and accomplish a greater good”.

<sup>40</sup> GA ED 231, dossier 6. There were probably other notes. The author of this one is Brother Louis de Poissy, a future Assistant who lasted for many years, and whose intellectual prestige was well established. He was not sparing in his strong criticism of certain decisions and opinions of Brother Irlide.

That was in the 9th session. Of the 23rd, we have the following report: "The gratuity of teaching has given rise to various practical difficulties over the years, especially following the secularisation of a great number of public schools. To safeguard the important interests of religious education and to reassure consciences, Brother Superior thought it best to explain to our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII the situation faced by our Brothers in many free schools, regarding gifts, subscriptions and school fees, and to ask His Holiness to resolve the doubts related to the practice of gratuity in these various cases. A rescript dated January 10th 1879 gave complete satisfaction to the Superior, who was quick to send copies of this rescript to the Visitors of the various Districts, accompanied by the necessary instructions.

"The Brother Superior has asked the Brother Visitors to see if, among the communities, there are not still some in a more or less irregular situation regarding gratuity. If there are, they are to send him a report about them so that he can give these houses the necessary authorisations"<sup>41</sup>.

From the circular in which Brother Irlide communicated to the Institute the results of the Chapter, one can deduce that some of the notes sent by the Brothers refer to private elementary schools. Noting the ideas

expressed in these notes, the Superior draws attention to two types of attitudes which should be condemned: "a) Not admitting poor pupils by preference when not all pupils applying can be admitted. We find it difficult to believe that this has happened in many places: it would be a fatal sign for our Institute, founded especially for the poor. The true and worthy sons of the venerable De La Salle «always show more affection for the poor than for the rich», as our holy Rules recommend in ch VII 13.

"b) Our Brothers themselves should not collect the sums offered or subscribed for the upkeep of the school. It is in fact more proper and greatly to be desired that our Brothers should not be involved in anything resembling the collection of a tax paid by the families of the pupils"<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> The General Chapter decided that the Register of Decisions would be limited to the essentials, and that a Supplement would contain more detailed information of each session. The last two quotations come from this Supplement without page numbers, deposited in GA ED 227. In *Register C*, p.124 and 140, the subject is barely mentioned.

The Supplement – which contains also the decisions of a Commission for the revision of the Rules (1883 and 1884) – stops before the 6th session of the 1884 General Chapter, leaving certain pages blank.

<sup>42</sup> Circular 27, dated January 3rd 1883, p.41.

## 5. BROTHER JOSEPH (1884 - 1897)

Brother Irlide had asked the 1882 Chapter to accept his resignation for reasons of health, but the Chapter had refused. His health grew worse and, realising that his end was near, he called a Chapter to elect a successor, as he lay on his death-bed.

### The 1884 General Chapter

The Chapter elected Brother Joseph as Superior, completed the Regime, and examined the notes sent by the Brothers. None of those preserved speak of the poor, or of gratuity. In the Chapter register, there is simply a reference to "a long discussion" which ended with a secret vote on two decisions of previous General Chapters, which were mutually contradictory, and had to do with the famous "free ink"!

Finally, the work of the Chapter is summarised in 5 decisions. The fifth of these runs as follows: "The General Chapter, asked to interpret article 9 of chapter VII of the Common Rule, which prescribes the provision of free ink to pupils, revokes the 17th decision of the 1822 General Chapter and, modifying an unpublished decision of the 1873 General Chapter, has decided that the point of Rule here in question, does not impose the provision of ink at the expense of the community; and that from now on, there is nothing to prevent this expense from being debited to the income from the sale of school materials"<sup>43</sup>.

### \* Messages of the Superior to the Institute

The backcloth continued to be the persecution, felt particularly acutely in France: much of it came in the form of educational legislation, tax laws and military service legislation. Behind all this, the official spokesman of the Institute saw the Satanic plot of the Freemasons, a view shared by the Pope. Faced with this suffering, which caused particular pain to a person of his sensitivity, the Superior did not weaken: his conviction that the Institute was the Work of God and accomplished the Work of God, inspired him with total confidence.

Confidence, but not conformity or passivity: the prayer and mortification, the humility and the regularity which he demanded of his fellow-Brothers was bound to hasten the triumph of the Kingdom of God. So that the Brothers could be in a position to collaborate actively in this victory, the Superior multiplied and encouraged certain means of formation: the generalisation of junior novitiates, better run novitiates, generalisation and organisation of scholasticates, month-long retreats in preparation

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<sup>43</sup> *GA Register C*, p.210 and 232. The importance given to this subject, and the total absence of any other topic concerning the gratuity of schools, or their option to serve a clientele from among the common people, is puzzling.

for perpetual profession, a 100-day second novitiate, publication (and this is his greatest work) of the three volumes of *Explanation of Christian Doctrine*, a course in basic religious instruction, written especially for the Institute. Wanting to give solidity, breadth and uniformity to the knowledge of the Brothers regarding their vows, Brother Joseph had some careful work undertaken which resulted in the publication, in 1891, of the *Instructions on the Vows, in the form of a catechism*. With this work, he hoped to establish definitively the "orthodoxy" of the Congregation in the matter<sup>44</sup>.

In his Circulars, Brother Joseph rarely referred to the poor or to gratuitous teaching. He chose, instead, topics such as the joys of the Institute, as for example, the progress being made in the cause of beatification and canonisation of the Founder, or the signs of growing fervour among the Brothers. He speaks of sad things also, such as the loss of municipal schools and the establishment of obligatory military service. The Circulars include ascetic exhortations to prayer, penance, devotional practices; encouragement to undertake Christian educational activities: first communion and faith support groups. This last topic is a particular favourite of his.

It is a pity, however, that there are no references to certain papal encyclicals. Those that are quoted, commented and recommended include: *Exeunte iam anno* (December 25th 1888, on well-ordered Christian life); *Quamquam pluries* (August 15th 1889, on devotion to St Joseph); *Octobri*

*mense* (September 22nd 1891, one of those on the devotion to the rosary), but there is not the slightest reference to *Rerum Novarum* (May 15th 1891), nor to any other piece of writing or speech by the Pope on the question of the workers. And this in spite of the fact that Brother Joseph recognised Leo XIII as the "defender and the protector of the poor and of the lower classes, and who had been rightly called the Pope of the workers"...the Incomparable Doctor who never ceases to enlighten the world by his immortal encyclicals"<sup>45</sup>.

But the Superior is clearly aware of the priority that the Institute must give to the poor: he knows that, in practice, the poor constitute the majority of those who benefit from its services; and he was concerned that the interests of the Brothers should not lead them to other things they preferred. He does not devote long paragraphs to the matter: a sentence is enough for him to slip in a reminder or a worry. The many families which entrust their children to the Brothers become "the most striking demonstration of the motivated preferences of the working class and of good citizens", just when the French State is preparing to expel from public schools "the disciples of the Founder of pri-

<sup>44</sup> The thinking behind the work – which is a little difficult to work out – is exclusively juridical. It was not possible to expect anything else at the time. In an appendix to this chapter can be found the section corresponding to the vow of gratuity.

<sup>45</sup> Circular 63, p.2. Circulars 48, 55 and 62 contain references to or quotations from the first 3 encyclicals mentioned in the text.



mary education in France, these teachers who, for the past 200 years during which, for this education, there was no legislation, no budget and no curriculum, gave to the children of the common people gratuitous instruction"<sup>46</sup>. Speaking to the young Brothers who have to interrupt their apostolic work to do their military service, he says: "...they want to ...tear you away...from these thousands of poor little children, whom you teach to love and serve Jesus". Thanks to the Catechism, "the Brother should serve up a meal for these dear little poor children of Jesus Christ", "but if he neglected his preparation, instead of bread and substantial dishes, he would offer them a stone!"<sup>47</sup>.

Speaking of the Founder, he pointed out as one of his characteristics his dedication to the humble and monotonous functions of teaching children, functions chosen by preference, at the price of eschewing all other ambitions<sup>48</sup>. He recalled that his dedication to the poor through the gratuitous schools was the way in which De La Salle procured the glory of God<sup>49</sup>. He quotes and comments with pleasure on the collect of the Mass of the recently beatified Founder: "O God, who for the purpose of giving Christian education to the poor, and of teaching little children the truths of salvation, have raised up the Blessed confessor John Baptist..."<sup>50</sup>.

It is not by chance that the longest paragraphs in which Brother Joseph explains and promotes the Lasallian apostolate to the poor, are quotations from the Meditations of the Founder, paragraphs which conclude

with the following comments: "We wish to speak about zeal for the Christian education of children and especially of poor children. At the same time as this zeal will obtain from devotion to the Child Jesus a more supernatural ardour, it will be our most effective means to glorify the divine Infancy. We shall try, therefore, to see with the eyes of faith, Jesus Christ himself in the little children who are entrusted to us. We shall devote ourselves to their instruction with all the more love as they are more poor and more bereft of this world's goods"<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> Circular 38a, p.6 and 11.

<sup>47</sup> Circular 55, p.9; circular 57, p.15.

<sup>48</sup> Circular 43, p.3 and *passim*.

<sup>49</sup> Circular 47, p.10-11. The stress is put on the seeking of God's glory, and the Circular points out that this was what De La Salle proposed in all his works: gratuitous schools, but also a boarding school for the Irish and at St Yon, Sunday Schools, the Seminary for country schoolmasters. The Institute at the end of the 19th century justified its own works by their similarity with those created by De La Salle. The case of boarding schools was an instance constantly quoted.

<sup>50</sup> Circulars 48, p.4 and 53, p.3-4. In the latter we find encouragement which, especially for those in charge of poor children, contains also a new view of his work: "If someone needs our service, however unimportant and contemptible the person asking for it, and however difficult or tiring the service may appear, let everything, I beg you, appear possible and even easy for the salvation of your brother. For it was to show us of what love and of what concern the soul is worthy, that God did not spare his own Son" (p.8).

<sup>51</sup> Circular 66, p.4-5, quoting MF 86; p.7-8, quoting MF 96; and p.11-12 MF 86. To the best of my

### \* The 1894 General Chapter

This Chapter was called because, 10 years having passed since the previous one, it was time to hold one.

Regarding gratuity and the service of the poor, the register of Chapter documents has practically nothing to say. It reported the Superior General speaking on this matter only on two occasions. During the 13th session, Brother Joseph "regretted that Brothers write in their memoirs that the programme of the baccalaureat must be now considered as the real concern of the Institute. Children of Blessed De La Salle, we are above all Brothers of the Christian Schools in which the poor have a right to the first place. He then recalled the origin and aim of our boarding schools".

Later, during the 24th session, he warned that "the qualifications of bachelor or graduate will be required only on a limited scale, so long as we remain faithful to the humble mission for which our Blessed Father founded the Institute primarily"<sup>52</sup>.

But there are signs that the matter was raised and, given the characters of the persons present, was perhaps spoken about with some heat on occasions. To give a general idea of the Institute, the Secretary had prepared a brief questionnaire which the Assistants were asked to answer. The information they gave had to include the characteristics of works, at least of those which belonged to Districts outside France. The most detailed answer came from Brother Junien who had responsibility for the houses

in South America. According to him, gratuity was total in Ecuador ("as we had it in France before the secularisation of primary education") and also in Chile ("including in the orphanage which has more than 200 children"); one of the two schools in Buenos Aires was gratuitous. The term "gratuitous" is not applied to the schools in Colombia, but some of them must certainly have been so<sup>53</sup>. The other reports do not go into such detail.

An unsigned note takes the defence of school fees and answers the objections of

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knowledge, the first texts which quote from the MR come from Brother Joseph (cf. CAMPOS I, p.57, note 2): "The General Idea of the Institute" of Brother Agathon was intended for the revolutionary leaders.

<sup>52</sup> GA Register C, p.286 and 303. Pages 290-291 deal with faith-support associations. Among those mentioned we find: in Paris, the Christian Trade Union for Commercial and Industrial Employees, with their offshoots: the Cooperative Society, the Mutual Aid Society, and the Free Employment Office. In St Etienne, the Free Employment Office and its People's Bureau; in Lille, Training Courses for Christian Teachers; in Belgium, spiritual accompaniment of teachers with diplomas from Carlsbourg and Malonne, with the crowning creation of a successful teaching Third Order of Blessed De La Salle.

<sup>53</sup> GA ED 232, dossier 14. The Brothers withdrew from the gratuitous school in Buenos Aires at the beginning of the following year. Brother Junien mentions that at Medellin, and even more at Bogota, "our Brothers have met several former students of Passy belonging to the leading families of the country, and occupying the highest positions in it. These Gentlemen urge the Brothers to open in Medellin and Bogota a boarding school like the one at Passy".

the supporters of total gratuity. The latter maintained that "the Institute was now coming closer to the middle classes and abandoning the common people". The supporter of school fees admits that De La Salle practised universal gratuity, but affirms that the Church no longer has the resources it had then, and Catholics (Catholic benefactor founders) could no longer afford to provide such support. He admits that, as a consequence, the Brothers' schools, although accessible free of charge to the poor, were in practice full of little bourgeois children: "well-off families...look for less working-class surroundings for their children, but something more refined". His answer to those who attack the boarding schools and the modern baccalaureat because they move the Brothers out of the social class in which the Founder wanted them, was that "the baccalaureat brings us a special category of pupil to whom we do a lot of good, and through whom we do a lot of good, by instilling in them an apostolic spirit. Pupils in boarding schools have much influence later on, and it is through their works that we will continue to reach the common people"<sup>54</sup>.

For his part, Brother Réticius, a fierce supporter of gratuity, has a long list of remarks made by the "remunerationists": "It is probable that, if the Blessed returned, he would apply the principle of gratuity in a different way"; "We would have to suppress some Districts if we went back to the system of absolute gratuity"; "Gratuity is impossible. The Committees are tired, and Directors are reduced to going out begging

every day, and this is a danger, wherever the maintenance of gratuity is obstinately defended"; "Gratuity is opposed to the fourth commandment which requires parents to give and pay for the spiritual as well as for the physical nourishment of their children"; "Gratuity often encourages laziness and lack of interest among parents, whose indifference increases at the same rate as public or private charities do more for them"; "Accusations, scandals in court often originate with certain little depraved and precocious beggars admitted to our schools"; "Gratuity puts us into a position where we have to fight and compete, which reflects badly on Catholic schools. With the masses of indigent and ill-disciplined children, our schools are no longer highly prized, and are empty of intelligent children capable of doing us honour"; "This category of pupils heaps insults on the Brothers during the parish catechism lessons, in the church, during the services, in the streets when the Brothers accompany them, in the neighbourhood of the school which has been deserted by tenants because of these implacable good-for-nothings"; "It is impossible

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<sup>54</sup> GA ED 232, dossier 3. The note refers to the rumours about the two classes of Brothers: those in boarding schools (the "Masters" or "Gentlemen") and the others. Writing in support of the former, the note says that "the envious would not have wanted their constant supervisions, their walks with the pupils, their nights in the dormitories" and that "the Brothers of the free schools have always preferred their freedom" to the work of boarding schools.

to give a school a good reputation when the intake comes from such a background". To demolish such arguments, he uses numerous pages from his written work<sup>55</sup> and many hours giving his conferences.

The 6th Chapter Commission concerned itself with "Schools, boarding schools, faith-support works". Replying to a note which regrets that schools admit rich children in preference to the poor, the Commission adapted the words of Brother Irlide in Circular 27, and stated the principle that "certain vagrant children, who are depraved by nature or habit, must not be admitted or kept, even in our schools, especially because they are poor, if they are dangerous for the other pupils and could drive them all away"<sup>56</sup>.

Other information provided by the Commission report concerns certain special types of work, such as the St Luc schools, the Arts & Métiers establishments in Lyon, St Etienne, Vaugirard, Lille, Rodez, Quimper, Reims, St Chamond, Rives de Gier, Grenoble, "and perhaps in other places in which can be seen one of God's great works, which are eminently social, in the Christian sense of the word".

And as Brother Joseph had expressed his fear, shared "by many other enlightened minds", that our batchelors were moving our pupils from the social stratum that was theirs, the writer of the report feels the need to tranquilise him by means of an enquiry he has led himself: 1° In various boarding schools, in addition to the modern baccalaureat, pupils are offered also technical,

commercial or agricultural courses, left to the choice of the pupils; 2° At least half of the batchelors taught in our big boarding schools go home and take up the profession of their parents; 3° In our boarding schools, our pupils keep their simplicity and frank openness. Consequently, he concludes that "as far as the change in social class of our boarders is concerned, it seems that there is nothing to worry about"<sup>57</sup>.

### \* The last Circulars of Brother Joseph

Founded for children, and especially for poor children, the Institute has a specific field of action it must not leave. This worries the Superior and he constantly says so.

Brother Joseph communicates the results of the Chapter in all honesty, and transmits the following soothing message to the Institute from the capitulants: "Take care that the education given in our boarding schools does not tend to change the social class of our pupils; preserve them as far as possible from those ambitious aspirations, which are as dangerous for individuals as they are for

<sup>55</sup> GA EG 346/11: *Memoir on gravity*.

<sup>56</sup> GA ED 232, dossier 12: Report of the 6th Commission, § VIII.

<sup>57</sup> GA ED 232, dossier 13. The report knows hardly anything about what happens outside France. In a note, it mentions the good that can be produced by talks on social matters, such as those which are given in the boarding schools in St Etienne and Dijon, and in the Arts and Crafts De La Salle School in Lyons. Brother Pigménion, headmaster of the latter, sent a note to the Chapter to ask it to publish a small school textbook on Social Economy (dossier 11).

society itself. The Chapter was happy to note, from the detailed information that was made available, that our boarding and our professional schools, far from contributing to the social advancement of our pupils, confines them to their modest aspirations”.

But, and the Assembly repeated it with insistence, according to the Bull and the Rule, “we must take care to instruct principally poor children”; “it was for the purpose of providing a decent and Christian education for the children of the artisans and the poor, that the Christian Schools were founded”. It is from there that comes the tender love, the preference for the poor, the resemblance with them, which must distinguish the Brothers, guided by faith <sup>58</sup>.

The Superior is concerned also about the studies of the Brothers, who must study and prepare to be competitive in the best conditions, but within certain limits, which he does not fail to point out: “Some notes seemed to be unclear when speaking of the studies of the junior novices...The studies of a junior novice are not those of a junior seminarist, or of a pupil wishing to enter some professional or advanced school. Good primary studies are what is important and what is quite sufficient for our junior novices. To aim higher, means distorting judgment, often giving birth to a silly vanity, and forming something quite different from future Brothers of the Christian Schools” <sup>59</sup>. That is what the text says: we may have other views.

Children, poverty, catechesis, Christian education, zeal, holy teachers, all these can

be found in the few lines that follow, and which constitute his last New Year’s greetings: “And since every Order, every Institute must make itself particularly pleasing to God by the faithful practice of the virtue corresponding to its own specific aim, let us not lose from sight that, if the Holy Church has entrusted to us what it holds most dear, that is, children, and especially poor children, it is above all so that we may instruct them in the holy doctrine and form them in the practice of the evangelical virtues. No doubt...you are lavish in your dedication and your zeal, showing such generosity and constancy that our enemies themselves are astonished”. But this zeal must

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<sup>58</sup> Circular 69, p.28-29. The exhortation is a string of quotations from MF 80,96, 133, 166, 173.

Regarding the good done in boarding schools, one can compare it with the document presented by Brother Philippe to Pius IX. The 1894 Chapter continued to warn against the creation of small boarding schools, but it praised the good that was done in the *caméristats* (p.28).

The Chapter also sent a message to the Pope, in which he explained that “despite the persecution, their schools and their works had multiplied, and that the Christian teaching received seems to have borne admirable fruit in the multitudes of children and young people who frequent them, and who, for the most part belong to this working class which is the predilection of Your Holiness” (p.62).

<sup>59</sup> Circular 69, p.11. In pages 17-20, there is a long description involving examples of faith-support groups. Special stress is laid on the St Labre Association, some of whose members founded the Christian Trade Union for commercial and industrial employees. There is mention also of a Christian Teachers’ Association in Paris.

become each time more pure and more supernatural, so as always to give the first place to the one "who can best preserve and

make Jesus Christ grow in the soul of the child" <sup>60</sup>.

## 6. BROTHER GABRIEL MARIE (1897 - 1904) <sup>61</sup>

### \* The 1897 General Chapter

The death of Brother Joseph on the first day of January 1897 made it necessary to call a General Chapter. A few Brothers sent in notes or memoirs on gratuity. While not numerous, these were a novelty, as in preceding Chapters there had been almost none at all. All those that have been preserved protest against the spread of remuneration in the elementary schools, and demand with greater or lesser urgency the return to what they considered to be the original practice of the Institute. All present gratuity as being the indispensable means to put schools at the effective service of the poor; they speak against the contempt in which the poor are held; against the spread of boarding schools and similar institutions; against the excessively advanced curricula of such establishments. There are even those who warn against the danger of the formation of two classes of Brothers <sup>62</sup>.

The Commission charged with examining the project proposed to the Chapter expresses three wishes in the conclusion to its report, wishes which share the sentiments of the notes from the Brothers: "1° In the future, the Institute should no longer accept the direction of a school supported totally or partially by school fees in whatever form.

2° When schools have to be closed, the paying school should be suppressed by preference. 3° With prudence and wisdom, and as circumstances allow, the use of school fees should be ended in the places where it has been tolerated, so as to return to the conditions of strict gratuity" <sup>63</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> Circular 73, p.6-7.

<sup>61</sup> In 1904, the period treated in this chapter ends, but brother Gabriel Marie continued as Superior till 1913.

<sup>62</sup> Notes kept in GA ED 223, dossiers 11 (Br Rainfroy), 12 (Br Lincinus), 15 (Bros Altigien Louis, Angelbert, Idelphus, Calixien, Lincinus, and three pages of a report of Commission 12, the 4th page of which has found its way into dossier 7). Brother Calixien was the Sub-Director of the Tours boarding school, Brother Lincinus, in charge of a neighbourhood gratuitous school in Angoulême, and the other four were in the Generalate: Brother Rainfroy as master of novices, Brother Angelbert as his assistant, Brother Altigien Louis as director of scholastics, and Brother Idelphus as Sub-Director of the Secretariat.

<sup>63</sup> GA ED 233, dossiers 1, 7, 9. Commission 6 dealt with boarding schools. In its report (dossier 7), it refutes, without naming the author, Brother Rainfroy's note. For its part, the 1st Commission (Administration) produced a concise report on boarding school finances: "But, for 12 to 15 years now, the thirst for building has invaded our large establishments and has profoundly changed their financial situation", and it mentions 19 boarding

The new Superior intervened in the discussion on the report, to emphasise:

“1° That the principle of gratuity, for our Institute, was unassailable, given our traditions, our Rules and our Bull of Approbation. Without the obligation of gratuity for the Institute and for the communities, our special vow of teaching gratuitously would have no meaning, no reason for existing.

“2° For serious motives, because of the misfortunes of the times, and in order not to sacrifice existing works of great value, the Holy See, within determined limits and for a time, granted dispensations from such an essential obligation.

“3° This does not mean that one can use these dispensations to create new works or develop unduly those that exist: this would mean giving them an authority they do not have.

“4° These dispensations must be used prudently, therefore, and in particular, Brothers must, as far as possible, not be personally involved in collecting school fees”.

In a later session, the wishes are approved and sent to the administration <sup>64</sup>.

### \* The Circulars of Brother Gabriel Marie

They reflect a great concern for regularity, with a possibly excessive insistence on its most verifiable aspects <sup>65</sup>. If the Superior embodies in an eminent fashion a certain fundamentalism, it is also a trend both in and outside the Institute. In this context, it is natural that doctrinal developments

should above all take the form of the most exact definition possible of the gratuity of teaching, its scope and its obligations; while only allusions are made casually to the poor, to workers and to the common people. But it is taken for granted, and is sometimes expressed, that the purpose of Brothers' gratuity is to make Christian schools accessible to the common people, and that this is the reason for the existence of the Institute.

In the Circular which reported on the General Chapter, the Superior devoted three pages to this subject. The Assembly did not make any particular decisions, because “our Rules are very explicit” in this matter, but it did accept the wishes presented by the Commission.

Returning to his intervention at the Chapter, the Superior recalls that “our Congregation has always considered gratuity of teaching as constituting a great treasure, as

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schools (one in Rome, the others in France), whose financial situation had been ruined or seriously compromised by building expenses: the financial help that the Institute hoped to receive from these institutions, was becoming a source of worry” (dossier 3).

The Chapter praises what is already being done in the Arts and Crafts schools; Brothers in the United States can display proudly what they are doing in their “protectories”.

<sup>64</sup> GA Register C, p.369-370 and 383.

<sup>65</sup> The glorification of the Founder, canonised in 1900, was taken to be the canonisation of his achievements and his writings, and in particular of those which were of a more legislative and regulatory character: the *Rule, Conduct of Schools*.

its most precious jewel, its glory in the eyes of men, and its guarantee of the Lord's blessings. This gratuity was the essential and indispensable means of attaining the specific aim of the Institute. It has as its aim, in fact, the Christian education of the children of the artisans and the poor, that is, of those who, obliged to work all day long to earn their living, could not pay school fees without imposing upon themselves excessively great sacrifices. To oblige them to pay these fees meant in practice denying the children access to the schools. The choice was, therefore, to maintain the Christian schools gratuitous or to close them".

After recalling that gratuity, bequeathed by the Founder, was both a personal and a community obligation, he turned to contemporary problems: "The difficult circumstances in which we find ourselves have obliged the Superiors, to their great regret, to ask the Holy See for the necessary dispensations, so as not to be obliged to close, through lack of resources, schools in which much good was being done, and whose disappearance would have caused serious harm to the cause of Christian education. But the Institute could never consider as a great advantage in itself a means which, in addition to other unfortunate consequences, strips the teacher of his halo of gratuity, and sometimes even deprives of the benefit of Christian instruction several of these dear little poor children for whom principally Blessed de La Salle founded his work".

Seeing that among Catholic militants there were objections to gratuity, the Super-

rior reaffirms the standpoint of the Institute: "There have been occasions when, in order to make the unavoidable collection of school fees more acceptable, and thus safeguard the existence of a school, people outside our Institute have explained the advantages of remuneration, and have tried even to bring absolute gratuity into discredit. And yet, however great the benevolence, zeal and dedication may be that inspired these statements, experience and reason show us, as far as we are concerned, the numerous disadvantages of remuneration". He then gives some examples: "For the teachers, the obliteration of the exact meaning of gratuity; for the community, moral preoccupations, often quite legitimate, over the refusal or dismissal of pupils unable to pay the fees; for the children, the almost obligatory distinction between rich and poor, something very humiliating, given present-day public moral attitudes".

The same Circular defended the legitimacy and usefulness of boarding schools, but on certain conditions: "However real the good produced by our boarding schools, we cannot forget that the primary and direct purpose of our Institute, the purpose for which it was principally established, was the charity schools, schools for the children of the artisans and the poor. That is why these latter schools must always occupy the first place in our Institute, both by their number and by the special attention that it gives them". The question of two classes of Brothers had come up occasionally. In the Chapter, "it was said, not without reason, that it



would be very useful if all the Brothers could work, at least for a certain time, teaching poor children". This way of doing things would be good training for Brothers, and would help them to love and admire more the works of the Institute <sup>66</sup>.

His first visit to Rome as Superior enabled him to visit the Brothers' institutions and communities in Italy. In his report, he does not fail to draw particular attention to those that were gratuitous and catered for the working class and very needy children, as in Biella, Piacenza, Genova, Torino, in certain houses of the District of Rome, and in the French Districts of Lyon, Chambéry and Avignon <sup>67</sup>.

We can summarise as follows the various Institute options – associated or separate – which are repeatedly mentioned in many Circulars: primary schools: yes; paying schools: no, or as few as possible; boarding schools: yes, but as a secondary concern; technical education: yes; classical education: no; Brothers' studies in accordance with these guidelines; in any case, as a consequence, undisputed priority for religious teaching <sup>68</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> Circular 75, p.22-25 and 46-51. In the light of the virulence that characterised the question of classical studies in some Brothers' schools, it was stated that, if our boarding schools remained within the limits of the Rule, "they respond to a need of the present time. They offer the middle class, whose role seems destined to become more and more important, an effective antidote to the illness of upward social mobility, which is one of the most serious dangers of contemporary society" (p.68).

If the Circulars which carry the signature of Brother Gabriel Marie do not have same unction as his predecessor's, they do have a transparent clarity. One may or may not be in agreement with his thinking, but one knows perfectly clearly what his thinking is.

<sup>67</sup> Circular 76, p.4, 5, 8 9, 26. On pages 10 and 25, he takes advantage of the opportunity to attack the supporters of Latin: "In Rome itself, in the classical fortress of the most pure Latinity, where everything leads or seems to lead to the worship of ancient Letters, in this city which is not an industrial town (and we must be glad of this), the great Leo XIII, with a view to safeguarding youth, thought it necessary to organise technical courses, in order to respond to the needs of contemporary society". This description of the Istituto de Merode in Rome, was taken to be a papal blessing on all technical, agricultural and commercial schools, and a condemnation of all those trying to introduce Latin.

The boarding school in Lyons was particularly dear to the Superior "because it has never compromised directly or indirectly over the forbidden fruit of the Rule, secondary classical education". The fact of saying this seems to imply that others, and not only in the United States, had compromised, directly or indirectly, over the said fruit...

See also Circular 113, p.4, 5, 11, 15.

<sup>68</sup> Circular 79, p.3-4; Circular 80 (on Brother Bénilde) p.8-9, 29,32,41,45; Circular 81 (to the Brothers of the United States, in French and in English, on Latin) p.12,16, 20; Circular 82, p.4; Circular 85, p.4; Circular 88, p.3 (the Pope of the workers, an Institute for the children of the artisans and the workers) p.7; Circular 90, p.6, 9,10,16; Circular 91, p.6; Circular 97a, p.21-22; Circular 99 (reflections on the canonisation of the Founder), p.4, 12; Circular 125, p.6 (in the audience described in it, Pope St Pius X designates the Brothers as the "apostles of the catechism", a title the Institute will not forget).

Circular 92, p.27-28, speaks of retreats for lay teachers, whether employed in the schools of the Brothers or former students of Lasallian training colleges, or linked to the Brothers in some other way.

### **Other texts on the much discussed topic of gratuitous teaching**

Before going any further, it seems useful to stop here for a moment to examine other views regarding the dispute over the gratuity of teaching, either in principle, or because of its practical implications. We need to return to the 1879 rescript.

#### **The text and the context**

Initially, the text of the rescript itself, considered to be an interpretation, was itself examined. And so there came into existence a sort of "interpretation of the interpretation"! For example, the 3<sup>o</sup> question submitted to the Pope offered an alternative, so to which of the two possibilities does the adverb "affirmatively" of the Holy Father apply? Another example: Why does not the rescript resolve the 5<sup>o</sup> question? Because a "yes" would have rendered useless the answer given to the four preceding questions, and would have excessively increased the power of the Superior, while a "no" would have been an insult; etc...<sup>69</sup>.

In the meantime, in France, "circumstances" spread and take root, and seem to be, in reality, the stable elements constituting the new situation. The gratuity which the Brothers had so fiercely defended in their schools, and over which they had fought the State to the bitter end, was now imposed by the State (June 16th 1881) in all public schools, in which the Brothers found it increasingly difficult to remain. Driven into the private school sector, they are welcomed

with open arms by Catholics of all classes, who make generous financial sacrifices to maintain religious education.

#### **In favour of paying schools**

Needs were enormous, and certainties were crumbling: voluntary contributions began to be insufficient, and it became necessary to collect fees. From whom? What had begun through necessity was now becoming a permanent and accepted practice. The supporters of fee-paying Catholic schools could support their view by quoting the very explicit words of Cardinal Guibert, Archbishop of Paris: "All the same, my very dear Brothers, it would be neither just nor wise to leave only to well-off people the burden of these alms, more precious than any other, which ensure that the souls of little children receive the bread of truth. Even when the needs of the body are concerned, alms are only a remedy. Alms should alleviate the penury of the genuinely poor: they must not encourage laziness and slackness! This is true also of spiritual needs. The father of a family who, by his work, provides for the material welfare of his children, must provide also for the needs of their souls, and it is only to the extent that he lacks the necessary means that he must accept help from others. From this point of view, the general application of the false and dangerous system of gratuity to schools has spread errors that must be opposed. It has often been

<sup>69</sup> Evidence clearly of an earlier age, in GA LD 252/4, dossiers 4 to 8.

said that there is nothing more deceptive than this gratuity, which is always accompanied by a considerable increase in school expenses. Another effect of this so-called gratuity is to accustom moderately well-off parents to lose interest in a sacred duty, and to dispense themselves from an obligatory watchfulness. Not paying for the lessons their children receive, they neglect to control them”<sup>70</sup>.

The bishop was concerned with the sacred duties of parents. Other supporters of the paying schools had set their sights lower: thanks to remuneration, Catholic schools will have the best pupils, the most intelligent pupils, those from the “best families”, and will succeed in raising their social and “moral” level. As for the “God-less schools”, the public secular schools, these will take all the other pupils, those whose parents do not care, those who will always be at the bottom of the social scale, and will never have positions of command or influence, those who are badly dressed, uncombed, flea-ridden, those who have no “connections”, the good-for-nothings, the scrapings of the barrel.

These were the ideas adopted by the Société Générale d'Éducation, founded in 1880 to promote Catholic education; these are the ideas that it promulgated tirelessly in its newsletter. In this way, the Institute of the Brothers, after being obliged to fight governments in defence of gratuity, now had to oppose (or was tempted to) the Catholics of a certain social level: the hierarchy, the clergy, the Catholic middle class<sup>71</sup>. De-

fended by Catholic society and endorsed by the highest echelons of the hierarchy, these ideas affected the Brothers also, although it is difficult to gauge to what extent.

### **The official reaction of the Brothers**

The Brothers' conscience could not tolerate this attitude in silence indefinitely. On March 19th 1879, Brother Irlide warned the Visitors about “misunderstood zeal”, and the measures taken on the same date were intended to put a stop to real and possible abuses. On July 26th 1883, he wrote to the Visitors again: “It appears that the unfortunate circumstances which obliged us to have recourse to the Holy See (in 1879)... are going to continue for much longer than we were able to foresee. For fear that, as time goes on, abuses will be introduced because certain Directors will not be careful enough

<sup>70</sup> From a pastoral letter dated March 6th 1885. His successor, Mgr Richard, had struck the same chord in December of the previous year, at an assembly of the Association of the Venerable John Baptist de La Salle, an association intended to promote and fund recruitment for the junior novitiates of France (cf. GA LD 252/4, dossier 21).

<sup>71</sup> Generally speaking, one can say that, in reality, people themselves had not changed their attitudes much, but that rather it was the political tasks that had changed. It was the middle class which made it difficult for the Brothers to maintain their traditional gratuity, a middle class that came into power after the 1789 Revolution. Its Catholic alternative, excluded from power, is the one which expresses its views through the Newsletter of the General Society of Education. Some examples of its opposition to gratuity can be found in GA LD 252/1, dossier 23; 252/4, dossiers 21 and 24; 252/5, dossier 1.

about remaining as close as possible to the Rules and the traditional practices of our Institute concerning gratuity of teaching, we believe we must draw your most serious attention to a point of such importance”<sup>72</sup>.

His successor did not accept the situation either. In 1886, Brother Joseph wrote a Circular addressed to all the Brothers. After recalling briefly the history of gratuity, he admitted “that the collection of school fees, whether in part or in full, according to the needs of different localities, was covered at the present moment by the sovereign approbation of the Holy See. But far from rejoicing at this situation, we accept it on the contrary with regret, and we long with all our heart for more prosperous times which will enable us to take up again in all their fullness the practices we have been obliged to infringe.

“We will never consider as an advantage for our Institute a situation which keeps out of our classes those that Our Lord Jesus Christ came to console in their sufferings and help in their abandonment.

The regret for their absence will never be compensated for, in our eyes, by the consideration that the «social class of the pupils» of certain schools had gradually risen when they became paying schools”. What reasons prevented the publication of this Circular?<sup>73</sup>

The archives of the Institute contain material showing the reactions of other Brothers in defence of gratuity. One of their most enthusiastic and uncompromising spokesmen was Brother Réticius, Director of the

second novitiate from 1887 to 1914, and Assistant from 1891 to 1913. This double responsibility provided him with an international platform from which he upbraided mercilessly the “remunerationists” outside the Institute (members of the Society mentioned earlier), and inside the Institute (the Brothers, including quite a number of the 1894 Capitulants). His basic thinking was summed up in his conviction that only gratuity enables the Institute to accomplish its specific purpose, which is the Christian education of the children of the artisans and the poor. This basic idea is supported by quotations from very prolix texts. To the articles of the Rule and of the Bull one might expect, are added numerous passages taken from the Meditations of the Founder, and many other arguments drawn from his good knowledge of the history of the Institute, arguments from the court case with the municipality of Boulogne in about 1780, the Chapter decisions before and after the Revolution, the Circulars of various Superior

<sup>72</sup> GA LD 252/4, dossiers 1 and 19. In the first letter, he plans to close some schools because they are understaffed. He gives his criterion: “Our intention, and our duty, is to close first of all those that infringe most the Rules and the practices of the Institute regarding gratuity”. Consequently, he asks all the Visitors to inform him “without delay, which schools in your District admit proportionally the fewest poor pupils, and in which remuneration is collected for the children of rich or well-off families”.

<sup>73</sup> Rough drafts in GA LD 252/4, dossiers 18 and 22. It was planned to quote almost the whole of the Circular dated July 26th 1883.

Generals, etc. From his point of view, all the objections made to the Brothers' gratuity were unfounded. He gave what he considered to be a definitive refutation to a long list of these objections <sup>74</sup>.

The voice of Brother Réticius is probably the loudest, but not the only one in this dispute. Other Brothers objected also because they thought that the Institute had abandoned gratuity too easily. Others went so far as to predict serious misfortunes for the Institute because of this attitude, and in order to avoid them, they demanded a rapid and heroic return to gratuity "as it was before 1861".

Along a parallel course, casuistry regarding the 5th vow continued to develop, before the "Catechism of the Vows" and after. An example: in 1862, in the article of the Rule which listed the vows, the vow "to teach gratuitously" was given as "to teach the poor gratuitously", but in the formula of the vows, Brothers continued to say "to teach gratuitously". So, what was the obligation of the vow? Another example: the explanation given in chapter XVIII of the Rule, maintained without any change since 1726, did not agree with the Catechism. Which was the valid reference? With these questions and others, the so-called "peace of conscience" ran the risk of never being attained! <sup>75</sup>.

### The rescript of 1901

The most enduring of all these questions had to do with the number of obligations contained in the vow. Some said that it was

a vow of teaching gratuitously, with all the stress on "gratuitously". Others maintained that the vow contained two components: the vow of teaching, and the vow of doing so gratuitously, with the stress therefore on both "teaching" and "gratuitously".

There is no point of going into the pettifoggling arguments based on this way of looking at the vow. On the eve of the Chapter due to endorse the definitive revision of the Rule, the government of the Institute once again had recourse to Rome in order to obtain an "official interpretation". Once more, experts in theology and canon law were called upon to make their pronouncements. Finally, the Petition was submitted to the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars:

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<sup>74</sup> The text of the *Memoir on Gratuity* of Brother Réticius can be found in GA EG 346/11 (copy) and LD 252/1, dossier 10 (partial draft). The refutation of the objections gives the impression of passing over certain ones in seven league boots! The texts of other authors, some inspired by the same ideas, others with their own, can be found in LD 252/1, dossiers 7, 8, 9, 18, and in EG 346/9, cahiers A and B (2 copies from different times), C, D, E, and another without classification.

Some of these texts bring to mind a plan of the government of the Institute to diffuse, with the help of conferences or courses, a uniform teaching promoting gratuity.

<sup>75</sup> In addition to the documents quoted in our preceding note, casuistic type texts can be found in GA LD 252/1, dossiers 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19 20, 24; LD 252/2, dossier2; LD 252/4, dossiers 4, 5, 6, 7. etc...

“Most Reverend Eminence,

“Brother Gabriel Marie submits that a doubt has arisen among some of the religious of the Institute regarding the special vow “of teaching the poor gratuitously”, a vow explicitly formulated in the Rule of the Institute, and included in the Bull of Approbation of Benedict XIII.

“The Bull says the following regarding the purpose and the vows of our Institute:

“§ Primo: Videlicet, quod ipsi (Fratres) sub clientela SS. Infantis Jesu et Patrocinio S. Joseph instituti, hoc maxime cavere debeant ut pueros præsertim pauperes, ad ea quæ ad bene christianæque vivendum pertinent erudiant: Instituti illorum dos præcipua et quasi spiritus Instituti, puerilis institutionis ad christianæ legis normam, zelus esse debeat.

“§ Nono: Quod vota Fratrum sint, castitatis, paupertatis, obedientiæ et permanentiæ in dicto Instituto, necnon pauperes gratis edocendi cum hoc tamem quod eosdem Fratres a votis simplicibus Romanus Pontifex, pro tempore existens possit absolvere.

“Regarding this vow (pauperes gratis edocendi) it was asked:

“a) Does the said formula “pauperes gratis edocendi” imply two distinct obligations sub voto, namely:

“1° that of teaching the poor,

“2° that of gratuity in the teaching of the poor?

“b) Does the said formula “pauperes edocent gratis” imply a single obligation sub

voto, that is, that of gratuity of the teaching given to the poor?

“In this case, the obligation of teaching the poor would be prescribed not sub voto, but because the Rules and obedience impose it on each individual, in accordance with the aim of the Institute, as it is expressed in article 1 of the said Bull of Approbation: ‘ut pueros præsertim pauperes...erudiant’.

“To put an end to the disturbance and difficulties which differences in interpretation could engender, deign, Your Eminence, to give, with the authority you have as Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, the official and authentic answer to this doubt”.

On February 12th 1901, the answer was ready, signed by the Prefect, Cardinal Gotti:

“The Sacred Congregation...for Bishops and Regulars, after mature consideration, gives the following answer:

“- Ad primum: a) Negative.

“- Ad secundum: b) Affirmative”.

The answer confirms the “Catechism of the Vows”: the matter of the vow is in the adverb “gratuitously”.

### \* The revision of the Rules

The 1901 General Chapter. A revision of the text of the Rules had already been asked for before 1860. In the time of Brother Philippe, it had been adjourned. Brother Irlide’s attempt had come to nothing. Under Brother Joseph, the existing text had been republished three times.

In 1879, his successor relaunched the project and spurred on the work. In the case of the Common Rules, the guiding principle was to return as exactly as possible to the 1718 text, considered to be the authentic Rule of the Founder. This choice had repercussions on the vows: the vows the Brothers pronounced were in accordance with the Bull of 1725 <sup>76</sup>.

When the new General Chapter met, the recent canonisation of the Founder was still a talking point, as was the outstanding success obtained at the Universal Exhibition of Paris in 1900, and legislation against religious congregations <sup>77</sup> in France was increasing. The convocation Circular briefly set out its aims: "The revision of the Common Rules, begun in the first months of 1879, and the preparation of the Rule of Government have just been completed. It remains now to have this work examined with care, modified if there is need, and approved by the Body of the Institute". In addition, the Chapter will have to complete the Regime, give its attention to the devotion the Institute should show to its Founder, and study what the Brothers with the right to do so will submit for its examination in their written notes <sup>78</sup>.

The working party which had prepared the revised text had had serious difficulties with chapter XVIII of the Common Rules, and in particular regarding the obligations resulting from the vow of teaching gratuitously. In its opinion, everything should be reduced to one clear statement, such as: "By the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously,

the Brothers commit themselves not to require nor accept, even for their community, anything at all from the children of the artisans and the poor or from their parents by way of remuneration for their teaching".

On the other hand, the same group openly admitted that "despite the wish that we have to see gratuity re-established as widely as possible, we cannot deny nor hide the situation in which we find ourselves. Too many schools have ceased to be gratuitous. The text of the Rule does not correspond to reality. This can trouble consciences or stimulate requests for explanations". It suggested therefore some questions for which satisfactory and standard answers could be prepared in advance, foreseeing that they would not fail to be raised at the Chapter. For example: How can the definition of the vow and the Rule of gratuity be reconciled given the generalised existence of boarding schools? How to justify to the Brothers the existence of fee-paying day boarding

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<sup>76</sup> Everything is inspired by a very material view of what constitutes fidelity to the Founder and what, later on will be known as a "return to the sources". Those close to the Superior, who maintain that the 1726 edition should be taken as the basic text, are no less fundamentalist.

The desperate eagerness to discover the original literal formulation of texts was accompanied by the extolling of St John Baptist de La Salle as "our Model and Legislator", the title given him in a constantly recommended prayer.

<sup>77</sup> Legislation that the Brothers succeeded in sidestepping, and for the last time, thanks to Napoleon's approbation.

<sup>78</sup> Circular 105, dated June 14th 1901, p.2.

schools or day schools which offer advanced or complementary primary education? How to explain that school fees have been established in a number of ordinary primary schools? What is understood by teaching which complies with the curriculum outlined in the Bull of Approbation? <sup>79</sup>.

During the Chapter, a commission supported a note "requesting the re-establishment of gratuity as far as possible and noting with sadness that certain Brothers consider fees as a means of using selection which leaves them only with the elite (as they say)". The same note wished to condemn a certain tendency to put better teachers in paying schools than in poor schools. <sup>80</sup>. Another Commission reports a note which condemns instances where a certain number of pupils have been expelled from schools for not paying the fees, and it adds: "If we wish God to bless our Institute, we must not deviate it from its purpose, which is the Christian and gratuitous instruction of the artisans and the poor" <sup>81</sup>.

When the Chapter dealt with the articles of the Common rules relative to the vow of gratuity, the draft of the preceding commission on article 7 was rejected with almost no discussion, after certain explanations had been given. It was admitted that "according to the Rule" refers more particularly to the time in class fixed by the Rule. In connection with article 8, which the preceding commission thought of suppressing because it was heterogeneous, the Brother Superior "explained that, the practice of gratuity having been reduced because of the misfortunes

of the times, it was necessary and opportune to affirm our traditional legislation on this point, which was so dear to our holy Founder". His intervention led to the vote: 99 in favour of the article, 5 against, and the same for the whole of chapter XVIII <sup>82</sup>.

There is a slight alteration to article 6 of chapter VI of the Rule of government, which becomes: "Schools must be gratuitous everywhere, neither pupils nor parents...". And later: "Even the presents and the free services they offer must be refused" <sup>83</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> GA ED 234/1, dossier 7: report of the preparatory commission, p.14-16.

<sup>80</sup> GA ED 234/1, dossier 14: report of the 6th commission on "Regularity", referring to chapter VII of the Rule. Very few notes were sent to this General Chapter, or very few are preserved in GA: there are very few in archive boxes 234/1 and 234/2 where, logically speaking, they ought to be.

<sup>81</sup> GA ED 234/2, dossier 11. Report of the 2nd Commission which dealt also with faith-support groups, small boarding schools, school texts. For its part, the 7th Commission, at a particular moment, considered a request that the Rule of Government include a chapter for the Brothers in charge of faith-support groups. The Commission rejected the request as being unfeasible, but recognised the importance of such initiatives and asked the Superior General not to cease recommending them.

<sup>82</sup> GA Register C, p.424-425.

<sup>83</sup> GA Register C, p.451-452. Another interesting example of editorial alteration: the draft of chapter XXIX of the Rule of Government ("Rule of the Director of the Scholasticate") began as follows: "The scholasticate is a school of religious and professional formation, to which are sent, after the novitiate, the young Brothers destined for the ministry of the school". The General Chapter replaced "ministry" by "work" (Register C, p.470). (The official Spanish version "young Brothers destined for teaching" avoids the problem)



In chapter XXIII of this same Rule, article 119 is finally written as follows: "To train children in Christian charity, the Brother Director will establish in classes, if this is possible, collections for the Propagation of the Faith, the Divine Child, the Schools of the Orient, St Peter's Pence, but the alms of the pupils must always be free and spontaneous". "The Schools of the Orient" replaced the "Work of St John Baptist de La Salle", which had figured in the draft document: certain capitulants had seen this latter inclusion as an infringement, at least indirectly, of gratuity, or believed that the public might have doubts about the disinterestedness of the Brothers. A boarding school Director was reminded that his work was only a complement and a support of the principal work established by the Founder. The words "and a support" were added by the Chapter <sup>84</sup>.

The long Circular which reported on the Chapter said nothing about schools for the common people. It mentioned only boarding schools and some advanced professional training establishments. Finally, it informed the Institute about the rescript of February 1901 regarding the obligations of the vow of gratuity <sup>85</sup>.

### **Editions of the Rules in 1901**

The two Rules were published in this same year. Chapter XVIII of the Common Rules explained the obligations of the 5th vow in the following fashion: "7. By the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously, one

promises not to ask or accept anything from them as remuneration for the teaching <sup>86</sup>.

And so, in virtue of this vow, neither the Brother nor the community <sup>87</sup> could ask for, or accept anything from the children of the artisans and the poor, or from their parents, as remuneration for teaching given according to the Rule <sup>88</sup>.

8. The obligation imposed by the vow of teaching gratuitously is restricted to the children of the artisans and the poor or, in a general manner, to the children of the common people <sup>89</sup>, but the Rule extends gratu-

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<sup>84</sup> GA Register C, p.465, 466. As has already been said, the previous General Chapter had been informed how little, because of building fever, a large number of boarding schools contributed to District finances. For his part, the Superior mentioned that the financial contribution of North American institutions where Latin was taught was practically nil (Circular 101, p.11).

<sup>85</sup> Circular 109, p.73-76, 98-99.

<sup>86</sup> Here, a note refers to the rescript of February 12th February 1901.

<sup>87</sup> In conformity with the *Catechism of the Vows* and disagreeing with Brother Irlide's interpretation.

<sup>88</sup> A different answer to current problems: teaching "according to the Rule" refers to the programme indicated in chapter VII: reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, religious teaching. In other terms, adapted to modern times, this is the programme of primary or elementary schools, including catechism. All this within the timetable indicated by the Rule, that is, six and a half hours per day, 5 days per week. What cannot be fitted into these programmes, timetables and services, is not covered by the 5th vow.

<sup>89</sup> This also is a position adopted: the question of knowing what to understand by "the poor" had already been raised.

ity, which it considers "essential for the Institute" to all children without distinction; and it prescribes "to direct schools gratuitously everywhere" and "not to accept from the pupils or their parents either money or presents, however small, whatever the occasion or whatever the day"<sup>90</sup>.

Curiously, either because nobody noticed or because it was not thought it important, the formulas for the taking and renewal of vows (by school Brothers) remained unchanged: "For this purpose, I promise and vow poverty, chastity, obedience, stability in the said Society, and to teaching gratuitously..." The Brothers who were most experienced in casuistry, tranquillised the oth-

ers: by saying that those who make vows continue to say "conformably to the Bull of Approbation", and in the Bull it says very clearly that it is the vow of "teaching the poor gratuitously". One day, this specification also will be included in the formula.

It was hoped that, thanks to a clear definition of its obligations and to fervent regularity, the Institute would succeed in overcoming the external difficulties which assailed it. It had no doubt that, if it remained faithful to itself (that is, to the letter of its origins), it would be in the best of conditions to take up the challenges presented to it by the 20th century.

## 7. THE BROTHERS' WORK IN THE SERVICE OF THE POOR

During the last part of the 19th century, from a legal point of view, the vast majority of the Brothers' schools were private institutions: 1,703 in 1903, as opposed to only 188 public schools. And even, this small number included the 72 schools in Belgium which were private and State aided<sup>91</sup>.

In certain countries, this was the situation that the Brothers had always or almost always known: in England and in its Asiatic colonies, in Austria and in Prussia, in Spain, in Turkey and in Egypt, in the United States and in several of the more recent foundations in Latin America.

In other countries, on the other hand, the Brothers had to change very rapidly from

being State employed to being teachers in the private sector. This is what happened principally in France and its colonies, but also in Belgium and, in a smaller measure, in Italy, the changes occurring in a variety of ways and at different times.

In every case, the Institute did its very best to stay in the public schools. When it saw that it was excluded, it tried to remain

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<sup>90</sup> Here, the note refers to the Rules, chapter VII.1 and 11, and to the Bull § 5.

<sup>91</sup> The 11 schools of the international District of Austria are perhaps in the same situation, if the explicit and unqualified indication in the 1904 summary is valid. What is not clear, is how 8 public schools can be indicated for the District of India and China.

in the same place, if the population continued to ask for its services, and offered it the indispensable means to provide them. The Brothers left a place only when there was no other choice.

It is certain that, despite all the difficulties, at the beginning of the 20th century, a high proportion of the Brothers' schools continued to offer their services within the framework of public education. This is what happened in Ireland, Canada, Ecuador, Monaco, Tunisia and Colombia; and to a lesser extent, in Italy, and even less so in Spain and Austria-Germany. The total is completed by some few isolated units spread over a number of different countries. But more than 90% of the Brothers' schools, and more than 85% of their pupils were in the private sector of education.

A more detailed idea of the works of the Institute can be obtained thanks to the "états jaunes" (the yellow annual return forms). In the paragraphs that follow, we have consulted those for 1903: they are the nearest to the collapse which happened in France in 1904. Although they do not describe the evolution which preceded it, they give an idea of the situation that had been reached. A brief analysis of the facts provided by them enables us to glance at an aspect not to be despised - the fight of the Institute, as a member of the Church, which it waged in order "to make the means of salvation accessible to the poor"<sup>92</sup>.

### \* **Small educational establishments**

About 420 Brothers' communities were responsible for 100 or so pupils each, and 105 of them, for fewer than 50. Among these, there were about a dozen formation houses or houses for elderly Brothers, which as a result had many Brothers in addition to those working in schools. Some other communities were located in towns where there were other houses of the Institute, but in more than 90% of the cases, they were the only community in the place.

Almost always, elementary schools were involved, with two or three classes, run by three or four Brothers - sometimes more - located in small towns. At the price of great effort, they ensured that boys received a Catholic education, and did not frequent the secular municipal school ("the God-less school"). The frequent mention of "boarders" or "caméristes" conjures up Brittany or the mountains of the South, such as the Alps and the Pyrenees, where the cold and the bad weather obliged the children from the countryside to spend the night at school, or not come to school at all.

A small number of the establishments were special institutions: schools for the deaf and dumb at Besançon, Bourg en Bresse, Lyon and St Étienne; an orphanage at Choi-

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<sup>92</sup> This rapid overview of Lasallian institutions includes also those which are not intended for the working class.

sinet. Others had the temerity to call themselves boarding schools although the majority of their pupils were day boys, and even non fee-paying. It even happened that fee-payers and non fee-payers had separate classes, the latter being in the majority. Given that their pupils paid for supplementary services, and not for elementary education, more than 80% of these schools called themselves gratuitous.

### **In the rest of the Institute**

Outside France, one could find a little more than fifty of these communities distributed among the majority of the Districts. They varied greatly in nature: they went from little elementary schools to more specialised establishments: boarding schools, secondary schools, hostels (a hostel for the deaf and dumb at Turin), teacher training colleges, craft schools.

Twenty-two of these establishments said they were completely gratuitous, although only 6 were public schools. 16 others seem to have had only paying pupils. Of the 12 which had paying and non-paying pupils, only 3 had a majority of gratuitous pupils. Three schools gave no information.

### **\* Middle-sized and large educational establishments**

While giving this name to institutions in which a single community of Brothers taught more than 100 pupils<sup>93</sup>, we have to admit that, in many of them, the characteristics found in the smaller schools were

present here also, and were even more in evidence.

### **In France**

The majority of these establishments were primary schools. It was not rare to find that, at the end of the primary school programme, a special class had been added, called the commerce class, or advanced course, or something else. In certain larger towns, they could be found in various districts of the town, numbering several dozen in the case of Paris and Lyons. These were schools run by a community which lived in them, or school annexes where the Brothers went only to teach.

There were at least 850 of these schools<sup>94</sup>. A little more than 100 were small schools with up to 100 pupils<sup>95</sup>; about 480 of them had between 100 and 200 pupils: 225 others had more than 200. In the case of about 40 schools, the information is not sufficiently clear or is missing completely. All

<sup>93</sup> The figure is arbitrary and so the classification based on it is relative. In addition, this number of pupils can be reached in various very small schools depending on a single Brothers' community.

<sup>94</sup> In this number are included the three schools of the Principality of Monaco, which are public. The figures I give cannot claim to be exact. For them to be so, there would have to be greater exactitude at the source and a more rigorous checking of the data. What is presented here is sufficient to give an idea of the general picture.

<sup>95</sup> Not included above with the "small establishments" because they are not the only educational work run by the Brothers' community.

in all, the total school population must have come to more than 140,000 pupils.

Of these schools, at least 500 said they were completely gratuitous. In 150 others, gratuitous pupils represented more than half of the total. Fewer than 50 said they had no gratuitous pupils. To say that 75% of the pupils were gratuitous would probably be to underestimate the number. In this group also, especially in small and isolated localities, there is frequent mention of boarders and caméristes.

While it is not always easy to distinguish them from the preceding establishments, about 60 institutions called themselves boarding schools. Thirty or so of them had between 100 and 300 boarders. Eleven others had more than 300: Le Puy, St Omer, Rodez, Lyon, Quimper, Vaujourns, Passy and the 4 St Nicolas schools (Buzenval, Igny, Issy and Vaugirard). Most of them, in addition to boarders, had day boarders and day pupils. It was rare for them to have gratuitous pupils at the same time as fee-payers, but there are about 15 cases where, depending on the same community, even occupying a section of the same building, there was a gratuitous school. Some houses, offering courses similar to those of boarding schools, but not boarding accommodation, were called "externats", which were certainly fee-paying. Between them, boarding schools and externats catered for more than 20,000 pupils.

### **In the rest of the Institute**

In the rest of the Institute, we find more or less the same types of establishments, but

of different proportions and adapted as necessary to local conditions.

If we do not include in our calculations the small establishments mentioned elsewhere, there remain more than 350 schools, most of them primary, but not exclusively, with boarders, but with very few day boarders.

More than 90 establishments lodged some or all their pupils, but barely three dozen had more than 50 boarders. The total number of boarders must have been lower than 7,500.

Curricula: Once the primary school programme was finished, there was a great diversity in the courses offered: science, foreign languages, commerce, pedagogical training<sup>96</sup>, agriculture, horticulture, arts and crafts. In certain establishments, because of academic requirements or other reasons, the study of the classics was included in the programme<sup>97</sup>.

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<sup>96</sup> The 1903 reports mention training colleges at Waterford (Ireland), Feldkirch and Vienna-Wahring (Austria), Carlsbourg and Malonne (Belgium), Bogota (Colombia), Santiago (Chile). Kotahena (Sri Lanka) also has a small group of trainee teachers. If other establishments train teachers, either they do not say so, or the fact has escaped my notice.

<sup>97</sup> This had happened especially in the United States, but not only. The "Latin question" became a lively issue. Brother Gabriel Marie did not want to adopt the temporising tactics of the preceding decades and, in 1898, basing himself on the decisions of the Holy See, cut short further discussion of the subject.

In 1923, a new intervention of the Holy See, contrary to the preceding ones, made possible a more reasonable solution of the problem. The question

### \* **Special institutions**

A certain number of institutions catered for pupils with special needs.

To the deaf and dumb, cared for in the special institutions already mentioned, we can add a group of 33 non fee-paying boarders in Saigon.

There were various orphanages. In France, the various establishments depending on the Œuvre St Nicolas no longer looked after orphans, but in the large house at Fleury Meudon, thanks to the generosity of the Duchesse Galliera, more than 300 orphans were looked after free of charge. The number of orphans was smaller in Clermont Ferrand, Dunkerque and Grenoble.

In other countries they were more numerous. In South East Asia, groups of up to 30 orphans were admitted as boarders free of charge together with other pupils, in Hong Kong, Mandalay, Maulmein, Penang, Singapore. In Rangoon they numbered 160.

In England, the Brothers were obliged to give up several institutions for orphans and abandoned children, but in 1886, they took over an industrial school in Manchester with 400 gratuitous boarders, which they ran very successfully: there were classes and workshops on site, but some pupils went to work in outside workshops.

In Vienna, to the 300 wards of the Imperial Orphanage, must be added more than 200 others, all gratuitous, in the Norbertinum.

There were more than 200 orphans in the Sacred Heart Refuge in Madrid, the first

Brothers' foundation in Spain. In the capital, there was also the St Susanna Refuge with 40 resident orphans among its 200 pupils. 50 other orphans were lodged at the Santa Espina. All these establishments continued to function thanks to the generosity of its benefactors – all women.

On the other hand, the Ospizio di Carità in Biella, Italy, was funded by the town and cared for about 60 children.

The list, which includes an industrial school in Toronto, becomes longer when we come to the United States: Belmead, Eddington, Philadelphia, Albany, Halifax<sup>98</sup>, Troy, Utica, Westchester, Feehanville, San Francisco. 192 Brothers provided a complete and gratuitous service to about 3,800 children.

In South America, the Brothers were entrusted with an orphanage in Santiago de Chile and later another one in Bogota<sup>99</sup>.

### **Funding of establishments**

Once Brothers' schools were no longer funded by the State, their financial support was no longer a straightforward matter. The population, already paying State taxes to support public schools, often had to set aside

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deserves further analysis, even from the point of view of the educational service of the poor. However, we cannot undertake this here.

<sup>98</sup> The "Home" in Halifax, in Canada, depended on the District of New York.

<sup>99</sup> In the annual statistical summaries, the column devoted to orphans disappeared in 1881 and re-appeared in 1910.

another sum in their budget to fund denominational schools. A closer look at the question reveals various forms of funding.

### **Public schools**

Schools in Belgium and in the Austro-Hungarian Empire calling themselves "public" received a grant from the State.

In Ireland there was something similar: the State covered totally or in part the salaries of the teachers employed by the school. However, other forms of funding are frequently mentioned.

It is not easy to know what went on in the rare schools in Spain which called themselves public. Those in the South of Italy seem to have been funded entirely by the municipality, and those in the North, partially.

The government certainly contributed to the funding of public schools in Canada (there is frequent mention of "public salaries"), Colombia, Tunisia. Further research would no doubt reveal the sums involved.

Regarding some of these schools, there is mention of paying pupils, but no supplementary services were given, such as accommodation, meals. In any case, the majority of the pupils were gratuitous.

### **Private schools**

It is obvious and indisputable that the services offered by boarding schools and other similar institutions were paid for by their clientele. However, in the case of elementary schools, it is a question that needs looking at.

In France, despite all the difficulties, there were more than 800 schools of all sizes which, in 1903, said they were gratuitous. In the other countries, there were more than 260 of them, both public and private, and including more than 20 orphanages in this total.

There were possibly 350 schools or more which had paying and non paying pupils, normally mixed together. A little more than 50 said they had separate classes for the paying and the non paying pupils.

One can only admire the various ways private initiative succeeded in supporting such a system. Funds for the schools and communities came from various quarters:

1° The clergy: they are the ones most frequently mentioned. Generally, the parish priest was involved, but sometimes the local bishop. Presuming that priests and bishops rarely had enough money of their own to cover the expenses of running a school, their involvement supposes a vast network of solidarity which made it possible to raise the necessary funds.

2° Benefactors: This is another term which appears quite frequently and which covers a variety of sources: businesses, individuals, associations. When foundations were involved, there was nothing to worry about so long as there was stability. If there was inflation, it was quite a different story! The list of benefactors included the Roman Congregation of the Propaganda Fide (in the case of schools in the east Mediterranean zone), as well as the French Government

(for its own reasons) in the same zone. In the British colonies, some contributions from the colonial government are noted.

3° Subscriptions: these function like societies with shareholders, in which each member makes a commitment to pay a certain sum in support of the undertaking. Families of pupils were allowed to contribute.

4° The collection of some remuneration from all or from some pupils, to cover a greater or lesser part of the cost of equipment or of running the school.

5° Quite frequently, to raise funds, the Brothers offered other services for which they charged: private lessons, supervised study, accommodation, small boarding schools, caméristats, etc.

In reality, the differences in terminology are not very precise: dioceses and parishes channeled towards the school the gifts of the rich as well as "the widows' mite", both benefactors. The difference between a parent subscriber and a parent who paid some school fees for his children, was often not very great. For the same reason, while it was easy to remember benefactors of a high social rank (empresses, duchesses, aristocrats, patrons), we must not forget that the existence and survival of the Christian schools were due also to the anonymous sweat of innumerable poor people: the pennies given in alms on Sunday, hours of unpaid work, building or making equipment.

The difference between a gratuitous and a paying school was not always very clear

either: some Directors called their school gratuitous if the lessons were free of charge, even if it had pupils paying board and lodging. Others, on the contrary, observed the distinction very carefully. On the other hand, those who paid could be a very small minority: should the school be called gratuitous in this case? And it is almost impossible to know how much the pupils were asked to pay <sup>100</sup>.

### Other services provided

Night school for adults and evening courses for adolescent workers, which became widespread in the time of Brother Philippe, progressively lost their popularity in France in the 30 years that followed: from 7,552 apprentices and 34,022 adults (including soldiers) in 1873, the number decreased to 711 and 1,763 respectively in

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<sup>100</sup> The desire to quantify gratuity appears in the statistical summaries for 1879 and 1880, under the heading "pupils in gratuitous schools" (and not "gratuitous pupils"). The figures for France for these two years are respectively 232,000 out of 278,205, and 217,407 out of 256,487. For the rest of the world: 68,216 out of 77,547, and 68,600 out of 79,071. The total number of pupils was obtained by adding to the number of pupils in gratuitous schools adults, apprentices, boarders, day boarders, trainee teachers, caméristes, soldiers and orphans.

The subject re-appears in annual statistics only from 1923 onwards, and then under the heading "gratuitous pupils". But the "états jaunes" (end of year statistical returns) had been asking for this information since 1895: (Is the school gratuitous or not? How many pupils are gratuitous? How many are paying?).



1903. On the other hand, in the rest of the Institute, the number increased, but without ever reaching very high figures: 83 apprentices and 3,772 adults in 1903, as opposed to 22 and 2,561 in 1873.

Another important kind of activity run by the Brothers was the faith-support groups: meetings for young people on Sundays, various societies. It is not easy to quantify them, and figures are not trustworthy, but they give the impression that, taking fluctuation into account, that there was a slow growth during this period <sup>101</sup>.

The Sunday meetings (youth clubs) were intended to help youngsters who went to work on finishing primary school, to continue in the practice of their faith. The intention was to keep them away from bad company and from masonic or socialist youth organisations, by offering them a setting in which they could strengthen themselves against the bad influence of factories, workshops, atheistic trade unions, and other similar dangers. This work had the wholehearted support of Brother Joseph, responding as it did, to the numerous appeals addressed by Pope Leo XIII to the Institute. Later, a large section of the Christian trade union movement would be recruited at these regular meetings.

And then there were the societies composed of pupils who committed themselves to a more intense spiritual life. Many pupils kept up their membership after leaving school. Among the organisers of these societies, the most notable was Brother Exupérien, an Assistant for many years. He

was the founder and heart and soul of the monthly magazine "Bulletin des Œuvres de Jeunesse", begun in 1882 and which reached a circulation figure of 6,000 copies.

One of these societies, the "Society of Saint Benedict Joseph Labre", which owed much to the ardent zeal of Brother Exupérien, proposed to its members a high ideal of spiritual life, and demanded from them serious commitments in daily life. The thorough formation provided influenced strongly the personalities of the first leaders of the French Christian trade union movement.

The Brothers did not wait for the arrival of Leo XIII to show they were sensitive to social problems. The way in which they dealt with these questions was certainly strongly marked by the understanding they had of their own mission, and by the guidelines which prevailed in the Church at that time. And so they collaborated in the paternalistic social work organised by Armand de Melun, and, in a different way, in that of Albert de Mun and his Catholic Workmen's Clubs.

Something quite unforeseen and new happened in the Paris of the 1880's. Brother

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<sup>101</sup> For France: young people at Sunday meetings: 14,600 in 1873 and 23,700 in 1903; members of different associations: 7,200 in 1873 and 6,300 in 1903. In the summaries for those two years there is no information from other countries. In addition, for 1903, the number of members of former-pupil associations in France is given as 40,100, in rounded figures.

Hiéron, in charge of the faith-support groups in a Brothers' school, extended his work for the children to include an employment office for business employees. His initial idea was to help young school-leavers find a job. But the office became spontaneously a meeting place; many of those who gathered there were members of the Association of Saint Benedict Joseph Labre. In September 1887, 17 of them, called by chance to a meeting by Brother Alban Joseph, founded the Trade Union of Business and Industry Employees (SECI)<sup>102</sup>. For the moment, it was an employees' trade union and not a workers', and that caused problems later when relations with other workers' associations were being established. But it was a real trade union, composed solely of employees, and not of employees and employers. This fact distinguished it from other initiatives of a corporate or paternalistic nature. On the basis of it, there was formed in November 1919, the French Confederation of Christian Workers (CFTC)<sup>103</sup>. Many of the leaders of this important group were former "St Labre" members.

The social conscience of the Institute had been manifested also for a long time by its efforts to prepare its pupils for the daily struggle to survive. The commerce classes attached to many primary schools bear witness to this. It was not by chance that all orphans were given some form of professional training, and that in many places orphanages were called industrial schools. In the same spirit, the Institute took over the Istituto degli Artigianelli, in Rome, so dear

to Pius IX. By a papal decision also, the Institute took over, also at the beginning of the 20th century, the Istituto Tecnico Angelo Mai, which had been transferred from its former location at the Madonna dei Monti. For its part, the École des Arts et des Métiers which the Brothers had opened in Rheims in 1893 made a great contribution to the prestige of Catholic education in the technical sector. In Belgium, the St Luc Art Schools were founded to improve, through art, the situation of abandoned children or of those in danger. At St Étienne (and the example deserves imitators), as the school was lacking in equipment, a cooperation

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<sup>102</sup> Brother Alban Joseph was one of the Visitors of Paris, and worked closely with Brother Assistant Exupérien, who had special responsibility for this sector. It should be recalled that the law of March 21st 1884 recognised freedom of association and, in this way, legalised workers' unions.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. RIGAUT 7, p.438-442; Michel LAUNAY: *Le syndicalisme chrétien en France de 1885 à nos jours*, Paris, Desclée 1984, and *La CFTC, origines et développement, 1919-1940*, Paris, Publications de La Sorbonne, 1986.

In the information given by Launay about the Brothers, there are a few inaccuracies: the Superior was Brother Joseph (not John) Marie Josserand; the General Chapter which elected him was held in 1884 (and not 1885); the Brothers' establishment of the Francs Bourgeois never ran courses for engineers. If it is true that "the Brothers never let their pupils believe that there could have been an ideal regime for France, and that this regime should have been the Bourbon Monarchy" (*Le Syndicalisme...*p.49), many Brothers deserve great praise for their heroism with which they kept to themselves their deepest convictions regarding this topic.

contract was drawn up with local industry to enable the Brothers' pupils to have shopfloor experience in real workshops <sup>104</sup>.

Driven to it by the problems of the time, certain establishments showed an increasing interest in the social doctrine of the Catholic magisterium. Further research would help us perhaps to appreciate more the scope of the talks on "social order" given

to the pupils of the De La Salle Technical School in Lyons; or of the "Ozanam Club" frequented by the pupils of the boarding school in Rodez, who were interested in social questions; or finally of the Conference of Social Studies set up in 1900 in the boarding school at Béziers, which included in its programme the analysis of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* <sup>105</sup>.

## 8. TO THE END

The subject of gratuity takes up a great deal of space in certain documents which appeared after the 1901 General Chapter. Circular 112, which recalled the centenary of the re-establishment of the Institute in France by Napoleon I, devoted several pages to it. So also did Circulars 115, which commented on chapter XVIII of the Rule; 115b, addressed to the Visitors; and 122b <sup>106</sup>.

The death of Leo XIII gave the Brothers the opportunity to recall that "since the publication of his remarkable encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, on the conditions of the workers, he had become known as the "Pope of the workers", and he liked being called by that name. And was it not this moving title, which made him more venerable and dear to us, whom the Holy Church, through the mouth of his illustrious predecessor, Benedict XIII, consecrated above all to the Christian education "of poor children", conformably with the intentions of our holy Founder, who wrote in his Rule: "It was for the purpose of procuring this advantage for

the children of the artisans and the poor, that he established the Christian schools" <sup>107</sup>.

In the first months of 1904, it was no longer possible to delude oneself about the intentions of the French government regarding the Institute of the Brothers, and the imminence of their implementation. Asking for the prayers of all the Brothers in the face of the impending disastrous events, the Superior said his own prayer: "No, Lord, and we say this with invincible confidence,

<sup>104</sup> Other examples of practical teaching given by the Brothers in RIGAUULT 7, p.386-408.

<sup>105</sup> RIGAUULT 7, p.365, 381, 392.

<sup>106</sup> Circular 112, p.34, 76-83, 86... the other texts are of a juridical or casuistic nature: Circular 115, p.5, 21-26; Circular 115a, especially p.11-12; Circular 122a, p.56-68. In this latter text there are references to boarding schools (p.13-14, 61-62) which help to understand the thinking and worries of the Superior and of many others in the Institute.

<sup>107</sup> Circular 124, p.5: this is the first time that the name of this encyclical appears in the Circulars of the Superiors.

you will not allow to perish this family of St John Baptist de La Salle which, for more than two centuries has been endeavouring to make you known and loved by poor children. And, if by some inscrutable plan of your Providence, it pleases you to allow the most redoubtable of trials, submitting to your adorable will, we shall nevertheless be assured of your mercy which, after purifying us and renewing us in your holy love, will enable us to take up our apostolic work again, even further afield and with greater efficacy”<sup>108</sup>.

\* \* \* \* \*

The thirty years that followed the death of Brother Philippe were dramatic for the Institute. The form of its apostolate in certain countries, the political changes that occurred in others (particularly in France), pushed it more and more outside its preferred social field of action: public elementary Christian schools and gratuity.

Excluded from public schools, it had to take refuge in private schools in order to continue to offer, by association, a Christian education. The difficulties which arose as a result regarding gratuity, it resolved, from the juridical point of view, by a more detailed definition of the obligations of the 5th vow, and in difficult cases, by means of temporary indults obtained from the Holy See. The type of establishments it ran predominantly, and its concern to maintain them gratuitous as far as possible, bear wit-

ness to its desire to keep as its priority the service of the poor.

Education being considered as a political subject and instrument, the State redoubled its efforts on all fronts to combat and suppress illiteracy and to raise the cultural level of the population. It devoted to this considerable human and financial resources, and it did so in view of its own aims, which did not coincide with, and sometimes were contrary to, those proposed by the Church.

In these new circumstances, the Brothers' schools must have seen that their relative importance as purveyors of culture was diminishing. Their task, however, to bear witness and to be an instrument of the Church for the evangelisation of culture, continued to grow. Because of this, and thanks to a social consensus which supported them, even at the price of a great financial effort, they hung on to the places where they were located, and competed with the secular school in a clearly militant manner.

Inspired by this same will to affirm the presence of the Church, the Institute put down its roots in countries where Catholics were a minority. “Colonies” or “Missions” were words which expressed generous enthusiasm and real affection but which sometimes hid feelings of superiority, difficult (or impossible?) to eradicate, because they were considered quite natural and, in the circumstances, perfectly justified.

<sup>108</sup> Circular 129, p.4: in the last words of the quotation, one can perceive a reference to MR 207.1.

But even independently of its will, the transition of the Institute to private schools brought with it changes in the clientele of its schools. Its schools were no longer for everybody, but for those who chose them. And with the spread of the practice of remuneration, they became schools for those who could choose them. Many Brothers regretted these changes, and some rejoiced at them.

The change in clientele and the general expansion of culture forced the Brothers to extend the range of their teaching to a more advanced level. Sometimes the reasoning behind this went as follows: if the children who have completed their primary education in a Christian school have to do secondary education (the only means of access to university or tertiary education) in a secular school, all the fruit of their primary education is condemned to death. Consequently, to safeguard this faith and these morals which are at risk, we too must offer them secondary education. There is no hope of it being gratuitous. Consequently the proportion of middle class children in schools will inevitably increase <sup>109</sup>.

All these circumstances, so unfavourable to the Lasallian practice of gratuity in school, brings about another definition of its meaning. Up to the time of Brother Philippe discussions about the gratuity of

teaching laid most stress on the fidelity of the Institute to its Rule and to its nature, the argument going as follows: "gratuity is an essential rule of our Institute; to break it is to alter the very nature of the Institute and eventually to kill it". Without setting aside this aspect, in the years that followed, emphasis was placed more on the purpose: "The end of this Institute is the Christian education of the children of the artisans and the poor; to abandon gratuity, is to close Lasallian schools precisely for those for whom they were created". Without any effort, an equivalence is established between "the children of the artisans and the poor" and "the children of the common people" or "the working class".

On the eve of the 20th century, the Institute of St John Baptist de La Salle was waiting for the "times of misfortune" finally to pass, in order to be able to return to the situation of the origins. It prepared itself for it by drawing up a Rule which reproduced as exactly as possible the one left it by its Founder.

<sup>109</sup> Expressions which recognise the Brothers as the friends of the common people, do not seem to be, at the end of this period, as widespread as they had been at the beginning. The change, however, reflects less the changes in the services offered by the Institute, than growing dechristianisation among the common people, which was more noticeable in the big towns.

#### KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

C: communities  
 PV: Perpetual vows  
 TV: Triennial vows  
 AV: Annual vows  
 WV: Without vows

TB: Total of Brothers  
 N: Novices  
 JN: Junior novices  
 PuS: Public schools  
 PrS: Private schools

PuP: Public pupils  
 PrP: Private pupils  
 O: Others

## APPENDIX I

## STATISTICAL SUMMARY

													1873	
Zone	C	PV	TV	AV	WV	TB	N	NM	EP	EL	AP	AL	O	
France	945	3.138	1.091	1.420	2.454	8.103	1.037	120	960	360	208.598	61.870	41.574	
Europe	77	522	128	89	154	893	39	-	23	105	4.724	18.572	2.214	
Africa	42	150	48	49	43	290	14	-	33	21	5.990	2.512	347	
Asia	14	43	12	24	23	102	7	-	3	13	258	2.574	-	
America	83	194	108	221	324	847	118	-	25	115	7.496	31.273	22	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.161</b>	<b>4.047</b>	<b>1.387</b>	<b>1.803</b>	<b>2.998</b>	<b>10.235</b>	<b>1.215</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>1.044</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>227.066</b>	<b>116.801</b>	<b>44.157</b>	

Europe: Germany, Austria, Belgium, England, Italy, Switzerland  
 Africa: Algeria, Egypt, Madagascar, Mauritius-Seychelles, Reunion, Tunisia

Asia: Cochinchina, India-Malaysia, Turkey  
 America: Canada, Ecuador, United States

													1883	
Zone	C	PV	TV	AV	WV	TB	N	JN	PuS	PrS	PuP	PrP	O	
France	932	4.122	1.257	2.104	1.191	8.674	538	1.133	398	765	76.154	142.002	8.831	
Europe	92	590	144	185	154	1.073	85	56	16	129	3.137	25.465	2.605	
Africa	28	167	32	45	48	292	17	8	17	17	3.237	3.046	171	
Asia	16	75	17	24	30	146	3	2	-	19	-	3.649	-	
America	107	404	186	269	189	1.048	117	65	30	108	10.084	26.962	-	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.175</b>	<b>5.358</b>	<b>1.636</b>	<b>2.627</b>	<b>1.612</b>	<b>11.233</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>1.264</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>1.038</b>	<b>92.612</b>	<b>201.124</b>	<b>11.607</b>	

Europe: Austria, Belgium, Spain, England, Italy, Switzerland  
 Asia: China, India, Turkey

Africa: Algeria, Egypt, Mauritius, Reunion, Tunisia  
 America: Canada, Chile, Ecuador, United States

													1893	
Zone	C	PV	TV	AV	WV	TB	N	NM	EP	EL	AP	AL	O	
France	1.053	5.117	1.168	2.086	1.494	9.865	823	2.222	4	1.266	1.426	210.260	2.939	
Europe	138	710	218	425	298	1.651	168	200	29	161	5.801	29.009	2.931	
Africa	31	216	89	95	36	436	41	105	9	36	2.790	5.793	139	
Asia	29	122	59	92	35	308	16	24	-	32	-	6.742	18	
America	149	672	221	380	237	1.510	171	154	57	124	19.977	30.150	-	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.400</b>	<b>6.837</b>	<b>1.755</b>	<b>3.078</b>	<b>2.100</b>	<b>13.770*</b>	<b>1.219</b>	<b>2.705</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>1.619</b>	<b>29.994</b>	<b>281.954</b>	<b>6.027</b>	

Europe: Austria-Germany, Belgium, Spain, England-Ireland, Italy, Switzerland  
 Mauritius, Reunion Asia: Cochinchina, China-India, Turkey Africa: Algeria-Tunisia, Egypt, Madagascar-  
 America: Canada, Chile-Argentina, Ecuador-Colombia, United States

\* Of which a) Soldiers: 372 French, 6 others; b) scholastics: 590 in France, 310 in other countries.

													1903	
Zone	C	PV	TV	AV	WV	TB	N	JN	PuS	PrS	PuP	PrP	O	
France	1.157	5.423	1.892	2.135	1.201	10.651	529	1.442	6	1.354	1.185	193.314	2.474	
Europe	175	942	490	467	292	2.191	183	392	118**	141	22.830**	26.857	4.528	
Africa	38	256	123	87	24	490	25	94	4	51	1.211	9.892	42	
Asia	43	211	102	80	59	452	23	17	10	42	3.890	6.678	45	
America	156	834	330	314	195	1.673	140	157	50	142	17.551	30.696	140	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.569</b>	<b>7.666</b>	<b>2.937</b>	<b>3.083</b>	<b>1.771</b>	<b>15.457*</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>2.102</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>1.730</b>	<b>46.667</b>	<b>267.437</b>	<b>7.229</b>	

Europe: Austria Germany Hungary, Belgium, Spain, England Ireland, Italy. Africa: Algeria Tunisia Malta, Egypt, Madagascar, Reunion Mauritius. Asia: Cochinchina-Tonkin, "Constantinople", India China. "Jerusalem". America: Argentina Chile, Canada, Ecuador Colombia, United States.

\* Of which 972 scholastics, 665 in France, 307 in other countries.

\*\* Of which 72 schools in Belgium with 13,930 pupils, free and subsidised.

The maximum number of Brothers seems to have been reached, in the whole Institute, in 1902 (15,472), and in France in 1901 (10,787)

## LASALLIAN DAY SCHOOLS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

## FRANCE

## OTHER COUNTRIES

	Public		Private		Public		Private	
	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils
1873	960	208.598	360	61.870	84	18.468	254	54.931
1874	992	217.120	364	60.727	88	19.429	249	54.977
1875	1.016	221.710	360	58.882	95	20.694	241	53.321
1876	1.017	220.867	367	59.417	97	22.270	241	50.391
1877	1.024	219.545	381	59.664	97	21.463	238	50.767
1878	1.003	210.136	409	60.091	97	21.433	250	51.442
1879	848	170.385	548	82.832	85	20.464	253	54.904
1880	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d	s/d
1881	540	104.193	684	115.863	71	16.129	269	57.244
1882	455	85.650	748	134.484	63	16.170	271	59.370
1883	398	76.154	765	142.002	63	16.454	273	59.122
1884	373	71.558	793	147.331	63	17.266	278	60.856
1885	347	66.870	828	153.470	75	19.350	268	60.290
1886	322	61.261	859	155.102	78	21.544	275	62.541
1887	271	51.146	902	162.054	79	22.719	280	62.248
1888	211	38.386	990	173.956	83	24.746	303	66.643
1889	196	36.150	1.016	177.513	94	26.750	311	67.601
1890	174	31.727	1.046	181.254	100	29.117	316	66.358
1891	21	5.074	1.201	204.947	89	27.731	341	69.095
1892	5	1.474	1.262	209.106	96	28.797	336	69.221
1893	4	1.426	1.266	210.260	95	28.568	353	71.693
1894	2	737	1.287	212.264	82	26.882	382	76.899
1895	-	-	1.307	214.554	119	32.334	340	72.016
1896	4	943	1.299	212.470	102	28.195	347	75.358
1897	-	-	1.328	211.511	115	32.140	348	74.551
1898	-	-	1.358	210.277	119	33.299	368	76.622
1899	-	-	1.370	205.233	113	32.933	375	78.210
1900	-	-	1.374	201.776	128	31.097	380	80.072
1901	5 <sup>110</sup>	1.114	1.368	199.731	167	41.258	351	72.961
1902	5	1.133	1.358	197.747	130	33.794	409	81.862
1903	6	1.185	1.354	193.314	182	45.482	376	74.123

<sup>110</sup> The reference is to two schools in Switzerland and three in Monaco, belonging to French Districts, and not taken into account in previous years.

## APPENDIX 2

**From the "CATECHISM OF THE VOWS"**

382. *Why do the Brothers make the vow of teaching gratuitously?*

The vow to teach gratuitously responds to the particular end for which the Brothers of the Christian Schools were established.

Several Institutes also make a special vow.

**Art. III Of the vow of teaching gratuitously**

395. *Which is the vow which responds in fact to the particular end of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools?*

The vow of teaching the poor gratuitously.

396. *What should be noted regarding the obligation of gratuity for the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools?*

The Institute has taken the obligation to teach poor children gratuitously, and by the vow it has contracted this obligation as something distinctive and essential.

397. *What is the obligation of this vow?*

Not to accept anything for the teaching given to poor children, either from the children themselves, or from their parents.

398. *What fault would a Brother commit who accepted for himself personally remuneration from a poor pupil?*

He would sin: 1° against the vow of gratuity, and the fault would be more or less grave, depending of the seriousness or lightness of the matter; 2° against the vow of poverty, which forbids the religious to receive anything from anybody at all without a regular permission.

399. *Can a Director accept for the community the remuneration from a poor pupil?*

He cannot (412). He would violate the vow of gratuity if, personally or through some one else, he accepted the retribution for the community from a poor pupil. In addition, he would scandalise his Brothers and abuse his authority, all of which are aggravating circumstances.

400. *Is the person who has transgressed his vow of gratuity obliged to give back what he has accepted?*

No, at least not to the pupil or his parents, since strictly speaking, he has not violated justice in their regard. All the same, he would do well to give back what he received from them, taking the necessary precautions to safeguard religious honour, or to give them the equivalent with the necessary permissions.

The violation of gratuity would become a fault against justice in the particular case of a foundation making this gratuity a formal condition.



401. *What does § 5 of the Bull of Approbation say regarding gratuity?*

Paragraph 5 of the Bull of Approbation says in a general manner: "That the Brothers teach children gratuitously, and that they do not accept money or presents offered by the pupils or their parents". The Bull confirms in this what the Rule prescribes (Ch. VII. 11): "The Brothers will not accept from their pupils or their parents money or presents, however small, whatever the day or the occasion".

The General Chapter of 1787 enjoins Directors (Decision 24) "to refuse without fail, and make the Brothers of their house refuse, presents, rewards and free services of any kind whatsoever from the pupils or their parents".

402. *What connection is there between § 5 of the Bull and § 9 in which it imposes the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously?*

Paragraph 5 defines in a single stroke a general principle characterising the life and dedication of the Brothers. Paragraph 9 ensures that this principle is put into practice by imposing the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously.

403. *What difference is there between the extension of the vow prescribed by § 9 of the Bull, and that of the Rule by § 5?*

The vow obliges to teach the poor gratuitously.

The Rule prescribes teaching children gratuitously, whoever they are, rich or poor,

and not accepting money or presents offered by the pupils or their parents.

404. *What difference is there, from the point of view of conscience, between the Rule and the vow?*

The vow obliges under pain of mortal sin in the case of grave matter.

The Rule does not oblige under pain of sin. But since this is an essential Rule, confirmed by the Bull of Our Holy Father the Pope, one cannot break it without committing a greater irregularity than by the violation of other Rules. Moreover, about this Rule in particular, it has to be said that it is almost impossible to infringe it, without, for other reasons, falling into some sin (150).

405. *How easily does one commit a sin by violating gratuity, even only in terms of the Rule?*

The violation of gratuity even in terms of the Rule can hardly take place without, for other motives, there being some sin. This violation, in fact, would expose one, in many cases, to the risk of breaking the vow of poverty itself. It would be bad example given to the Brothers and even, sometimes, to outsiders. It would easily lead the teacher to be partial and to have unjust preferences, etc.

If the person transgressing the Rule of gratuity were a Director, he would be guilty of giving scandal, and of violating an essential Rule, a violation committed by the person who is the official guardian of the Rules in the community (162).

406. *Why do you say that this Rule is essential for the Institute?*

Because the Founder declared it formally to be so, and because this has always been the tradition of the Institute itself.

407. *What did Blessed de La Salle say about gratuity?*

Blessed de La Salle is very explicit on this subject. In his Rule he said: "The Brothers will conduct schools gratuitously everywhere, and this is essential for their Institute" (Ch. VII, 1). He repeats the same thing in a variety of ways in his writings and especially in Meditations 92, 153, etc.

408. *How has the Institute tradition regarding gratuity become strong?*

1° By the jealous care with which the Institute has maintained gratuity for two centuries.

2° By the deep feelings aroused in the Brothers each time some legislative measure has concerned gratuity.

3° By the closure of several schools where, in an indirect manner, it was planned to establish school remuneration for children believed to be rich.

4° By the care always taken to obtain a dispensation from the Holy Father each time that imperious circumstances have made it necessary, temporarily, to infringe in some way the Rule of gratuity.

409. *Why did Blessed De La Salle make gratuity an essential Rule of the Institute?*

It is in order, as he said himself, "to procure the advantage of a Christian education

for the children of the artisans and the poor" (Rules, 1), who, without gratuity, would frequent the school only in small numbers.

Since this gratuity is for everyone, rich and poor, the latter are not humiliated because they cannot pay for the teaching they receive. It bestows on the teacher the crown of perfect disinterestedness. The child sees in him only the man of God, devoting himself, sacrificing himself, to make his pupil a good Christian and a good citizen. He loves him, respects and obeys him all the more willingly as gratuity protects him more from all suspicion of partiality, and safeguards better his moral authority.

410. *What should one think of certain objections made to the principle of gratuity?*

These objections are unfounded: to be convinced of this, it is enough to recall:

1° That Blessed de La Salle established the principle of gratuity, as had also before his time other Founders of Orders for the care of the sick, for the education of children, and for other charitable works.

2° That the Church, through the infallible intermediary of Our Holy Father the Pope, has approved and sanctioned this gratuity, by making a Rule of it for the Brothers, and by prescribing it for them even by a vow.

3° One could use even, in the support of gratuity, what the adversaries of Christian education themselves do. They have made instruction in their schools gratuitous to ensure their success, and experience has

shown only too well that they were not mistaken in their choice of means.

411. *Since the rule in § 5 of the Bull does not oblige under pain of sin, why has there always been recourse to the Holy See when circumstances made it necessary for a time to infringe it?*

Because the Institute is approved by the Holy See, and because it could no longer claim to be so, if, on an important point, it dispensed itself of its own accord from the Rules contained in the Bull of Approbation. It was for a very good reason, therefore, that each time exceptional circumstances made it necessary, the Superiors had recourse to the Holy See to obtain a temporary dispensation from gratuity, even when only rich children were involved.

It should be noted that this gratuity is considered to be so advantageous, so important by the Holy See, that more than once it has put restrictions on the request we thought it necessary to submit to it.

412. *Is the obligation of gratuity imposed on the individual only, or also on the community?*

This obligation is imposed on the individual and on the community. It is imposed on the community, not indirectly, but simultaneously, inseparably, by the very force of the obligation which binds each individual.

413. *In what sense is this obligation imposed on the community?*

In this sense, that no remuneration, no gift contrary to the prescriptions of the Bull

can be accepted in the name of the community by an individual teacher, by the director, and even by an outsider.

414. *What proves the obligation of gratuity for the community?*

If this obligation did not affect the community in the same way as it did the individuals, it would become by that very fact pointless. Gratuity is established for the benefit of the children who attend the school, but how could one say that the children were taught gratuitously, when instead of paying the individual, they paid the community?

It should be noted also that if the vow of gratuity obliged the Brothers only individually, this vow would seem superfluous, since the vow of poverty prevents the religious already from accepting anything from anybody for his own personal use.

415. *What confirms the obligation of gratuity for the community?*

Each time serious and exceptional circumstances have obliged the Superiors of the Institute to ask the Holy See for a local or temporary dispensation from some obligation of gratuity, the request has been made in the name of the community, and the dispensation has been granted for the benefit of the community. No dispensation, in this connection, has ever been requested or granted for individuals, for whom, in any case, this dispensation would be pointless, since they are already bound by the vow of poverty.

416. *What should be noted regarding the use to be made of dispensations from gratuity?*

In the first place, these dispensations can be used only for the time and within the limits indicated by the Indult itself.

In the second place, they must never make one lose sight of the spirit of the Institute. That is why, it is proper to use them only when necessary, and then always with perfect disinterestedness, with sincere love for poor children, and complying exactly with what, in similar cases, is wisely prescribed by the Superiors.

The true disciples of Blessed de La Salle keep always in the depth of their heart a special love for this gratuity, so dear to their Blessed Father. They use only with regret and great discretion the dispensations made necessary sometimes by the misfortunes of the times, and sigh, longing for the time when, circumstances having changed, they can joyfully take up again the holy obligations of their Rules.

417. *Can one accept remuneration in boarding schools without violating the vow of gratuity?*

Yes, in these establishments, remuneration demanded to cover the cost of maintenance, is out of the question, that is, not covered by the vow of gratuitous teaching.

Blessed De La Salle himself directed boarding schools, in conditions similar to those of boarding schools established after him. And the Institute, so jealous of its Rules on gratuity, has always directed boarding

schools since the very beginning. Finally, so that there can be no doubt at all, a rescript from Our Holy Father Pope Leo XII, dated March 21st 1825, sanctioned the traditional practice of the institute in this matter.

418. *Does the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously imply as such the obligation of teaching?*

The vow is strictly concerned only with gratuity itself. It is this gratuity<sup>111</sup> properly so called which, at the request of the Brothers, the Sovereign Pontiff wished to make, in the form of a vow, the distinctive and essential characteristic of the schools of the Institute.

The obligation to teach is not as such the object of a vow for the Brothers. In any case, it is sufficiently imposed upon them by the very nature of their vocation, by their Rules and by the Bull of Approbation in which it is said (§ 1) "that they must above all make it their care to instruct children, especially the poor, in the manner of living in a good and Christian manner; and that zeal for the education of children according to the rules of the Christian law, must be the principal characteristic and, as it were, the spirit of their Institute".

419. *How is the obligation of teaching imposed on the conscience?*

For the Brothers, this obligation is a professional duty, an important rule they can-

<sup>111</sup> The translation of gratuity by gratuitous teaching is for stylistic reasons, but sometimes this leads to a loss of clarity. There are also some other faults in this version.

not neglect, without normally committing some fault. They have, in a certain way, responsibility for the souls of the children entrusted to them: if they did not bring them up in a Christian manner, God would require them to give a strict account.

In any case, the founders of schools pay teachers for the Christian teaching they are supposed to give: it would be an injustice not to fulfil these pious intentions faithfully.

420. *What does Blessed De La Salle say about gratuity?*

“It is impossible for you to push disinterestedness too far in your employment, for you are in charge of the poor. Instruct them by your example. Teach them to love poverty by practising it unselfishly as far as God may require. You know, moreover, that you are vowed to teach gratuitously...Be on your guard never to accept anything either from the pupils or from their parents” (Med. 153).

\* \* \*



## CHAPTER 8

### UP TO THE MIDDLE OF THE 20th CENTURY

This chapter attempts to cover more than half a century – a somewhat ambitious objective, given the innumerable events which occur during this period. The temerity of the attempt is partially explained by the hope of being able to show, despite the length of the period in question, that it has a certain continuity. The continuity is seen also in the way in which the service of the poor is envisaged at all levels of the Institute, beginning with the highest. This service is seen as being indissolubly bound up with the gratuity of teaching. At the end of a process,

during which theory is reflected less and less in practice, a crisis makes it necessary to rethink both the former and the latter.

A rapid and very partial glance at some aspects of the Church and the World during this half century will serve as an introduction to our subject. This can be divided into three parts, separated conveniently by the bloody conflict of the two world wars. The succession of Superior Generals of the Institute in each of these parts also makes for convenient subdivisions.

#### 1. THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH

As the Institute, banned from schools in France in 1904, tried to face up to its dramatic situation, all around it there was a world chasing after happiness. The ideal seemed to be to enjoy oneself, hell or no hell. Those were “*les années folles*” (the mad years), the “*belle époque*” (the Edwardian era).

There was no longer much justice in individual relationships or in those between nations: the noise of the feasting of the rich was louder than the cries of the exploited in five continents. The powerful let a few

crumbs drop from their table. For the starving or persecuted populations of Europe, there remained the hope or dream of the possibility of starting a new life in the new territories of the American Republics, or in the European colonies in Africa or the Pacific.

On the throne of St Peter, Pius X had succeeded Leo XIII. His long years of pastoral work at all levels had always kept him close to the people, whether as a country parish priest or as Patriarch of Venice. On the other hand, his knowledge of the Ro-

man Curia was that of an outsider. His policy was quite different from his predecessor's. His motto "Instaurare omnia in Christo" was a direct challenge to a world which organised itself and lived without taking Christ into account. His pontificate was characterised by pastoral initiatives which survived him: earlier and more frequent reception of communion, the reform of liturgical music, the stimulus given to the newly founded Catholic Action movement. His concern for doctrinal and disciplinary unity led to a new version of the catechism, and the preparation of the Code of Canon Law. But some of his condemnations were excessive and indiscriminating: that of the French "Sillon", of certain expressions of Italian Christian democracy, of modernism, and of certain promoters and certain results of biblical research.

The carnival-like revelry of a certain part of society was swept away in 1914. The supreme efforts of the Pope were not enough to prevent ambition, power and resentment from unleashing the first armed conflict in history to affect most people in the world.

In the following period, the influence and the effects of "international financial imperialism" became more and more deeply rooted; while groups festering with collective frustration paved the way for messianic ideologies: the dictatorship of the proleteriat, theoretical in socialism, or real in the Soviet Union, nationalistic or racial dictatorships on the Nazi or fascist model. These ideologies were exported too: communism, nationalism, racism, influenced to a lesser

or greater extent personal, party and government thinking throughout the world.

To proclaim the Gospel in such a world, the Catholic Church appealed to its old and new soldiers. Among the old, there were the religious Orders and traditional religious congregations, and many others founded more recently. As for the new, there was a massive mobilisation call to the laity, who were invited to take part, through "Action Catholique", in the apostolate of the Church hierarchy.

This was the time of Benedict XV (1914-1922) and especially of Pius XI (1922-1939). The teaching of the latter devoted much space to certain important social and political questions of the day: the situation of workers in an international economy, communism, national socialism. His energetic approach, fearless in the face of the powerful, gave Catholicism a kind of militant self-confidence, opposed to a world which wanted either to ignore or suppress it<sup>1</sup>. The institution of the liturgical feast of Christ the King of the Universe, was clearly a challenge.

Pius XI felt anguish at a worldwide peace that was too fragile, which could disintegrate at any moment. His fears were justified. Twenty-five years after the beginning of the first world war, the second broke out,

<sup>1</sup> Open or hidden persecution in the Soviet Union, under communism; in Spain under the Republic; in Italy under fascism; in Germany under nazism; in China. And constant allusions to the Mexican persecution.



more widespread and murderous than the first. On its ruins, which after 6 years stretched over Europe and Asia, Communism<sup>2</sup> began its advance, increasingly menacing for some, bearing fresh hope for others.

In the years that followed, world politics, on both an international and national level, was coloured by the stance adopted towards the tide of communism. The constitution of 2 large opposing military blocks, NATO and the Warsaw Pact, recognised the permanence of a state of belligerence called a "cold war". As not all countries accepted this 2-block arrangement, an increasing number of them formed a 3rd block composed of a heterogeneous collection of nations.

It was against this background that the great colonial empires disappeared. In some cases, wars between the colony and its "mother country" preceded independence; in others, countries sought their freedom by means of serious and long-lasting civil wars.

In the time of Pius XII, the Church was not short of reasons for considering the takeover of governments by the marxists as a great misfortune: the State profession of atheism led to serious and widespread persecution in countries ranging from Yugoslavia and East Germany to China. The Church, of course, did not limit its pastoral activity, nor its social teaching to defending itself against communism: its constant demand for justice in international and labour relations, called into question as much the individualistic as the collective models.

Also, the first steps in liturgical reform suggested the acceptance of the fact that the era of Christianity had evolved.

But it was John XXIII who "resolutely opened the windows of the Church" onto the world. The Vatican II Council, which he called and opened, constituted a clear demarcation line between what came before and what came after, in the history of the Church, internally and in its relations with the world, whose "happiness and hopes, joys and sadness" it made its own.

## 2. THE INSTITUTE UP TO THE FIRST WORLD WAR

### \* France: secularisation or exile

The legal suppression of all teaching by religious congregations in France had a profound effect on the running of the Institute and on its government during the first part of this century. Despite the warning signs that had become increasingly insistent, some

continued to delude themselves up to the very last moment that the blow would not fall on the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

<sup>2</sup> Speaking about it, Pius XI had said: "Undoubtedly, the first, the greatest and the most widespread danger is that of communism in all its forms and degrees" (Speech *Siamo ancora*, May 12th 1936).

This disaster brings to mind quite naturally what happened at the end of the 18th century: the Institute, totally suppressed by the Revolution, was reborn under the Consulate with surprising energy and survived all the changes of government and dynasty. But this picture is misleading: the world was very different in 1904, and too close an analogy between events could lead to excessive simplification. At the dawn of the 20th century, the Brothers were perhaps as important as they had been 100 years before, because of their work of evangelisation in schools, but they were already less needed as teachers. Their suppression at the end of the 18th century had been a real setback for popular education. But this was not the case at the beginning of the 20th century. On the other hand, from the point of view of militant Catholicism, its services were required with even greater urgency, so that Catholic schools (necessarily private) could maintain their standards as schools and as Catholic institutions.

The Brothers – Superiors and inferiors – found themselves under great pressure from both inside and outside the congregation. Bishops, parish priests, support committees, looked upon the Brothers as committed and competent Christian educators, and wanted to count on their services (and believed they had the right to do so), even if this made it necessary for religious to hide their status or to abandon it. From another point of view, all the past efforts of the government, and all the attempts to renovate the Institute had emphasised above all the religious status of

the Brother, and this had to be saved at all costs. As one blow followed another, when decisions had to be made, it became clear that, at the highest levels of the Institute there was no agreement regarding what should be saved first, nor what means should be taken to do so.

The choice to “save the works” led generally to a pro forma secularisation: the Brothers put on secular dress, started using their Christian name and surname again, removed all the exterior signs of a community, were officially struck off the lists and registers of the Congregation, lost their active and passive voice in elections and assemblies, but kept their vows and their other commitments as Brothers. It was a demanding and painful situation, very risky, and not completely clear to many consciences<sup>3</sup>. At this price, hundreds of Christian schools continued functioning...but were no longer included in official Institute statistics.

The choice to “save the religious” normally led to expatriation. Thousands of Brothers<sup>4</sup> continued their apostolate outside the country. Some of them did so in

<sup>3</sup> RIGAULT, *Les Temps de la Sécularisation*, p.78, gives the number of Brothers secularised between 1904 and 1914 as 3,781.

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French establishments transferred abroad to neighbouring countries: houses of formation and boarding schools moved mostly to Italy, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland, Great Britain and Spain. Others created new works or joined works existing already in these countries, or in others not yet occupied and further afield, in all the continents. Expatriation was normally looked upon with admiration as being a heroic act. This solution was not without creating problems.

“Secularisation” or moving abroad to start new works or to help existing ones, were two facets of the great effort made by the Institute to preserve its identity and its service, as it understood them. In both situations, its dedication to the poor became more difficult, at least from the economic point of view, and diminished: generally speaking, working in a private school meant being obliged to rely on good will, which was not always there or sufficient, and it became necessary to have recourse to school fees. As for the “secularised” Brothers, they were less sure of support from the Congregation, and they tried to provide against more difficult times. Consequently, some looked for better paid jobs.

All this comes to light, explicitly or by implication, in the General Chapters and in the Instructive Circulars which multiplied in the period following 1904.

#### \* The General Chapter of 1905

Certain that, this time, French legislation against teaching congregations would not

spare the Institute, Brother Gabriel Marie called a General Chapter on May 29th 1904, to be held whenever possible. It was eventually held at Lembecq lez Hal in Belgium, beginning on May 12th 1905.

The immediate effect of the law of July 7th was the suppression of 801 of the 1,359 schools the Brothers had in France<sup>5</sup>. The others disappeared over the course of the next 10 years. The Chapter had to deal with Brothers who, disguised as civilians, continued to work in many of these schools. Suspect in the eyes of the police, who did not accept readily their break with the Congregation; suspect in the eyes of some Brothers, who considered them almost as apostates by comparison with the heroes who chose expatriation to save their holy vocation, their holy habit and their holy Rules; called upon in various ways by bishops and parish priests, who relied too much on the religious, and too little on the Catholic laity, to preserve the Christian character of their schools; deleted from the official lists of the Institute; supported little by the struc-

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tures of the Institute (communication with the Superiors, meetings, communication within the Congregation, community life), so as not to attract attention; uncertain about the future and the help they would receive from the Institute when they retired; more tempted by life around them and their original sin; sometimes, not really understanding the real implication of their secularisation... the life of the secularised Brothers was not simple, thrown as they were, directly into a world from which all their previous efforts had tended to distance them.

All this, and much more, is said, or one can guess from the report of the 10th Chapter Commission and from the documents of the plenary sessions of the assembly<sup>6</sup>. What retained the attention of the Chapter particularly, was the insistence, attributed to some secularised Brothers, on being paid for every service they rendered, and their efforts to obtain better paid jobs.

On the day of the closure, the Superior General made three recommendations in his final message. The third was concerned with "the gratuity of our schools, the special and primary aim of the teaching and work of the holy Founder. The recommendation is addressed to the whole Institute, and especially to our newly created works. If, in this case, it may be advantageous to begin with a work involving remuneration, it must be undertaken only with the aim and desire to attach to it as quickly as possible a gratuitous school, so dear to St John Baptist de La Salle. This is the spirit of our Institute.

Let us preserve it. An Institute faithful to its spirit is indestructible, whatever men may do, especially when its aim, Christian education, responds to a permanent and universal need". After recalling the example of two Brothers, one from the 1789 Revolution, and the other from the 1871 Commune "who demonstrate this spirit of the holy Founder in act", the Superior concluded: "May God deign, especially today, to multiply such apostles in our midst!"<sup>7</sup>.

### \* The General Chapter of 1907

The numerous, complex and increasing difficulties encountered by the Institute in areas where it was persecuted, and for other

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<sup>6</sup> GA, ED 235, file 5. The notes sent to the Chapter have not been preserved, but the essential contents are reflected in the report: many of the notes spoke of the money problems of secularised Brothers. There is no doubt that the notes laboured this point. The subject occupied the Chapter for a long time (cf. *Register D*, p.76-93). In an atmosphere charged with tension and emotion, a letter from a secularised Brother (Brother Evremond) was read out. In it he declared his desire to continue to belong to the Institute, whatever the cost (p.90f).

<sup>7</sup> GA, *Register D*, p.94. Circular 135, p.71-72, in its transcription of this recommendation, adds the following paragraph: "A speaker, at a recent meeting, thought he was justified in saying that the Brothers of the Christian Schools made a mistake when they introduced the principle of gratuity. Let us be convinced, with our Founder and with the Church, that this gratuity has been and always will be of great benefit to the working class, and an eminently Christian act of charity". It is highly probable, that the speaker in question belonged to the Société Générale d'Éducation.

reasons, in new areas where it was reorganising itself, added to a number of deaths in the Regime, were the reasons given by the Superior to call another Chapter for April 18th 1907. The almost insurmountable problems that would have been caused by an attempt to elect delegates were avoided by summoning the delegates of the previous Chapter, thanks to a papal rescript <sup>8</sup>.

The service of the poor in the Institute surfaced clearly in the 9th session. Given the fact, that French Brothers continued their exodus to other countries, one delegate (from the District of Madrid, to all appearances) "asks the Brother Superior most respectfully to continue to encourage, by sending them Brothers, the Districts which preserve, with the greatest care gratuity in their schools. The District of Madrid is one of these since it has 39 gratuitous schools and 42 communities. Through a lack of Brothers, this District will have to refuse a number of new foundations requested by various members of the episcopate". The supplicant dared to hope his request would be granted <sup>9</sup>.

A note sent to the Commission on "Schools and boarding schools" regretted that in recent times, the Institute had done nothing to keep up with the needs regarding civic teaching and social studies. A leading member of the assembly replied "as regards social teaching, it should be pointed out that, on a certain number of points, there did not exist as yet any doctrine that was undisputed and accepted by all Catholic schools. It was better to wait so that greater precision can be given to this teaching". An

answer which provoked others, but which led to no decision.

Other notes analysed by the same Commission affirm that "in certain places, the Brothers seem to give preference too easily to paying schools; the Brother Directors themselves do not seem to show sufficient interest in the gratuitous classes, in houses including both paying and gratuitous pupils", which gave the Superior General an opportunity to recall, yet again, that we "must advocate gratuity" <sup>10</sup>.

The Regularity Commission devoted some time to a note about the formulation of the 5th vow. In concrete terms, the note asked that the formula for the vow should read "to teach the poor gratuitously", as was said in the Bull, and not only "to teach gratuitously", the formula first used in 1725. The Commission appreciated the reasons put forward, but, for others that it considered more valid, it decided against making the change. The assembly backed this decision, after returning several times to the subject <sup>11</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Circular 147, dated February 2nd 1907. Rescript dated December 21st 1906.

<sup>9</sup> GA, *Register D*, p.133

<sup>10</sup> Id., p.134 and 135.

<sup>11</sup> Report of the 6th Commission, p.4-6, in GA, ED 235, dossier 7. The Chapter dealt with this question in sessions 10, 13 and 15. (*Register D*, p.138-139, 143, 153-154). The request to introduce a mention of the poor in the formula of the vows (I promise and vow...to teach the poor gratuitously; which vows...to teach the poor gratuitously) came possibly from Belgium. It seems this conclusion can be drawn from two letters from brother Assistant Madir

### \* Circulars

As we have just seen, the sudden and brutal change in the situation of the Institute in France brought about some material adjustments, but no changes in the doctrine of the Institute, nor in emphasis in the way the Superior explained and defended it. These Circulars recall the aims of the Institute regarding the poor, the priority and preference they should be given and, to make them effective, the need to maintain gratuity of teaching in the greatest measure possible" <sup>12</sup>.

On the other hand, he takes pleasure in speaking about establishments which have made this their preference, especially those he has visited personally <sup>13</sup>.

### \* The 1913 General Chapter

Without really explaining why, Brother Gabriel Marie called a Chapter for April 30th 1913 <sup>14</sup>. What motivated his decision was that, given their age and the burden of their work, the Superior and several of his Assistants were worn out. Also, thinking that the worst of the storm had passed, they believed it was time the Institute came under new leadership. Showing their solidarity with the Superior, all the Assistants resigned, some adding the express request not to be re-elected. The hands of the Chapter were completely free to set a new course for the Institute, if it thought it opportune.

The assembly spent little time on the service of the poor. The report of the "Schools and boarding schools" Commis-

sion mentions a few notes about social studies in faith-support groups. "Several express the desire to see gratuity honoured even more in the Institute, at least in certain areas, and deplore the establishment of too many small boarding schools".

In the course of one of his last interventions, Brother Gabriel Marie "shows that the Institute still remains faithful to the spirit of its Founder where gratuity is concerned.

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Joseph to one of his Visitors, letters which are preserved in ED 225, dossier 6. The time spent by the Chapter on this question seems exaggerated. The refusal of the request was based on fears and on reasons based on rather doubtful logic.

In a gesture without precedent, Circular 148a, dated May 24th 1907, transcribes for the Brothers almost all of the Chapter report. What is related to the subject can be found on pages 37, 39-40, 41, 46-47, 53, 59-60, and in summary form, on pages 65 and 73..

<sup>12</sup> Circulars 133, p. 8; 146, p.31-32; 158, p.7 (words of the Pope: "Where there is no catechism, there is religious indifference or even atheism. And this is particularly true for the working class"); 167, p.10 ("Let us honour also the poverty of Jesus in that of the children he sends us"); 171, p.5 ("devoted to the Christian education of children, especially poor children"); 177, p.14 (De La Salle has pity on the crowds of poor children).

<sup>13</sup> Circulars 133, p.8.24; 139, p.13-14; 146 (Italian works, projects for Cuba, Panama, Brazil: p.4-18, 30); 148 (faith-support groups with frequent references to adolescents beginning work: p.91, 105, 107, etc); 151, p.10-19 (orphanages in Madrid, Vienna, association in Venice; institutes for children of prisoners in Catania and Pompei); 168, p.47, 56, 83 (Brother Prime's account: 30 years in poor schools, fought for gratuity, poor and a friend of the poor).

<sup>14</sup> Circular 181, dated December 8th 1912.



He adds that, if the formation of new Districts has sometimes made us comply with the conditions of the countries where we have established ourselves – and in some of these countries, gratuity is more or less impossible today – we must always tend towards it and seek to implement it, as it becomes possible, because the exaggerated

proliferation of paying schools would put the Institute into serious danger”<sup>15</sup>.

One has the feeling that the last word has been said: it is enough now to recall it and to recommend its implementation. In the immediate present, there was no change in course. The governments that followed were all conservative in their thinking.

### 3. THE INSTITUTE IN THE INTER-WAR PERIOD

This section includes the period between the two great wars of the 20th century, but we shall have to start a little before the first, and the last paragraph will deal also with the second<sup>16</sup>.

After the earthquake of 1904 and its most immediate consequences, the Institute tried to affirm its identity in the new situation. The novelty of the situation was geographical, with the Institute now spread worldwide, but also historical (if we can use the term) on account of the new conditions in the world it now had to enter. The affirmation of identity was sought through the intensification of a more total regularity: the Rule, the whole Rule, the Rule the Founder gave us, the Rule which accompanied the spiritual and pedagogical successes of the Institute for more than two centuries, the Rule which will make it unshakable and triumphant in the future, in the measure that its minutest details are observed exactly.

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<sup>15</sup> GA, *Register D*, p.197; report of the 2nd Commission (cf. ED 235, dossier 14).

<sup>16</sup> Superior Generals between 1913 and 1966, Brothers:

1. **Imier de Jésus** (Jean Antoine Lafabrière); 1855-1927; elected May 17th 1913, resigned April 30th 1923.
2. **Allais Charles** (Jean Petiot); 1858-1928; elected May 4th 1923.
3. **Adrien** (Adrien Petiot); 1867-1934; elected November 11th 1928.
4. **Junien Victor** (Auguste Détharré); 1864-1940; elected January 17th 1934.
5. **Arèse Casimir** (Noël Valentin Bression); 1862-1954; Vicar General from December 1th 1940 to May 19th 1946.
6. **Athanase Emile** (Louis Arthur Ritimann); 1880-1952; elected May 19th 1946.
7. **Dionysius van Jezus** (Alphonse François de Schaper); 1882-1952; Vicar General from October 2nd 1951 to May 19th 1956.
8. **Nicet Joseph** (Pierre Paul Loubet); 1898-1999; elected May 19th 1956, resigned May 20th 1966. From this time onwards, Superior Generals were no longer elected for life.

## BROTHER IMIER DE JESUS

### \* With eyes fixed on regularity

Circular 189, dated September 8th 1913, reported on the recent General Chapter. The new Superior commented here and there. Referring to the numerous requests for Brothers sent to him from all Districts, he says: "The tide of ignorance and religious indifference is overcoming the working class, and it is realised that the great, the unique remedy is Christian education".

He gives a paraphrase also of the Chapter session on gratuity. After recalling the essential points regarding it in the Rule, and recognising that "in some places abuses had been introduced", he recommends the community reading of the corresponding paragraphs of the *Catechism of the Vows* and Circular 115. He then goes on to recall the rules to follow when it becomes indispensable to ask for school fees<sup>17</sup>. And he ends with an exhortation: "Let us become attached to gratuity: let us love it, let us observe it with the sensitivity shown by our predecessors, and which is still shown everywhere by true Brothers of the Christian Schools. Let us avoid subtle arguments, fine distinctions by means of which one eventually warps one's conscience. Let our schools not be only Christian Schools, let them always remain Christian and gratuitous Schools".

A good paragraph even is devoted to small boarding schools, to deplore them:

"The results obtained are not in proportion with the number of Brothers sacrificed by the District to staff them, nor with the exceptional hardships the teachers have to suffer".

The supreme and permanent concern of the Superior is the restoration of regularity that is total, and on as widespread a scale as possible. He sees in the Rule all the enlightenment a Brother needs, all the practices which can make him holy. Commenting on Chapter VII, he invites the Brothers to consider themselves privileged to have poor children in class, and he concludes: "A Brother serves Jesus Christ also in the children; he recognises him especially in those on whom their destitution confers an "eminent dignity", that of the Saviour hidden under the features of the poor"<sup>18</sup>.

Models of regularity, such as Brothers Scubillon, Barmier, Miguel, Bénilde and Alpert distinguished themselves by their

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<sup>17</sup> In such a case, the Brother Directors "will make known to their Brother Visitor the conditions of their school, and what are its usual resources. The Brother Visitor will then send a report to the Brother Superior General, and submit for his approval the measures to be taken. Having received the required permissions, the Brother Director will inform his community about them, and will follow strictly the instructions accompanying them" (p.31-32). This is an example of an administrative measure taken without any mention of the 1879 papal rescript.

<sup>18</sup> Circular 199, p.49.

love of the poor, and their preference for the less favoured <sup>19</sup>.

The Rule explains how necessary the Institute is in order to prevent disorders among the artisans and the poor; the Rule, by requiring the Brother to look upon everything with the eyes of faith, reveals to him, in the children, the sons of God, redeemed by Jesus Christ, and leads him to show a special affection for the poorest, the least gifted, those who put up the greatest resistance to the efforts of the educator <sup>20</sup>.

When the end of the war finally came, and things became calm enough to think about celebrating certain events, the Superior decided to associate the second centenary of the Rule with the death of the Founder. He obviously referred to the Rule when speaking of the work of the "Legislator of popular education": the Christian and gratuitous schools, intended principally for the children of the common people, for their civil and Christian education: teaching, that was simultaneous and progressive, with no fewer than two classes per school. Among the directives of the Rule, those regarding gratuity were often a source of conflict: Superiors Gerbaud and Philippe were still models because of their vigour in maintaining or restoring it. But De La Salle's work, inspired by the Heart of Jesus, who loves the little and the poor, is called to continue: to do so, the Brothers will have to follow the example of their Founder and learn to live as poor people among the poor, detached from the "golden dust" which fascinates the world, in accordance with what

the Rule allows them, with the merits they accumulate, and with God who will reward them <sup>21</sup>.

### The 1923 General Chapter

At the end of the 10 year period beginning in 1913, Brother Imier called a General Chapter. What could have been a peaceful process held a few surprises. In addition to examining and approving work done previously to adapt the Rules to the new Code of Canon Law, the assembly had to cope with the wholly unexpected resignation of the Superior, and with the request of the Holy See regarding classical studies <sup>22</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Circular 205, *passim*.

<sup>20</sup> Circulars 209, p.4; 210, p.26. This same page quotes two very fine passages, one from St Vincent de Paul, and the other from St John Baptist de La Salle.

<sup>21</sup> Circular 216, p.31-31, 33, 35, 41, 44, 73. Brother Imier de Jésus must be given the credit for creating the university scholasticate at Lille. Although this was not something absolutely new, it was a significant step forward with long-lasting repercussions. We know that he supported similar institutions in Louvain and Dublin, and in general, university studies for the Brothers.

<sup>22</sup> Circular 235, dated January 1st 1923. There was nothing unusual about the Superior saying nothing about his resignation. He could not have known either the reaction of the Vatican, communicated to him by a letter dated the following April 17th. It is a little more surprising that he said nothing about the work of revising the Rules to bring them into line with the new Code of Canon Law.

In any case, the Superior had a horror for any changes in the Rule. Taking up the words of Brother Irlide 40 years before, and adding a few of his own

For a number of different reasons, the Chapter had to deal with popular education on several occasions.

### Notes from the Brothers

Commission 4 restricted itself to rejecting those which, arguing that there would be fewer violations of poverty and gratuity, demanded the legalisation of the habit of smoking <sup>23</sup>.

Commission 7 had more to say: various notes sounded a note of alarm because “our Institute is straying from its principal aim, given to it by our holy Founder: the education of poor children”. The Founder’s intention was illustrated by a great number of texts from the Bull, the Rule, and the writings and life of John Baptist de La Salle.

Another note asks “for the Brothers to be put on their guard against ideas contrary to gratuity, spread more or less everywhere at present by school committees, teaching associations, and even by certain members of the clergy and episcopate, in order to induce the families of our pupils to pay fees”. Another note asks “if today in our Institute there still exist many real gratuitous schools; if this term cannot be used in the case of schools where families have to pay fees to either the parish priest or to the school committee which maintains the Brothers”. The problem was not limited to a single place, since the notes came from 4 different Districts. The Commission, unable to provide up-to-date statistics, was content to express the wish to the capitular assembly “that each

college takes upon itself, when its financial resources permit, to maintain, at its own expense, an absolutely gratuitous school”.

In a plenary session, the Brother Secretary General reported that out of a total of 270,150 pupils, in Brothers’ schools, 120,674 received gratuitous education. The Superior commented: “Such a result proves how much the Institute, despite the difficulties of the present times, remains faithful to the principle of gratuity, which is for it a tradition going back to its origin. Let us preserve this fidelity at all costs. Whoever

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vintage, he put the Institute on its guard against the desire for change: “Chapters cannot be too restrained when it comes to making new decisions and regulations. After two centuries, our Institute must bring to a close the period of trials and experiments. From now on, any circumstances that we find will be very similar to those which occurred in the past, and it is rather in the past that we must look for rules of conduct for the future...The Church obliges all religious orders to hold General Chapters more or less frequently, and the purpose of these Chapters is to restore all things, that is, to put them back in their former state...It is better to undertake the necessary restoration by recommending the exact observance of the Rules, and recalling the decisions of preceding Chapters, than to make new ones. It is rightly said that a multiplicity of new laws is a sign of decadence in a society. The same can be said of religious Institutes” (p.10-11).

The Assistants who called the General Chapters of 1928 and 1934, and the Vicar who called the one in 1946, thought it necessary to express, in very similar terms, the same aversion (Circulars 264, p.10-12; 283, p.10-12; 316, p.7-8).

<sup>23</sup> GA, ED236, dossier 5: Report of the 4th Commission, p.5 (Regularity).

looks after the poor possesses the essential virtues of Christian and religious life, and he will have God's best blessings" <sup>24</sup>.

The 3rd Commission reported on the excessive amount of work which crushed certain Brothers in gratuitous schools. Complaints came from Spain in particular and were quite numerous: "the Brothers in charge of the youngest gratuitous classes have between 80 and 135 children in them... This is contrary to the prescriptions of the Rule of Government and of the *Conduct of Schools*, to hygiene and the law. Working under such conditions, destroys health, which is proved by premature deaths. Even worse than these premature deaths is discouragement, loss of interest and the loss of vocation". The causes of such a situation are the "irresistible pressure from patrons, founders, from a priest whose zeal is misunderstood... The Director allows himself to be persuaded, and the young teacher acquires an extra pupil. Things cannot go on like this!" And that is not all: "Foundations have become insufficient to provide for the upkeep of the workers and pay the Brother Visitor the annual tax for the District. To make up for what is lacking, extra work is added, especially French lessons. This is a breach of the Rule (6 hours of class per day) and an increase of tiredness which cannot but harm religious life. These conditions make personal study difficult or impossible, and the preparation of lessons and the progress of pupils suffer necessarily as a result". "In some places, there are night schools... The teacher, already tired from

his prescribed hours of teaching, has to add to the total an hour or an hour and a half of lessons beginning at 7 o'clock in the evening. This exceeds all bounds and weakens spiritual health." The assembly responded by the desire "to come as close as possible everywhere to the letter of our Rules regarding the duration of teaching" <sup>25</sup>.

### Classical studies

Without any prior warning, the Chapter had to deal with the question of classical studies. A letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State, dated April 17th, said that "in the presence of an increasingly urgent need which is felt in various places, and in consideration of the profound change which new times had brought to school curricula and statutes, and also of the more wide-

<sup>24</sup> GA, ED 236, dossier 5: Report of the 7th Commission, p.10-11; ED 227, *Register D*, p.277-278; circular 236, p.50.

<sup>25</sup> GA, ED 236, dossier 5: Report of the 3rd Commission, p.8-10; ED 227, *Register D*, p.283; circular 236, p.35.

The Chapter considered also the question of lay teachers teaching in the Brothers' schools. The war made it necessary to employ women also. The recommendation of the Chapter was to dispense with lay teachers as soon as possible, and especially with women teachers, who were evidently particularly dangerous! Circular 236 says absolutely nothing about the scandalous presence of women teachers in Brothers' schools. Referring to the men, it recognises that "the majority of these auxiliaries are very worthy and respectable, but they are the world. And did not St John Baptist de La Salle make it a duty for us to keep well away from it?"

spread participation of all classes of society in all sorts of study, His Holiness is of the opinion that the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools must henceforth extend its teaching to classical studies". The forthcoming General Chapter will have to study "how and in what measure all this can be implemented, and indicate the precautions that it will judge necessary". All that it does will have to be submitted to the Vatican authorities. Let it be clear that the Sovereign Pontiff does not in any way wish to change the nature of the Institute "which must remain lay, and its principal aim and principal glory must be, in the future also, schools for poor children and the teaching of religion, according to the Bull of Approbation..."

With exemplary submission, an ad hoc Commission first of all, and then the plenary assembly, drew up the resolutions which were incorporated into the text of the Rule, modifying or eliminating whatever was opposed to the new text.

The final formulation, as far as concerns us here, is the following: "The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools extends its teaching to classical studies, to comply with the august will of Our Holy Father the Pope Pius XI, manifested in his letter to the Most Honoured Brother Superior General, on April 17th 1923.

"But, as was recalled explicitly in the letter quoted earlier, the Institute remains composed exclusively, according to the will of the holy Founder, of lay Brothers, and its

principal aim and glory, remains schools for poor children and the teaching of religion, conformably with the Bull of Approbation of Our Holy Father the Pope Benedict XIII: "The Brothers must above all make it their care to instruct children, principally the poor, in all that concerns living good and Christian lives'" <sup>26</sup>.

### \* **Gratuity in figures**

Circulars and Chapters do not really give a true idea of the work of the Brothers. Any attempt to take a closer look at their everyday lives would require the persusal of masses of documents really too numerous

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<sup>26</sup> GA, ED 236, dossier 6: Report of the ad hoc Commission; ED 227, *Register D*, p. 280-282, 291-293; circular 236, p.56-63; Common Rules (1923), ch. XXVIII, art.1.

Article 3 of the same chapter had been written as follows: "The Brother Visitors, with the consent of the Regime, can authorise the pursuit of classical studies, according to the needs of time and place, by Brothers they believe are able to benefit from these studies". The Vatican had the expression "who ask to do so" suppressed, and the text stayed with simply "by Brothers they believe are able".

On page 56 of Circular 236, an uncorrected slip of the pen indicates the 27th (instead of the 17th) of April 1923, as the date of the letter from the Secretary of State.

The words referring to the fundamental purpose of the Institute ("its principal aim and greatest glory") come and go from the letter in the Commission report, in the articles of the Rule, in the correspondence with the Holy See, and even in the papal audience granted to the Superior in the October of the same year (cf. Circular 237, p.9).

to cope with. We have chosen one of the many possible indicators: we have tried here to quantify the proportion of gratuitous pupils in the overall total at a given date. In

the table below we give the results of an analysis of the “états jaunes” (end-of-year statistical returns) for the year 1913:

### BROTHERS' PUPILS IN 1913

Regions	Pupils	Gratuitous	% gratuitous	Uncertain
France	7,286	3,755	51,54	-
Rest of Eur.	82,080	45,925	55,95	2,541 (3,10%)
Asia/Oceania	14,480	3,726	25,73	126 (0,87%)
Africa	12,326	6,445	52,29	-
America	73,303	40,859	55,74	12,895(17,59%)
TOTAL	189,475	100,710	53,15	15,592(8,23%)

The choice and the results call for some comments.

Regarding the choice of date, 1913 seemed suitable: 10 years had passed since the law excluding the Brothers from schools in France, and the situation had achieved a certain stability. There was a major change in the government of the Institute, and it was the last year of tranquillity before the outbreak of the world war. The source of information is as reliable as it could ever be. The aspect under consideration – gratuity – is an aspect traditionally considered as essential by the Congregation, and is easy to quantify. Ideologically, it is very closely linked with the service of the poor: for the poor to have any real chance of attending a Christian school, it was indispensable for that school to be gratuitous.

The results obtained seem coherent with the other statistics usual in the Institute: the total number of pupils – the figure most easily comparable – differs only very slightly from the official statistics for that year<sup>27</sup> which, according to all indications, are based totally on the états jaunes. But, if this is true, then the official statistics lose some of their trustworthiness. At this point we must refer to the answer form and the answers.

The answer form (état jaune) we have already referred to, by which each community had to give information about its situation on December 31st, was explicit: after asking if the school was gratuitous or not, it asked how many pupils were gratuitous and

<sup>27</sup> 189,350 according to the annual summary; 189,475 according to my rapid calculation.

how many paid. In theory, no error was possible.

The problem arises among the answers given. In the first place, many are missing: there is practically nothing about the secularised Brothers and their schools in France. On the other hand, it is probable that some answers never reached their destination<sup>28</sup>.

Not all the answer forms received contained complete information: 11 schools (2 in France, 4 in Europe and 5 in America) give no information about their pupils. In the case of 15,562 other pupils, it is impossible in practice to work out whether they pay or not<sup>29</sup>: the corresponding questions are not answered, and the information cannot be extrapolated from other figures.

Finally, when deciding into which column figures should be put, the decision was sometimes based on a deduction, or on indications which were not entirely reliable. When it is said that a school is gratuitous, and nothing more, and all the pupils figure in the gratuitous column, there is still an area of doubt: we know that some of those who filled in these forms considered their school gratuitous even though there were pupils paying for accommodation and certain other services. To balance this, when it was said that a school was not gratuitous, and nothing more, all the pupils were considered to be fee-payers, though some of them must have been gratuitous. Even when forms were filled in clearly and completely, some doubts remained: figures on one page sometimes contradicted those on the page opposite<sup>30</sup>.

Another coefficient of relativity is conceptual: if gratuity, ideally, is the same for all gratuitous children, those who pay, on the other hand, can be classified, in each place, in a variety of ways: according to the amount they pay, according to their resources, and according to living costs. In the present study it is impossible to go into all these details.

Despite all these limitations, one fact is certain: gratuity in Institute schools was diminishing<sup>31</sup>. A glance at the figures for 1923 confirms this trend<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> For example, there are no tables for Hong Kong or the Philippines.

<sup>29</sup> Particularly deficient in this matter and in that years were the tables sent in by the Districts of Baltimore and New York.

<sup>30</sup> For example, when the total of gratuitous pupils, added to that of the paying pupils is different from the overall total of pupils. Although hard to believe, this actually happened. At other times, those who collected the fees were persons or bodies not known to the Brothers' community which, as a consequence, was not involved with the practicalities of gratuity and remuneration.

<sup>31</sup> More thorough research could cast some light on other aspects. For example, how many pupils were there per class when gratuitous and paying pupils were taught in separate classes: there were cases (something to think about) when the classes for gratuitous pupils were much more crowded. This meant that, when this happened, more Brothers were allocated to teach the paying pupils whereas their number was the same as that of the gratuitous pupils. Another aspect, more sensitive and needing more study, is the level of knowledge and skill of the Brothers who taught the two different groups.

<sup>32</sup> A first calculation, based on the états jaunes of 1923, gave a total of 261,310 pupils, 126,710



**BROTHERS' PUPILS IN 1923**

Regions	Pupils	Gratuitous	% gratuitous
France	53,045	17,911	33,77
Rest of Eur.	91,682	49,052	53,50
Asia/Oceania	22,751	5,032	22,12
Africa	15,076	6,779	44,97
America	82,314	50,905	61,84
TOTAL	264,868	129,679	48,96

Despite uncertainty regarding some details, a comparison between the two tables shows that the proportion of gratuitous pupils is diminishing, except in America. Staying a little longer with figures, and using the information in the états jaunes, we can obtain a more precise idea of a number of situations.

In the first place, the remarkable increase in the number of schools in France reflects a change of atmosphere. This increase was less to do with new foundations, than the incorporation into official documents of the schools run by the secularised Brothers: the world war brought about a national reconciliation which enabled communities in France to come out of hiding. The laws still existed, but they were never or only very rarely applied. But their schools remained private, and the gratuitous teaching mentioned by some of them, was obtained only thanks to strenuous efforts by the Church, and by a sober and laborious life on the part of the Brothers.

More significant is the case of the three Spanish Districts of Madrid, Barcelona and Valladolid: without any help from the State apart from benevolence, the Brothers succeeded in keeping 53 of their 79 schools completely gratuitous<sup>33</sup>.

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(48.49%) of whom were gratuitous, and 10,883 (4.16%) were uncertain. Even though the percentage of the gratuitous was very similar to that given by the official statistics (48.03%), the raw figures differed by several thousand.

If we revise the figures, including many facts and criteria (many but not all) of the annual statistical summary, and especially, exclude the "uncertain", we arrive at the same figures as the table. In this table, I do not count the 3,590 junior novices (only 7 of them are given as gratuitous), while the official statistics included them in the total number of pupils. With the junior novices, my totals reach 268,458 pupils, of whom 129,686 (48.31%) are gratuitous. This is not very far from the official figures of the Institute: 268,781 pupils, of whom 129,097 are gratuitous.

<sup>33</sup> Ten other gratuitous Brothers' schools on Spanish soil belong to French Districts, in addition to a larger number of paying schools.

Italy maintained gratuity in about 20 of its schools, most of which were private. The three schools in Monaco, on the other hand, were funded entirely by the Principality.

Belgium, in addition to the 7 public gratuitous schools entrusted to the Brothers in its African colony, funded 94 out of the 120 schools in the country itself, which explains the high rate of gratuity there (61.31%).

Apart from Monaco, Ireland seems to have had the highest rate of participation by Brothers in the State public educational system – 25 out of 28 schools. This explains why more than 90% of their pupils were gratuitous. In Great Britain, although only two schools were public, 8 others received a grant from the State <sup>34</sup>.

The level of gratuity was normally lower in Central and Eastern Europe.

The schools in the former Turkish Empire received help from the French in many cases, but it was insufficient to survive on <sup>35</sup>. In most of the British colonies the government provided support for schools, but this was not the case in the French colonies.

In Canada also the State was friendly: 48 public and 12 grant-aided schools out of a total of 73. This goes a long way to explain why 86% of the pupils were gratuitous. This same thing, or perhaps even better, existed in Nicaragua, but on a smaller scale: 6 public and 1 grant-aided schools. On a smaller scale also in Colombia: 15 public schools, 4 grant-aided and 11 private. In all, 73.4% of the pupils were gratuitous.

Even though State aid was practically non-existent, the total of 12,502 (47.2%) gratuitous pupils in the United States was most meritorious. The figure for Ecuador, however, 86.45%, is very surprising. Under the same conditions, the other American countries had more paying than gratuitous pupils.

In another register, 4,217 <sup>36</sup> pupils under the heading “orphans” bear witness to an important apostolate in a very difficult social setting, which included child criminals, sons of prisoners, etc.

As there came about a more or less general decrease in the proportion of Lasallian gratuitous schools, so the Superiors and the assemblies of the Congregation intensified their recommendations of gratuity. It would seem, however, that given the declarations of the Rule and of the Bull on the one hand, and the 1879 indult on the other, reality forced the Brothers to take refuge more and more in the latter <sup>37</sup>. By reality, we should

<sup>34</sup> What is said here of Italy, Belgium, Ireland and Great Britain does not take into account the French establishments there.

<sup>35</sup> In Libya, the two schools depending on the District of Turin are gratuitous.

<sup>36</sup> There is good reason to believe that the figure does not include all the children at risk. For example, it does not include the 1,359 inmates of the Westchester Protectory, nor others.

<sup>37</sup> In practice, not many people knew about the indult: in theory, it had been communicated only to the Visitors. New Visitors were informed of its existence only when they took up office. Certain Brothers were appointed headmaster of a paying

understand a whole combination of things: the greater complexity and duration of school education, the increase in the number of Brothers' schools belonging to the private sector, the lack of financial means from private sources, the personal and collective desire to advance, pedagogical successes, and perhaps some desire for glory.

The gap between practice and texts does not stay entirely unpunished: a certain feel-

ing of guilt begins to spread throughout the Institute; a feeling that Brothers tried to shrug off, either by going back to the texts (sincere and generous, but of little use, in reality), or by a more suitable or lax interpretation of these same texts (given that reality was irreversible).

## BROTHER ALLAIS CHARLES

### \* Circulars

Surprised by his election as Superior, and wishing to express personally the obedience of the Institute to the Pope regarding classical studies, Brother Allais Charles went to Rome in October 1923. In his account of the audience, he reports the Pope as saying: "Up till now, you have concerned yourselves with the materially poor. And you must continue to do so, as we reminded you, and because you are obliged to. In addition, you will now have the means to devote yourselves to another category of poor, perhaps even more to be pitied than the former, that is, the morally poor.

In former times, the clergy reached them easily, because public attitudes and morals were better. Now that this clientele has become argumentative, it keeps away from our influence and does not allow itself to be

easily influenced by Christian ideas. It is the school, it is you who will make them better". As he reported on his journey, he did not fail to draw attention to certain Italian establishments for the poor at Vercelli, Turin and Grugliasco<sup>38</sup>.

Reports on other longer journeys to Districts in America, Central Europe and the East Mediterranean, gave him an opportunity to mention the gratuity of certain schools, the dedication of certain others to particularly needy children, and the policy

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school, and maintained it as such without trying to find out what had led to this situation. Transferred to another, they applied there what they had learned in their previous one, without suspecting the existence of the rescript. The rescript was more applied (and sometimes badly applied) than understood.

<sup>38</sup> Circular 237, dated November 14th 1923, p.10, 18, 19,21.

proposed by a recent Chapter <sup>39</sup>, according to which each paying school was to maintain a gratuitous one. Or they give him a chance to identify the obstacles which prevent a response to needs <sup>40</sup>. Every now and then, he recalls the principle itself or some exemplary institution by way of illustration<sup>41</sup>.

On other occasions, the subject is developed more systematically. Gratuity and disinterestedness in teaching occupy several pages of a Circular in which he recalls the second centenary of the Bull of Approbation, or in which he comments on the formula of the vows, or a page in another, in which he speaks of the "promises" of the taking of the habit at the beginning of the novitiate <sup>42</sup>.

What he teaches does not stray from what is already known. A summary of it can be found in the pages that his successor published under the title: "Our motives for loving God and our neighbour". After establishing that our love must be disinterested and supernatural, and that the poor must be our preference, he summarises the history of the institute regarding school gratuity. It was perfect, not without some struggles, up to 1861. And then, pressure from the official world of Public Instruction and from other less secular influences, took away this title to glory from the Institute. In the words that follow there comes through a sense of guilt or of paradise lost: "We shall be more truly sons of St John Baptist de La Salle when we re-establish gratuity in our schools, as it was in the 17th and 18th century...;"

followed by a hopeless wish, the resolution "to bring about this reform, if it becomes

<sup>39</sup> For example: Circular 246, p.19-20, 25, 28 (Protectories in Toronto, New York, Lincolnale), 41, 61, (public school at Bernalillo, gratuitous school dependent on the College in Vedado); Circular 252, p.43, 47, 50, 54, 55, 62, 65, 68, 69 (gratuitous schools, usually maintained by paying schools, in Eastern Mediterranean countries; Circular 259, p.17, (long mention of the New York Protectory), p.27, 28, 29, 40, 41, 44-45, 53, 57, 58, 59 (gratuitous schools in Nicaragua, Ecuador, Colombia).

<sup>40</sup> For example, Circular 246, p.57: paying schools in an area near Havana which had an absolute need of gratuitous schools.

<sup>41</sup> Circular 246, p.8: In Canada, the Brothers waited 50 years before opening a boarding school "because the Brothers, who truly had the spirit of their Founder, wished first of all to give the poor the benefit of a Christian education". Prominent among the virtues of the Founder professed by the Brothers must be "his charity for poor children" (id. P.52).

The feeling of joy experienced by the Superior when surrounded by children becomes more intense "if they are poor children, that is, for us a choice clientele" (Circular 252, p.20).

The work of stevedores in a port inspires him with a few thoughts about social inequality (Circular 259, p.31-32); this type of consideration is not frequent in the Circulars of Superiors.

<sup>42</sup> Circular 241, dated November 1st 1924, p.26-34: comments on articles 1 and 5 of the Bull; Circular 255, dated January 1st 1927, p. 8-9, 52-59 devoted to the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously; Circular 247, dated January 1st 1926, p. 41-42: comments on the 8th question: "Are you disposed to instruct children well and always gratuitously?". One can note that nothing is said about the topic of Circular 260, dated January 1st 1928, which explains the sense and the obligations of the name "Brothers of the Christian Schools".

possible one day". The paragraph continues by distinguishing different kinds of poor: there are the materially poor, the intellectually poor, and the most worthy of pity, the morally poor. All must awaken the sympathy

and win over the heart of the Brother. The Brother must serve them with disinterestedness, in accordance with all the different meanings of the word "gratuity".<sup>43</sup>

## BROTHER ADRIEN

### \* General Chapter of 1928

The death of Brother Allais Charles made a new Chapter necessary, which the Assistants called for November 7th. Among the first things it did was to elect the new Superior, Brother Adrien, the brother of Brother Allais Charles.

Of the almost 900 notes or memoirs sent in by the Brothers, 12 referred to gratuity. They came from a great variety of places (Spain, Egypt, North America, France, Argentina, Italy) and repeated in unison the cry of alarm heard in 1923. Noting that the principles based on the Bull and the Rules were not being implemented, they affirmed that as gratuitous schools were being closed, paying ones were being opened, so that in their Districts the latter were more numerous than the former. "They insinuate (and in saying this they are certainly mistaken) that the Superiors have a greater esteem for the latter than for the former".

The 3rd Chapter Commission, whose topic this was, considered that such complaints, although unjustified, "cannot leave the members of the General Chapter indif-

ferent. We are obliged to admit that, for the last quarter of a century, the Brothers of the Christian Schools have been becoming more and more the teachers of the better-off classes, and less and less the teachers of the children of the poor"; the comparison between statistics of 1924 and 1928 clearly shows the direction things were going.

The Commission laid no blame on the Superiors, but took up the wish expressed in 1923 "that each paying school, as far as its financial situation permits, maintains at

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<sup>43</sup> Circular 267, dated January 12th 1929, p.36-39. GA, LD 252/5, dossier 9, preserves a few handwritten notes of Brother Allais Charles. They seem to belong to two different periods. The first part seems to come from his first years as Assistant, about 1906, ("these last 45 years" seem to start in 1861), and deplores, with a vigour similar to that of Brother Réticius, the generalised abandonment of school gratuity on the part of the Brothers in France. Perhaps these notes were part of a memoir sent to the 1907 Chapter, as a paragraph of Circular 278, p.50 seems to suggest. The second part supposes that the January 1st Circular for 1925 has already been published, and its tone is that of the recent Circulars.

its expense a gratuitous school", and noted that it was not effective, since things had become worse. To reverse the trend, it proposed that "each time it is proposed to open a paying school, the opening of a gratuitous school should also be envisaged". And it hoped that in this way "the proportion of our two categories of pupils will be modified to the advantage of the gratuitous pupils" <sup>44</sup>.

The examination of the topic in a plenary session led the new Superior General "to declare that the Institute remains faithful to the teaching of the poor. Statistics do not always describe reality. In a good number of paying schools, the majority of the children are poor and pay only very low school fees, or are even completely gratuitous. Also, many gratuitous schools have been set up next to boarding schools in many countries. It remains important to remain faithful to gratuity that was so dear to the holy Founder and the Institute".

After which, the Chapter approved "that when a paying school was opened, the opening of a gratuitous school should also be envisaged". For the final vote, it was thought that the proposition should be toned down a little, to read "that in conformity with the essential purpose of the Institute, our preference should always be for poor children, and that it be manifested by the building of more gratuitous schools" <sup>45</sup>.

### \* Circulars

The principal text on this subject was Circular 278, dated January 8th 1933. It was

the second part of a commentary on the "third commandment of the Institute" and it was totally devoted to gratuity, considered as a commandment of the Institute <sup>46</sup>.

The intention of the treatise, its plan, the sensitivity of the subject, are quickly made clear: "In order to preserve ourselves from all error and exaggeration in such an important subject, we cannot do better than to refer to the teaching and example of the holy Founder...It will be easy for us, who are his heirs and his continuators, to deduce from them our present obligations. A rapid glance at the history of the Institute, will show us next how, in the course of two centuries, the principle of gratuity was understood, and will confirm the accuracy of our conclusions" (p.10-11).

The first part (p.11-27) has the title: "The gratuity established and taught by St John Baptist de La Salle". The examples drawn from his biography, the texts taken from his

<sup>44</sup> GA, ED 236, dossier 11: Report of the 3rd Commission, p.10-12.

<sup>45</sup> GA, *Register F*, p. 41, 42, 43, 53; Circular 266, p.47, 49. In Circular 269, p. 68, the Superior exhorts the Brothers to give "all the preferences of their heart to the poor, to the little and to the humble", as he had promised in their name to Cardinal Merry del Val, the new Protector of the Institute.

<sup>46</sup> The Circular, coming at the beginning of the year, begins with the season's greetings and a brief survey of the past year. The visit of a Brother Assistant to Ecuador is an opportunity to recall the beginnings of this District, and to praise the absolutely gratuitous character of the quasi totality of its educational works (p. 5-6).

writings and from the Bull of Approbation leave no doubt regarding the absolute and obligatory character of gratuity. Boarding schools are legitimate, but only as an exception, as a complement or support of the essential work, which is the Christian education of the poor. The obligations of gratuity are those that every Brother ought to know, thanks to the Rule, the *Catechism of the Vows*, previous Circulars such as N° 115 and 122a. After explaining in what violations of the vow or Rule of gratuity consist, Brother Adrien devotes a number of paragraphs to the practice of not accepting presents offered by the pupils or their parents.

The second part is a "Summary of the history of gratuity in the Institute, beginning with the death of the holy Founder" (p.27-55), and is subdivided quite naturally into three periods. Initially, up to the dispersion of the Brothers in 1792, "the Rule of gratuity is accepted everywhere"; the Superior recalls the difficulties encountered by the Brothers in order to maintain it, the extreme means they even used, the firmness of the Institute with the authorities, especially in the case of Boulogne sur Mer. And then, from the French Revolution to 1861, "the public authorities tend to impose school remuneration on us". Up to that date, the Institute had been able to resist the harassment of the government, but in 1861, it gave way in circumstances and in a form already known <sup>47</sup>. Finally, from 1861 to our days, "Rome gave us the necessary rescripts". For the first time, all the Brothers were able to read an official communication which de-

scribed in a broad outline the history of the famous indults. But these papal documents, capable of solving the juridical aspect of various cases, left the essential purpose of the Institute intact. And it was there that friction came about. That is why "for 50 years, one can say that there has not been a General Chapter at which this question has not been raised, either to deplore the situation in which circumstances have left us, or to call, with great ardour, for a return to the traditional practices of the Institute" (p.51). One can see that not all consciences are at peace, and that, despite the fact that statistics show, for the generalate of Brother Adrien, a constant, if slow, increase in the proportion of gratuitous pupils by comparison with the overall total of pupils taught by the Institute.

In the last part (p.55-70), offering the example of "the love of Our Lord, of the Holy Church, and of St John Baptist de La Salle for the poor", he exhorts the Brothers to fill themselves with the same sentiments.

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<sup>47</sup> There is perhaps some gentle criticism in Brother Adrien's assessment: "The capitulants of 1861 seem to have exaggerated the danger to the Congregation at the time regarding gratuity" (p.43). This same criticism was levelled by many at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th, in clearly harsher terms, for example, by Brothers Sylvéris (Visitor for houses of Formation), Réticius, Louis de Poissy, Allais Charles (Assistants), among others. Some Brothers already thought that all the problems of the Institute (its "original sin") stemmed from the pusillanimity of 1861, crowned by the disastrous indult of 1879.

As he is about to conclude, the Superior reminds the Brothers “that in the mind of our Father, the essential work of our Institute is to give a Christian education to poor children. That is our own furrow in the holy Church, the furrow we are called to water with our sweat...Following the example of our holy Founder, let us love to turn towards

the poor and the disinherited with supernatural tenderness, and reserve for them the best of our heart and our concern”.

This is almost all that can be found in the Circulars of the Superior, who died on March 2nd 1934. Three and a half months later, he was succeeded by Brother Junien Victor.

## BROTHER JUNIEN VICTOR

### \* The General Chapter of 1934

About 1,200 notes and memoirs were sent to the Chapter. A dozen on gratuity were studied by the 5th Commission. All were in favour of gratuity; and the majority feared that the Institute was straying off course by forgetting the poor and lavishing its care on the rich, which explains the vehemence of some of the expressions used <sup>48</sup>. One note complains that there are Brothers who disparage gratuitous schools without ever having worked in them, or experienced the supernatural joy of exercising their apostolate among poor children. Another proposes that most young Brothers, if not all, spend some time in gratuitous schools, because they are the best place to keep them modest and inspired by supernatural attitudes.

The Commission did not believe that the Institute had lost sight of gratuitous schools for poor children, and offered recent statistics in support of its view. All the same, it

recognised “that, as our natural inclination will always lead us to look after better-off children by preference, rather than after the poorer classes...”, it recommended that during retreats the attention of the Brothers be drawn to the essential purpose of the Institute; that everything possible be done to preserve gratuitous schools; that a sufficient proportion of the Brothers be employed in schools for the poor. It trusted that the Regime would satisfy its wishes.

But one note puts the importance of gratuity into its context. According to its author, the essential thing was to teach: the fact that the children were rich or poor was secondary. The Brothers prefer the poor; but if they cannot be admitted gratuitously, it is better to accept fees than to refuse to teach.

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<sup>48</sup> The note sent from La Paz (Bolivia) by Brother Apollone Jules can be called vehement. It is the only one preserved. The original is in GA, ED 226/2, dossier 11. Copy in ED 237, dossier 8.



In this case, one would have to consider whether it was preferable to open paying schools rather than gratuitous ones. "The Commission is of the opinion that the considerations contained in this last memoir reflect faithfully the needs of the present moment"<sup>49</sup>.

The topic does not seem to have provoked any strong reaction in the assembly. In the report of the session concerned, one interminable sentence includes fears, strong feelings and points of view: "The Commission notes with joy a large number of reports, all praising gratuity and recalling the prescriptions of the holy Rule and the teaching of the holy Founder on this subject; it expresses fear at the beginning of a deviation from the primitive spirit, by the multiplicity of paying schools and colleges, in which a good number of Brothers are employed; and expresses the wish that the attention of the Brothers be drawn during retreats to the essential purpose of the Institute; and that, wherever it is possible, gratuitous schools be maintained, and that as large a number of Brothers as possible be employed in them; all this in the measure that present needs permit"<sup>50</sup>.

These views were repeated in the Circular reporting the Chapter to the Institute, but with a few modifications: the "dozen" notes of the Commission report, which became "a large number" in the Chapter report, became a "great number" in the Circular. The mention disappears of the number or proportion of Brothers that should be sent to gratuitous schools. This sleight of hand

made it possible to avoid any hint of contradiction of the affirmation made a few pages previously, where it is said, while discussing what type of community was best for Brothers starting out on their apostolate, that "we have come to the conclusion that boarding schools, where community life is well organised, and contact with the world is reduced to a minimum, are places most conducive to the perseverance of young Brothers"<sup>51</sup>.

#### \* Other circulars

The Superior took advantage of the New Year Circulars to pass on very discreetly certain pieces of news about the Institute: Some news was painful: the persecution in Mexico, which had flared up again after 1930; the problems in Spain which led to the martyrdom of the Brothers of Turon in 1934, and spread to most of the country

<sup>49</sup> GA, ED 237, dossier 7: Report of the 7th Commission, p.13-14.

<sup>50</sup> GA, *Register F*, p.124.

<sup>51</sup> Circular 283, p. 42-43: on this last aspect, the Chapter document does not put a comma after the word "boarding schools": "boarding schools where community life is well organised and contact with the world is reduced to the indispensable, constitute..." (*Register F*, p.103). According to one interpretation of this sentence, the circular was saying that in boarding schools "community life was organised and contact with the world was reduced to the minimum", from which it follows that they offer the best conditions for the perseverance of young Brothers. This interpretation gives rise to a variety of comments.

when the civil war broke out; the conflicts produced by nationalism in Turkey, Greece, Germany; the loss of establishments for the poor in Nicaragua and Colombia, because of secular governments; the threat to the gratuity of Lasallian schools in Ecuador, where it had been jealously preserved everywhere until then. And there was good news: the creation of the new Districts of Belgian Congo and Peru-Bolivia; the praise obtained in Peru for teacher training schools and institutions for the care of delinquent children; the recent arrival of the Brothers in Japan, Manchuria, Ethiopia (following the Italian occupation). And despite all the Brothers who had left, Institute numbers continued to increase slightly.

After Brother Adrien's Circular on "The 3rd commandment of the Society", there was nothing new on the subject. But the social teaching of the Church became more abundant and existing conditions were conducive to its diffusion. That is why, speaking of "the catechetical work of the Brother of the Christian Schools", the Superior devoted two pages to "Catechisms on the social doctrine of the Church". Referring by name to papal encyclicals *Rerum Novarum*, *Quadragesimo Anno* and *Divini Redemptoris*<sup>52</sup>, he justified the inclusion of social doctrine in normal catechesis (for example, when dealing with the 7th commandment), and the need for specific treatment of the subject in certain courses.

In September 1939, the second world war broke out. The Brother Superior died a year later, in October 1940. Given the impossibility of calling a General Chapter, the Holy See intervened and appointed Brother Arèse Casimir, the most senior of the Assistants, Vicar General.

The situation was such that communication with the Institute was very sporadic. There is no mention of the educational service of the poor. The greatest concern of the time was to know about and alleviate the penury caused by the conflict, which was widespread and serious. In the annual reports on the situation of the Institute, one comes across the following sentence: "In Mauritius, the Institute has three establishments: the college at Curepipe, which takes in the best children of the area. The elementary classes at Rose Hill and Port Louis are attended mostly by the poor natives"<sup>53</sup>. Written in good faith.

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<sup>52</sup> Circular 300, dated February 19th 1938, p.112-114. Circular 297 on Action Catholique had mentioned more than once this participation in the apostolate of the Church as a particularly appropriate means of understanding and disseminating the social doctrine of the Church.

<sup>53</sup> Circular 310, dated February 11th 1942, p.35.

## 4. THE INSTITUTE AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The last part of the period in question can be divided into two phases: the last attempt to consolidate for ever a monolithic

vision of the Institute; and preparations for openness to pluralism which the Vatican II Council would make possible and necessary.

### BROTHER ATHANASE ÉMILE

#### \* The 1946 General Chapter

Hardly was the restoration of the Rome Generalate completed (made necessary by the damage caused by a protracted occupation by the military), than it hosted, for the first time, a General Chapter, which opened on May 15th 1946<sup>54</sup>, and elected Brother Athanase Émile Superior General.

The Vatican Congregation for Religious made its presence known by a letter addressed to the Cardinal Protector of the Institute. It prescribed some guidelines: "The Sacred Congregation believes it opportune to establish some criteria and norms which will make it easier to conduct discussions better, and render Chapter deliberations more concrete and practical". After recalling the declarations of the Bull about the preference that should be given to the poor, the apostolic purpose of the educational work, and gratuity, it added: "From these principles it can be deduced that, without neglecting the higher forms of education... the special predilection of the Institute must be for elementary schools, for technical and

professional schools, for catechetical works, for youth clubs and after-school groups"<sup>55</sup>.

#### Notes from the Brothers

Out of more than 2,500 notes sent to the Chapter, twenty or so refer to gratuity and to the service of the poor through the school. Some condemn individual failings: Brothers who accept gifts or money from the pupils. Others complain about a collective shortcoming: the Institute is moving further and further away from schools accessible to the poor, in order to devote itself to institutions accessible only to the rich. There are

<sup>54</sup> The indecision of the Vicar General had to be defeated: after accepting this date, he thought of postponing the Chapter for 6 months (GA ED 238/7, dossier 4).

<sup>55</sup> GA: copy of the letter inserted in *Register F*, p.186-187. Circular 318, p.44-45. Technical education was considered to be a means of winning back the working class. The tide of communism was seen as a growing threat at the very gates of the Vatican. Pastoral considerations were mixed up with party politics (excommunication for anyone voting for the communist party).

those who see in this a need the Institute cannot avoid, and propose it asks for a general sanitation. Others, more numerous, ask for a drastic return to the original preferences of the Institute, or at least to certain signs of interest in the poor: decrease in school fees, gratuitous schools side-by-side with paying schools, or colleges in rich countries financing poor schools in mission countries.

The studies prepared by Brother Mémoire Achille, Visitor of South Belgium, deceased in 1943, are more dense. The responsibilities of his position had led him to study the topic conscientiously. The conclusion he came to was that the vow to teach the poor gratuitously could be suppressed: it was difficult to define with any certainty who was poor and who was not. It was almost impossible for an individual Brother to receive a remuneration properly so called from a poor pupil; it was very difficult to gauge the gravity of the fault which, in any case, in itself, did not call for restitution, because it did not constitute an injustice. But he wished to keep the Rule of gratuity, because it expressed the disinterested zeal with which the Brother must devote himself to his ministry.

More radical, Brother Modeste Henri sees in universal gratuity an unacceptable principle, and in practice, almost impossible to implement. After recalling that at the time of the Founder the vow of gratuity was not made, he concludes by suspecting a surreptitious move on the part of the Brothers to introduce it into the text of the Bull. The

note ends with a proposition to eliminate gratuity from the 3rd commandment of the Institute, and that it be limited simply to dedication in teaching<sup>56</sup>.

### The Chapter Commission

The questioning of the very principle of gratuity and negligence in its implementation gave the 5th Commission serious concern. "Worried by the differences of view among the Brothers regarding gratuity, it respectfully asked the Brother Superior General to have an objective and precise study made of the subject, of the obligations of the vow to teach gratuitously, and of the Rule of gratuity, which are described in detail in Brother Adrien's 1933 study. This study could profitably find inspiration in the 4 important memoirs attached to this report" (those of the two Belgian Brothers).

In addition, "The 5th Commission called for the preferential development of popular education and for this, it proposed that : a) In every District, the largest proportion of the Brothers be allocated to this education; b) and that in the 10 year period following

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<sup>56</sup> GA. ED 238/6, dossier 1. One note on gratuity and two on schools for training workers in ED 238/2, dossier 2. In LD 252/1, dossiers 3 and 4, copies of the study by Brother Mémoire; dossiers 5 and 2: original copy of Brother Modeste Henri's note.

Written stressing the juridical and casuistic point of view, the works of Brother Mémoire seek clarity and tranquillity of conscience, but do not seek in any way the diminution of the requirements of gratuity for the Brothers, nor of their dedication to the poor.

the present Chapter, no new school be opened unless in working class areas, without special authorisation from the Regime; and that schools comply as closely as possible with the gratuity proposed by the Rule and the Bull". So as not to encourage interpretations that were too narrow, the Commission wanted it "to be understood that "popular education" is understood in its extended sense, that is, well beyond primary education. It includes schools of the first and second level, that is, upper level primary schools, professional and technical schools, commercial institutes, arts and crafts schools, St Luke schools, and even certain modern colleges open to pupils with scholarships" <sup>57</sup>.

### In the plenary session

During the debate in the plenary assembly, interventions were mutually corrective without, however, cancelling one another out. The obstacles to gratuity were recognised as real, as well as the abuses: fees too high, fixed without the necessary consultation and authorisation, excessively lucrative sale of school materials, and the poor themselves, who made it a point of honour not to accept alms. All this kept the poor away from the schools. But, it was objected, one cannot generalise when speaking of abuses. The Institute seems to be doing all it can, given the difficult circumstances. One must do all that one can to maintain gratuity, but when it is impossible, disinterestedness still remains possible.

Thus enlightened, the assembly voted in favour of the proposed recommendations which, in their final formulation read as follows:

"The 5th Commission, concerned by the differences of opinion among the Brothers regarding gratuity, asks the Brother Superior respectfully to have published an objective and precise study on the object and obligations of the vow of teaching gratuitously, and on the Rule of gratuity.

"2° It requests the preferential development of popular education, and for this it wishes:

"a) that, in practice, in each District, the greatest proportion of the Brothers be allocated to this education;

"b) and that during the 10 year period following the present Chapter, no new school be opened unless in working class areas, without special authorisation from the Regime; and that schools comply as closely as possible with the gratuity proposed by the Rule and by the Bull" <sup>58</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> GA, ED 238/7, dossier 4: Report of the 5th Commission, p.1-3. A few pages later, the report asks for "the urgent elimination of the female element used here and there because of the war" and "the prudent reduction of the civil element". All that as part of "the re-organisation of our schools" (p. 6).

<sup>58</sup> GA, *Register F*, p. 233-234. From one publication to another, the first wish undergoes modifications which seem to indicate the unease of the Chapter regarding this subject. Either "of view" is suppressed ("the differences of view"), or "the nature" is changed for "the object" of the vow, or there is hesitation about introducing or not the study of the "Rule of gratuity" in addition to that of the vow.

The Circular which communicated the results of the Chapter to the Institute gives an adequate idea of the report and of the debate. But it presents the two wishes with modifications which are not negligible: in the first, the emphatic “differences of opinion regarding gratuity” becomes an anodine and more presentable “abandonment of gratuity in certain areas of the Institute”; and in the requested study “the nature” of the vow disappears. In the second wish, “and for this we wish” is replaced by “for this we suggest”, and the “in practice” in 2° a) is omitted<sup>59</sup>.

### \*Approval of the Rules

This is not the only example of the firmness with which the Superior held to his own opinion. Wishing to give the new edition of the Rules the immutable character conferred by a papal seal, he had the satisfaction of obtaining, from the Congregation for Religious, a decree of approbation, dated March 24th 1947<sup>60</sup>.

In that year’s edition, certain “constitutions”, indicated by an asterisk, modified the “Rule”, whose text, however, remained unchanged. In this way, the first article of the Common Rules and Constitutions of the Brothers of the Christian schools is formulated as follows:

<sup>59</sup> Circular 318, dated July 16th 1946, p.86-87, 90.

<sup>60</sup> In the text of the decree we read: “To demonstrate his special benevolence for an Institute so deserving because of its dedication to the Christian

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education of the poor, our Most Holy Father the Pope Pius XII...commanded to approve and confirm, according to the petition...”.

Certain statements deserve a comment: “Little by little, in the opinion of the Brothers, the authority of the Bull and of the approbation it implied was extended to the Constitutions, which the Founder had studied and drawn up with such care...”. One can imagine the zeal of the Superiors to extend to the Rules the canonisation obtained by the Founder in 1900.

“The Brothers of the Christian Schools, assembled recently in a General Chapter...the Superior General and the capitulants urge the Holy see to give an explicit approbation of the said Constitutions”. In the Register of Chapter documents, there is not the least trace of an “insistent request”. Each time that the Superior spoke in the Chapter of submitting the text to the Congregation of Religious, he did so as a necessary step demanded by the Vatican, without ever having the matter discussed, nor asking – finally – the opinion of the assembly.

The text of the Rules (Common Rules and Rules of Government), apart from a few articles, were not discussed: the capitulants were brought face to face with a text prepared by the Regime, about which they could make written observations. These observations were handed over to a post-capitular Commission responsible for publishing the Rules. A paragraph from Circular 321, dated May 24th 1947, which announced the new edition seems to be nearer the truth: “The wishes of the General Chapter having been fulfilled, and account taken of the remarks made by the Sacred Congregation for Religious, we solicited and obtained a new approval of our Rules...” (p.12). If the first part (“wishes of the Chapter”, “remarks of the S.C. for Religious”) is a partisan view of the facts, the plural “we” does not deceive anybody: the real subject is the first person singular.

The Superior had a great esteem for a book that was very much in fashion, *The worship of the Rule*, by Fr Colin, a Redemptorist.

"1. The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a society in which profession is made of conducting schools gratuitously.

"\* If exceptional circumstances oblige an elementary school to receive a retribution, the authorisation of the Holy See will be necessary.

"The Brother Superior with the advice of the Brother Assistants can open colleges and boarding schools when he judges it opportune, but never to the detriment of schools for the artisans and the poor".

Experience will never cease to demonstrate the perplexity that such an article can cause, both because of its formulation and its comparison with reality <sup>61</sup>.

### \* **The Brief Treatise on the Religious State**

This is the work which took the place of the *Catechism of the Vows* in 1950. In his introduction, the Superior guaranteed its perfect Lasallian orthodoxy. The author is "a member of our Institute" <sup>62</sup>, "who, working close to us, has written nothing without submitting it to our control". The guarantees are no less strong regarding "the doctrinal accuracy in general, each page, each proposition having been read and examined in minute detail by a learned theologian and Roman canonist". The work is to be recommended also by "the space given to ascetic considerations", considerations that are "solid and all the more convincing as they are lacking in all pseudo-mystical sentimentality" <sup>63</sup>.

The vow to teach the poor gratuitously <sup>64</sup> occupies the ten pages or so which constitute the 2nd article of chapter X. Free of the restrictions imposed by the catechism format, doctrine is expressed in a fluid style, but contains nothing substantially new.

Once the causal link between gratuity and the purpose of the Institute has been established, there follows a list of the obligations which derive from the 5th vow, those imposed by the Rule, and what is not included under either heading. Long paragraphs are devoted to the dispensations granted by the Holy See, especially to that of 1879, and to the correct way of making use of them.

These canonical explanations are followed by a few ascetical pages devoted to the spirit of gratuity <sup>65</sup> and the importance

<sup>61</sup> There is also a partial repetition of article 11 of chapter XIV: "It will not be permitted either, in school houses to admit boarders. There can be boarders in houses destined for them, when the Brother Superior, with the advice of the Assistants, consider it appropriate".

<sup>62</sup> This was Brother Gordon Désiré, former Secretary General and former Assistant.

<sup>63</sup> Brief Treatise, p. XIII-XIV.

<sup>64</sup> The Spanish version uses the expression "gratuitous teaching" each time the French text uses "gratuity". Brother Guillermo Felix explained the reason for this at the 1966 General Chapter, as can be seen in "Religious Consecration and Vows" (39th General Chapter), p.175, Spanish version.

<sup>65</sup> "The spirit of gratuity", sub-title of paragraph 316: "The spirit of the vow of teaching gratuitously", in the Spanish version. This spirit is recommended, but it is not said in what it consists. To guess what it could be, you have to read the following paragraph on its importance.

of preserving this vow: for the Brother, it represents a solemn affirmation of his disinterested dedication, of his predilection for the poor, of his magnanimous renunciation of all sorts of personal advantages; and for the Institute, it is a constant reminder of what must be its essential work, according to the spirit of its Founder. So, nothing pseudo-mystical, nor mystical either.

### \* Circular 332

Dated January 6th 1951, and published in the context of the tercentenary of the birth of the holy Founder, it takes the form of an answer to the first wish of the 5th Commission, adopted by the General Chapter. We read: "To contribute, in our turn also, to the determined maintenance of the principle of gratuity wherever it has fortunately remained in force, and to its re-establishment in areas where circumstances have led us to depart from it...would not this be the best offering we could make to our beloved Father" (p.49). As the Short Treatise was still very recent, and had been drawn up under his direct and strict control, it is not surprising that the subjects and the way they are formulated are transposed directly into the Circular.

The first part is devoted to "the gratuity desired" by the Founder. The classic texts of the Rules and of the Bull leave no doubt possible regarding his intention or his purpose. Some considerations emphasise the advantages of gratuity for pupils and for teachers. A rapid glance at history shows the untarnished fidelity of the Institute to

this practice up to the middle of the 19th century. And then, enlarging upon the information given in Brother Adrien's circular, he adds some brief and precise information about the indults concerning gratuity, spending more time on that of 1879, and giving the circumstances, text and manner of applying it.

Part 2 treats specifically of the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously. After a summary of its history, the matter of the vow is explained, how it should be practised, various aspects regarding its significance and current relevance. All this, plus a conclusion and some statistics, fills 47 pages (49-95), which are worth reading.

The intention is to give an explanation that is complete and clear: from now on, no one should have any doubts as to the obligation and the matter of the vow and of the rule of teaching gratuitously, nor as to the matter and circumstances governing the application of indults concerning them, nor the fundamental commitment of the Institute to schools accessible to the poor.

The text is also a defence. In the time of Brother Irlide, "encouraged by some bishops and leading Catholics, a campaign was organised against gratuity". Gratuity was put on trial, and was declared to be an abuse, immoral, and inspired by socialism and communism. It was said that there was less truancy in paying schools, and pupils studied more, etc (p.65). Despite warnings and reactions from the Superiors, the Brothers were affected by this propaganda. Some of



them accepted the theory according to which “there are more advantages than disadvantages in not admitting to our schools children whose parents are of an inferior social class” (p.61), or believed that paying schools “with their choice of children are preferable to gratuitous schools which are accessible to all, even the badly dressed” (p.72). And even “there are among us, not opponents of the vow of gratuity, but religious, who in good faith, do not see the point of the vow of gratuity in our times” (p.85).

On several occasions, clarification and defence lead to exhortation. He exhorts Brothers to esteem ordinary people above everybody else, and gratuity which opens the doors of the Christians schools to them; to desire to be employed in the service of the common people in the gratuitous schools; to maintain gratuity to the greatest extent possible; never to close their door to those whose only fault is their indigence; not to put into the gratuitous schools Brothers who have been removed from paying schools; when allocating Brothers to schools, not to give priority to paying schools, with the result that the gratuitous schools are mainly staffed by lay teachers.

The conclusion is a poignant appeal to the Brothers to make an examination of conscience: “Dear Brother Visitors...have you not increased, without a valid reason, the number of schools for the children from wealthier classes, to the detriment of the schools for the poor? ...Dear Brother Directors of boarding schools or colleges, are you not losing sight of the fact that the essential

mission of the Institute is the Christian education of the children of the humbler classes? Do you remind your Brothers of this, seeking to make them esteem and love it?...To the Directors of paying schools: Do you consider it a duty and a joy to admit free of charge a few poor children into your classes, and do you show that you are full of charity for them? To the Directors of gratuitous schools: Do you love the task entrusted to you by obedience? Do you fulfill it happily? Do you not occasionally give way to the temptation, when admitting children to your classes, to choose those who are well-dressed, nice looking, from ‘good families’, as they say, in preference to the really poor children? To the Brothers who look after better-off pupils: Do you preserve in the depths of your heart your love for the poor? Would you willingly and even joyfully accept to work for them? And to everyone: Are we all convinced, whatever our position in the Congregation, that we must be the faithful guardians of gratuity, through respect for the teaching of the holy Founder; and that with him, we must consider our schools for the common people as being those which it is most important to develop?”<sup>66</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Questions taken from pages 90 and 91.

A note from Brother Assistant Philippe Antoon addressed to the General Chapter of 1956, in addition to pointing out the modifications introduced by the Superior into the Chapter documents, judges this Circular very severely: it lacks objectivity, the Superior did not take into account opinions different from his own, he left almost all the things discussed without an answer. According to him, the wish of the 1946 Chapter was not fulfilled, and the

The cordial and concerned invitation to return to gratuity ends with two eloquent pages: a table and a chart showing clearly the evolution of the last 100 years, and that the proportion of gratuitous pupils had fallen from 92% to 40%. The decrease "is explained by a number of causes which it is right to say were beyond the control of our Brothers more or less everywhere, but which nonetheless is painful to see. We can ask ourselves, whether the holy Founder, coming down on earth, would not be alarmed. May the tercentenary year of his birth witness an increase, which will continue in the years to come, of the proportion of gratuitous pupils in our schools!". (p.93)

#### \* Other writings

In the other Circulars we find the same ideas, but developed more briefly. Speaking of the Institute, he writes: "Its distinguishing feature in the eyes of the holy Church is the supernatural devotion to poor children, through Christian education, with a view to their eternal happiness". It would please the Superior to see that "our most learned Brothers in the boarding schools wished to teach, if only catechism, to the children of humble condition, and were anxious to show, by acts of kindness, their esteem for their fellow Brothers, who devoted themselves to such a meritorious apostolate"<sup>67</sup>. When Brother Bénilde was beatified on April 4th 1948; it was his unfailing devotion to schools for the common people that was recalled<sup>68</sup>.

The attention of Brother Athanase Émile was drawn in particular to some Italian works. There was the Istituto Bartolo Longo in Pompei, and the school for the blind in Naples, and the schools for children mutilated by the war opened in 1949. "We are happy about these schools, because this is essentially a charitable and social work which is in keeping with our vocation"<sup>69</sup>.

An enthusiastic report about the work of the Pious Union of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate (parish catechism, Mass for the poor, and especially the House of Charity for the gratuitous teaching of arts and crafts), enabled him to expatiate "in all frankness and liberty" on a number of things which never cease to surprise him: "We cannot avoid noting that, for some decades now, in

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study ought to be started again from the beginning (GA, ED 243, dossier 1).

<sup>67</sup> Circular 320a, dated March 19th 1947, p.26. The Circular speaks of the wish expressed by certain Brothers to see the priesthood introduced into the Institute. From the Superior's point of view, a real love for the poor and generous dedication to children and young people would remove from the minds of the Brothers "these obsessions to leave the sphere in which Providence has placed us" (id.). In addition to removing the temptation to become priests, the love of the poor is also "an excellent means of attaching us to the virtue of poverty which is the foundation of the state of perfection, and to cherish it as Jesus Christ loved it" (Circular 327, dated January 6th 1949, p. 50).

<sup>68</sup> Circulars 322, dated May 5th 1947, p. 44; 325, dated January 10th 1948, p.13; 327, p.75 (on page 77, the love of Brother Arnould for the poor is mentioned).

<sup>69</sup> Circular 330, dated January 6th 1950, p. 31.

most of our Districts, there has been a strong tendency to undertake secondary education and to establish paying schools, to the detriment of popular and gratuitous schools. To this tendency, which external circumstances explain in part without however justifying, we owe no doubt some interesting forms of apostolate which do honour to the Institute, and in which genuine good is achieved. But has not this tendency created in too many Brothers a mentality which it is difficult to reconcile with the fundamental thinking which never ceased to inspire the activity of the holy Founder, that is, the opening of schools, first of all and above all for the children of the poor and working classes? Do we not have at the present time a good number of Brothers whose preference is clearly for a school clientele too different from the one that St John Baptist de La Salle loved above all?" But at the very

time that in the Institute one can see signs of a sad distancing from its primary objective, "God raises up, in the very shadow of our Congregation, a secular Institute which devotes itself exclusively...under the banner of total gratuity, to the apostolate of the little, the abandoned, the miserable...the real sons of the common people. Is there not perhaps a lesson in this fact that Providence wishes to teach us, and a practical demonstration that gratuitous schools are possible today as they were formerly?"<sup>70</sup>.

This fear, in the face of the danger the Institute is in of being unfaithful to the intentions of its Founder, can be heard clearly in the last New Year's greeting the Superior addressed to the Brothers<sup>71</sup>.

The writings of his successor up to 1956, the Vicar General Denis, do not refer to the subject which interests us.

## BROTHER NICET JOSEPH

### \* The 1956 General Chapter

The hundred members of the Chapter met on May 9th 1956: they had to elect the new Superiors and consider a number of Institute problems.

The Vatican sent guidelines and words of encouragement: "Preserve, therefore, with fidelity this treasure of wisdom and piety bequeathed by your holy Founder, and be inspired in your work by the spirit which animated him when he brought together and

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<sup>70</sup> Circular 328, dated March 19th 1949, p.16-20. See also p.29, the second conclusion.

<sup>71</sup> Circular 334, dated January 6th 1952, p.10. Circular 329, dated October 3rd 1949, accepted that, on the missions, all types of educational establishments were beneficial, but it did not fail to point out that "the Institute must go to the elementary schools, to the technical and professional schools, to catechetical centres, to colleges for the training of secular teachers, to youth associations and after-school groups" (p.91).

formed his first Brothers...May the poorest and the most deprived classes, which were your Founder's predilection, be always your preference too", we read in a message from the Secretariat of State, which invited the Brothers to concern themselves also with technical and professional education. "You are aware of the poignant interest of the Church and of the world today in the poor and the little, for whose service St John Baptist de La Salle founded his Institute and opened popular schools. Never lose sight of the particular aim proposed to you by your holy Founder and by the Church by approving your Institute...Following the example of your Founder, adapt yourselves without delay to the new advances in technical and professional teaching which has the task of training Christian shop foremen for factories". These are some of the instructions originating in the Congregation for Religious <sup>72</sup>.

### Notes from the Brothers

In addition to the election of the Superiors, the Chapter had to examine more than 3,600 notes sent in by almost 1,400 Brothers. 274 of them were allocated to the 5th Commission, whose brief covered "Schools, Catholic Action, technical education". More than 70 notes are preserved in its "gratuity" dossier, and about 50 in its "technical education" dossier <sup>73</sup>.

Their contents impressed the Commission, and with reason. In many of them could be perceived a powerful demand for the Institute to reinstall the truth. How can it pro-

claim its fundamental commitment to the poor, if everything about it gives a different message? How is it possible to maintain that gratuity is essential, when it is the gratuitous schools that are disappearing "because of a shortage of staff", while paying schools proliferate and develop? How is it possible to continue to claim that the Institute prefers "the children of the artisans and the poor", when the location of establishments and their academic requirements exclude the working classes, and are accessible to the rich only? The majority of the Brothers, and the best trained ones, work with the rich, whereas the poor schools are for the others, those without qualifications or with the least aptitude for teaching. By allocating to them the "leftovers", the Institute can no longer continue to say that the poor occupy the first place in its heart. How can one believe that the first glory of the Congregation are the schools for the poor, when the Bulletin of the Institute gives all its attention to large fee-paying establishments, and to former students who have made a success of their lives? In the final

<sup>72</sup> Complete text of the two documents in circular 354, dated July 16th 1956, p. 24-27.

<sup>73</sup> GA, ED 243, dossiers 1 and 4. Almost all the notes in dossier 1 have to do with gratuity, popular schools, the service of the poor: 33 are from France (the District of Lille easily with most), 8 from Spain, 7 from Belgium. 16 other countries sent in smaller numbers of notes. Many of the items in dossier 4 are answers to a questionnaire on technical education the Regime had sent to Districts shortly before the Chapter.

analysis, the Brothers are no longer with the working class, with the poor, but with the rich and the middle class. And this situation is reflected in their own lives: the Brothers also have become middle class, their standard of living is no longer that of the poor, and they have no idea how the poor really live. In too many Districts, the postulant or the novice who opens the Rule and reads: "The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a Society in which profession is made of conducting schools gratuitously, will be disorientated: the reality he knows does not correspond to this definition.

Those are, in summary form, the criticisms most frequently made in the notes. Many suggested remedies, more or less well thought out, more or less realistic: a return to the evangelical spirit of the Founder, to his evangelical love for the poor, to his concern for real needs, to his zeal for salvation, because this can inspire practical and efficacious means to enable the Institute to return to its original purpose, to send many well trained Brothers to the poor schools, make the Brothers return to a simplicity of life which will enable them to live with fewer financial resources, stop the expansion of the large establishments, and oblige them to support the gratuitous schools, etc.

### **The Chapter Commission**

For its part, the Commission did not believe that things were like that. It believed that: "The Institute remains generally faith-

ful to the obligation to give a Christian education to the poor; but it admits that it is indispensable to take all the means possible to achieve this aim...and feels it necessary to stress the importance of the direction taken to avoid a certain tendency to cater for the upper levels of the working classes to the detriment of the more deprived. Regarding gratuity, it remarks that many notes are ill-informed and lack objectivity: the Institute is not well known, and it has to be admitted that the official Bulletin can help to give a false idea of it". But it thought that more ought to be done, including the study asked for by the previous Chapter. That is why it expressed the following recommendations to the assembly:

"1° The 5th Commission, given the difference of views that exists among the Brothers regarding gratuity, asks the Brother Superior General most respectfully to have an objective and precise study made on the origin and nature of the vow of teaching gratuitously.

"2° The Commission expresses the wish that emphasis be placed on the direction taken in 1946 to promote the preferential development of popular education, in order to avoid a tendency to cater to the upper levels of the working class to the detriment of the most deprived.

"It renewed the wish of the preceding General Chapter regarding the proportion of Brothers allocated in each District to popular education, and the opening of schools (except with the permission of the

Regime), which were not for the working class”<sup>74</sup>.

As for professional teaching, its development was generally supported as a means of coming closer to working class people<sup>75</sup>, but it was pointed out that, generally speaking, the Brothers were ill prepared for such work, from both a technological and pastoral point of view, and greater contact with “Action Catholique Ouvrière” was recommended, and a better understanding of its methods. This is reflected in a motion presented by the Commission: “Conscious of its responsibility regarding the christianisation of the working classes, and struck by the insistence with which recently the Sovereign Pontiff and his representatives designated this aim for our apostolate, the 5th Commission asks that, wherever it is opportune, an effort be made to develop and create technical schools for the authentically Christian formation of young workers, especially at the elementary and intermediate levels, as well as school-connected and after-school activities for their benefit. It asks also that qualified teachers be very specially prepared, and that they be well versed in the teachings of Action Catholique Ouvrière”<sup>76</sup>.

### The plenary sessions

Although it spent several sessions on it, the assembly added nothing substantial to the work of the Commission and to the motions it had submitted. These appeared almost word for word – some of the harsher turns of phrase had been removed – in the

Chapter report to the Institute in Circular 354: “The 5th Commission, given the difference of views that exists among the Brothers regarding gratuity, asks the Brother Superior General most respectfully to have an objective and precise study made on the origin and nature and obligation of the vow of teaching gratuitously.

“1° That, following the directive already given by the 1946 General Chapter, the preference to be given to the development of teaching of the poor be stressed and emphasised, avoiding or even correcting in this way, a tendency to cater for the higher classes to the detriment of the most deprived”.

“2° That as a consequence, in each District, the proportion of the Brothers allocated to popular education be respected, and that, if schools are opened, they should give this kind of education, unless the Regime decides otherwise.

“Conscious of its responsibility regarding the christianisation of the working

<sup>74</sup> GA, ED 243, dossier 1: notes from Brothers, report and wishes of the Commission.

<sup>75</sup> A note from the United States, skilfully mentions other aspects of the question: in a country with rapid developments in technology, it is very expensive to equip a school with the proper tools and to maintain them up to date. In addition, with the rapid spread of automation, what employers wanted were skills linked with reading, writing and counting.

<sup>76</sup> GA, ED 243, dossier 4: notes from Brothers, wishes and report of the Commission. The text of the latter is confused, even incorrect, in the original.

classes, and struck by the insistence with which recently the Sovereign Pontiff and his representatives designated this aim for our apostolate, the Chapter expresses the wish that, wherever it is possible and opportune, an effort be made to develop and create technical schools for the authentically Christian formation of young workers, especially at the elementary and intermediate levels, and of school-connected and after-school activities for their benefit. For this purpose, let qualified teachers be very specially prepared, and let them be well versed in the teachings of Action Catholique Ouvrière”.

As the Chapter was closed, one of the last requests of the new Superior was that “we should concern ourselves more with the working class. The Holy Father and all those close to him have asked us to do so; it would mean returning to the Founder’s intentions, and responding to the desires of many of our young people who are generous”<sup>77</sup>.

### \* Circulars

From the first greeting addressed to the Institute by the new Regime at the end of the Chapter it was clear that the Brothers could already breathe a different air. The Brothers who “live a life in two parts: one part dedicated to prayer and personal sanctification, and the other more or less to the apostolate” are reminded that “we are not a more or less well balanced combination of two forms of life, but we live both of them at the same time, the two merged into a single aspiration: to be dedicated completely

to God and to the accomplishment of his will...The will of God is that we should all dedicate ourselves to the apostolate of education...And it is in order to respond to this divine expectation, that we commit ourselves by a total gift of ourselves to Christ, and that we promise to follow him unconditionally with all the generosity demanded by the evangelical counsels, counsels of which our Rules are a transcription in concrete terms”.

Described in these terms, the Brothers’ life reflects what is written in articles 4 and 5 of the first chapter of the Rule, and serves to forestall or correct any possible deviations from the Lasallian apostolate: “The

<sup>77</sup> Regarding the wishes (cf. GA, *Register F*, p.374, 375; Circular 354, p.74, 76-77). For the treatment of the subject in plenary session (*Register F*, p.339, 342, 350-351; Circular 354, p.67-70). Final exhortation (*Register F*, p.385 – a line; Circular 354, p.111).

It is clear that the adoption of the first wish, reproducing almost word for word that of 1946, disqualified Circular 332 which claimed to implement it. It is perhaps useful to know that 3 members of the 1946 5th Commission were at the 1956 Chapter, two of whom in this same Commission, and that the other, Brother Philippe Antoon, had become an Assistant.

Confronted with the notes concerning lay staff employed in Brothers’ schools, the Commission and then the Chapter adopted the minority North American view, which believed it was a “providential fact” (this expression can be found in the Commission report, and in the Circular, but not in the Register of Chapter documents), provided the necessary precautions were taken regarding their choice and training. The change of vocabulary is the sign of a revolution worthy of Copernicus.

purpose of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children...and it was in order to procure this benefit for the children of the artisans and the poor that the Christian Schools were founded". The Church itself asked for a renewed attention to this founding principle <sup>78</sup>.

Fulfilling a wish of the General Chapter, Circular 358, dated November 10th 1957, proclaimed 1958 as "Poverty Year" in the whole Institute. Explaining the Lasallian meaning of poverty, it recalled that the Founder did not concern himself so much with the hierarchical aspect of the Brothers' vocation, as with "our profession as teachers, a function which classifies us as belonging to the social category of the common people, to whose children we normally give a primary education". A well-known paragraph from the Meditation for Christmas Day specifies in what this "humility of heart" suited to our state consists, and makes us similar to the Incarnate Son of God: "In choosing our present state, we must have resolved...". That is why, "it is by basing our poverty on this communion with Christ, and on the love of Christ recognised and served in the person of poor children that we will mostly easily understand the thinking of our Founder and enoble our vocation...This spirituality "of the little ones" based on the Gospel ought to inspire the interior life of the Brother and characterise his apostolate": Various quotations from the meditations of the Founder advocate it clearly and strongly <sup>79</sup>.

In 1961, the Visitors of all the Districts met in Rome with the Regime. The intention was to "feel the pulse" of the Institute halfway through the 10 year inter-capitular period, and to launch some projects. Some previous research, which was brought to the attention of the participants, had to do with "gratuity and the meaning that should be given this word in the present circumstances". According to this study, De La Salle considered gratuity to be a means, but an indispensable means, to reach the poor of his times; but the purpose of the Institute is defined always in terms of the salvation of souls and evangelisation through education. "In fact, at the present time, gratuity

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<sup>78</sup> Circular 353, dated June 17th 1956, p.5-6. The Chapter ended on June 14th in the evening. The Circular, signed by the Brother Superior and all the Assistants, seems to include the important aspects of certain notes sent to the Chapter. Entire paragraphs taken from the notes of Brother Philippe Antoon are easily recognisable.

<sup>79</sup> Circular 358, p.16-18. The texts from the Founder quoted come from MF 96,3; 143,2; 133,3; 166,2. On page 42, the Superior asks the following questions: "Do we still feel the same anguish which overcame the Founder on seeing the spiritual abandonment of the poorest of the poor? Do we have the courage to go and open a school in the red districts which call for our presence, and that to the detriment of this or that big boarding school which, in addition, does not appear to fulfil what we were founded for: to give, before everything else, a Christian education?" Pages 46 and 47 recall the attitude to be adopted when presents are offered by pupils or parents of pupils.



involves only a very small number of Brothers; it is not the obligatory means of reaching the poorer classes. There is reason, therefore, to study this new situation and to see how to reinforce by legislative texts devotion to the poorer classes according to the traditions of our Institute". These are very authoritative statements: it would be good to know where they came from <sup>80</sup>.

When communicating to the Brothers the impressions he has gathered during his long journeys all over the world, Brother Nicet Joseph does not forget to mention, in passages that are sometimes long and full of feeling, situations which illustrate more clearly the gratuitous work of the Brothers, their direct work for the poor, the working classes, the marginalised, and the spread of their influence through teacher training colleges.

Without referring to every establishment in the world, we can mention the institutions for young delinquents in Peru and Great Britain, the teacher training colleges in Christian and missionary countries, the technical colleges in Spain, the gratuitous establishments all over the world paid for by fee-paying schools or supported by State policies which divide up public money more equitably. When referring to these institutions, the Superior emphasised generally how closely they were fulfilling the aims of the Institute, and exhorted Brothers to do more in this connection <sup>81</sup>.

### Another glance at the statistics

A quick glance at the statistical tables in the appendix to this chapter, immediately reveals some changes in the headings of the columns: the "houses" of the Brothers have now become "communities", and the "Brothers without vows" disappear almost completely (2 left in 1966).

There are important changes in the section on pupils: the distinction is no longer made between public and private schools, and more details are given regarding levels and types of education; in various places columns are left free for the informant to include information he considers important:

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<sup>80</sup> Circular 369, dated July 20th 1961, p.6. I have found no documentation in GA regarding this inter-capitular meeting. More specifically, concerning gratuity, the only thing resembling the report on which the Circular was based is a well-documented typed text, 44 pages long, dated "Rome, March 4th 1961", without any indication of its author. It is to be found in LD 252/5, dossier 15. If something else was tried to fulfil the wish of the Chapter for a study on gratuity, the Brothers were not informed.

<sup>81</sup> Abundant indications in Circulars 362, dated April 11th 1959 (Cuba and a part of South America); 367, dated October 23rd 1960 (Africa); 371, dated February 2nd 1962, (Great Britain, Ireland, Congo, Rwanda); 375, dated October 11th 1962 (Far East); 378, dated October 2th 1963, (north half of Latin America); 381, dated January 6th 1965 (Spain). By mistake, the Circular was issued as N°380, making it the second Circular with that number.

number of gratuitous pupils, pupils in detention centres, children or young people with special needs. The table shows changes in the services offered by the Institute<sup>82</sup>, as well as the areas it wishes to develop.

After the storm of 1904, the number of Brothers increases slowly. The slowness of this growth worries the Superiors: admissions are never enough to satisfy the requests coming in from all over the world. There were many Brothers who left: during the inter-war period: some 400 Brothers withdrew every year. In the second half of the century, departures decreased noticeably, but the overall growth remained slow. It was only in 1965 that the number of Brothers overtook the 1903 figure. In 1956, the highest figure ever was reached: 16,824 Brothers with perpetual or temporary vows. From 1959 onwards, annual increases became increasingly minimal: in 1966, for the first time, a decrease was registered (192 fewer Brothers than the previous year), which could not be attributed to some external trauma (war, persecution...).

The total number of pupils increased almost every year, and from 1946 to 1966, it almost doubled, from 390,722 to 751,688. In addition to these, but less significant, there were 384,000 others in after-school activities, called variously "Catholic action", "adult classes", "Sunday meetings", "former student associations" (which made up almost 3/4 of the total) and "faith-support groups".

Almost 36% of the pupils properly so called were gratuitous in 1966. The percentage had dropped to a first minimum of

46.93% in 1926. Constant progress raised it to 53.2% in 1933, and then it dropped irregularly to 47.73% at the beginning of the second world war. In the second half of the century, this percentage was never attained. The maximum, 42.66%, was reached in 1958, and the decline accelerated after 1961.

In 1966, out of a total of almost 1,450 Brothers' schools, there were certainly more than 400, and even 450, completely gratuitous schools. Their size varied from a few dozen pupils to more than a thousand. The highest numbers come from Spain, Belgium and Canada with 70, 65 and 47 gratuitous schools respectively. There were more than 20 in the United States, Colombia and Congo, and smaller but still sizable numbers in Great Britain, Ireland and Italy. A surprising fact: in the minuscule Caribbean island of Aruba, the Brothers had 11 gratuitous schools with more than 4,000 pupils. As for other schools, a certain number of gratuitous pupils were normally admitted to fee-paying schools, in greatly varying proportions. The conditions in which the Institute exercised its apostolate throughout the world highlighted this effort to maintain gratuity. The fact remains, however, that the exhortations of the Superiors and the generous efforts of many Brothers were insufficient to reverse this tendency.

Among the Brothers' institutions which deserve special mention are those which

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<sup>82</sup> See, for example, the evolution in the figures for primary schools and the baccalaureat between 1939 and 1966.

trained lay teachers. In 1966, there were already 40 of them: 11 in Europe, 11 in Africa, 4 in Asia Oceania, and 14 or more in Latin America. It was not always the poor who were involved, but it was often a service that could be said to be for the benefit of the common people.

A clientele particularly worthy of attention are the young people called "delinquents" by the statistics, for want of a better name. During this period, educational work with delinquents, traditional in the Institute, developed greatly: 9 institutions were opened in the United Kingdom, 7 on the continent of Europe, 1 in Australia, 2 in Africa, 7 in America, caring for a total of 3,830 pupils.

To these can be added the traditional category of "orphans", an umbrella term for a number of different works: deaf & dumb (St Étienne), sons of prisoners (Pompei), children war victims, etc., as well as children who had lost their parents. In 1966, these numbered 4,900<sup>83</sup>.

Finally, a glance at technical education, from which the Church expected a fundamental contribution to the evangelisation of the working class, and a bulwark to check the spread of communism. In 1946, the Brothers had almost 19,000 pupils in commercial, agricultural, professional and arts and crafts educational centres. This figure includes very diverse levels, from complementary courses after the end of primary school to almost university level studies. Twenty years later, the statistical returns

show 45,000 pupils spread over 5 groups: agricultural (3,636), commercial (9,550), professional (19,890), art school (2,664), secondary technical (9,449). Of these, a third (15,052, perhaps a few more) were gratuitous. Among these latter, 2,410 were registered also as orphans or delinquents<sup>84</sup>.

The figures give an immediate idea of the Brothers' work. A more thorough study, however, would be needed to reveal in detail the aims, the content, the methods and the results of so much dedication.

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In the course of the century, we can see how a certain number of Brothers increasingly felt that their Institute was straying away from the purpose for which it was founded. The members of the general assemblies of the Congregation, and the Su-

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<sup>83</sup> Material taken solely from a large sized register, in the GA without classification, with information for the year 1996, set out by countries, Districts and houses.

<sup>84</sup> The countries with the most pupils in various categories: agricultural courses: France (1,840) and Belgium (561); commercial classes: Brazil (1,699) and Argentina (1,344); professional courses: France (5,593), Spain (4,277), Belgium (3,048); art courses: Belgium (2,365); secondary technical: France (4,169) and Belgium ((2,488). The highest numbers of gratuitous pupils: Belgium (3,731), Spain (3,071), Colombia (2,662), ex-Belgian Congo (1,364). Information from the register referred to in the preceding note.

periors in general, believed they could refute this insinuation, at least to the extent to which it might imply culpability on their part: if the Institute was not doing in the 20th century the world over, what it had done in France during the first half of the 19th century, that is, give a Christian education free of charge to the common people, the fault lay with the circumstances which would not permit it. Once the bad period was over, and circumstances became favourable, the Institute would once again translate into acts the attachment it had never forsworn to the principle of gratuity. This is something we can read even in the

Circulars of Brother Athanase Emile and in the Short Treatise, in language at times less severe. It took a good half a century "to organise the wake" for lost gratuity.

The 1956 General Chapter also made the following powerful statement: the world of the poor is unknown to us: our formation, the kind of teaching we give, our lifestyle, what we worry about, places us in the average middle class, among the white collar employees, rather than among the poor and the working classes.

Ten years later, it will be possible and necessary to speak of conversion to the service of the poor.

\* \* \*

## APPENDICES

1. PROPORTION OF GRATUITOUS PUPILS <sup>85</sup>

Year	Total pupils	Total gratuitous	% gratuitous	Year	Total pupils	Total gratuitous	% gratuit.
1879	355.752	300.816	85,56	1947	398.149	155.378	39,03
1880	335.558	286.004	85,23	1948	397.844	156.860	39,43
1922	270.150	120.674	44,67	1949	413.768	166.379	40,21
1923	268.781	129.097	48,03	1950	423.696	167.294	39,48
1924	261.423	132.807	50,80	1951	437.658	171.357	39,15
1925	262.658	128.900	49,08	1952	458.854	184.958	40,31
1926	268.755	126.135	46,93	1953	480.490	198.574	41,33
1927	273.589	134.327	49,10	1954	497.753	200.843	40,35
1928	279.569	138.675	49,60	1955	526.016	217.144	41,28
1929	288.326	144.645	50,17	1956	547.329	226.821	41,44
1930	298.713	152.350	51,00	1957	569.797	237.469	41,68
1931	302.733	156.947	51,84	1958	591.993	252.563	42,66
1932	306.415	160.726	52,45	1959	613.358	259.768	42,35
1933	313.436	166.758	53,20	1960	648.427	268.554	41,42
1934	321.706	169.270	52,62	1961	653.466	278.379	42,60
1935	321.859	164.588	51,14	1962	699.771	293.794	41,98
1936	306.438	156.638	51,12	1963	704.586	286.203	40,62
1937	313.252	150.984	48,20	1964	717.111	272.806	38,04
1938	323.077	156.647	48,49	1965	737.112	274.871	37,29
1939	323.261	154.301	47,73	1966	751.688	269.941	35,91
1940-45	-	-	-	1967	771.991	237.446	30,76
1946	390.722	156.689	40,10	1968	780.608	240.005	30,75

<sup>85</sup> Source: annual statistical summaries. The numbers for 1879 and 1880 refer to "children in gratuitous schools". Since 1967, figures for gratuitous pupils have not been published. Those for 1968 can be found in a register in the GA.

## 2. SOME STATISTICS BETWEEN 1913 AND 1966

1913

Zone	H	PV	TV	AV	WV	TB	N	JN	PuS	PrS	PPuS	PPrS	TP
<b>France</b>	197*	3,580	248	305	326	<b>4,459</b>	236	1,043	9	103	1,643	17,437	<b>19,080</b>
<b>Europe</b>	262*	1,529	566	602	390	<b>3,087</b>	343	798	175	163	31,412	37,607	<b>69,019</b>
<b>Asia-Oc.</b>	51*	418	137	121	71	<b>747</b>	31	106	16	46	4,720	9,491	<b>14,211</b>
<b>Africa</b>	45*	394	88	53	29	<b>564</b>	46	163	4	52	920	11,389	<b>12,309</b>
<b>America</b>	235*	1,418	467	435	242	<b>2,562</b>	190	366	95	183	27,199	47,532	<b>74,731</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>740*</b>	<b>7,339</b>	<b>1,506</b>	<b>1,516</b>	<b>1,058</b>	<b>11,419</b>	<b>846</b>	<b>2,476</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>65,894</b>	<b>123,456</b>	<b>189,350</b>

Distorted figures: a) information lacking about secularised Brothers and schools in France; b) in the figures for France are included schools and Brothers transferred abroad, but which are still included in the registers of their District of origin.

**Europe:** Germany; District of Austria-Hungary; Belgium; Spain; England-Ireland; Italy. **Asia-Oceania:** Districts of Cochinchina, Constantinople, India-Philippines, Jerusalem. **Africa:** Districts of Alexandria, Algeria-Tunisia, Reunion. **America:** West Indies; Argentina; Brazil; Canada; Colombia; Chile; Ecuador; United States; Mexico; Panama.

1919

Zone	H	PV	TV	AV	WV	TB	N	JN	PuS	PrS	PPuS	PPrS	TP
<b>France</b>	417	2,311	198	323	96	2,928	38	332	3	377	701	60,432	61,133
<b>Europe</b>	404	2,428	715	884	346	4,373	434	1,193	185	212	38,442	46,704	85,146
<b>Asia-Oc</b>	56	364	85	62	28	539	16	40	25	43	10,882	8,666	19,548
<b>Africa</b>	43	356	53	46	10	465	-	-	10	45	2,133	11,46	13,601
<b>America</b>	270	1,639	475	512	181	2,807	226	494	134	129	43,707	32,979	76,68
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,190</b>	<b>7,098</b>	<b>1,526</b>	<b>1,827</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>11,112</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>2,059</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>95,865</b>	<b>160,249</b>	<b>256,114</b>

**Europe:** Germany; Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Spain; Holland; Hungary; England; Ireland; Italy; Luxembourg; Malta; Monaco; Romania; Switzerland. **Asia-Oceania:** Australia; Philippines; India; Indo-China; Syria-Palestine; Turkey. **Africa:** Algeria; Canaries; Belgian Congo; Egypt; Cape Town; Madagascar; Morocco; Mauritius; Reunion; Tripolitania; Tunisia. **America:** West Indies; Argentina; Brazil; Canada; Colombia; Chile; Ecuador; United States; Mexico; Nicaragua; Panama; Venezuela.

1929

Zone	Com	PV	TV	AV	WV	TB	N	JN	PuS	PrS	PPuS	PPrS	TP	GP
<b>France</b>	411	2,278	505	249	45	3,077	111	865*	-	386	-	54,203	54,203	19,093
<b>Europe</b>	446	3,139	1,284	833	12	5,268	646	1,272*	183	249	41,656	55,276	96,932	54,303
<b>Asia-Oc</b>	61	420	170	86	1	677	36	114*	39	36	16,348	10,103	26,451	4,304
<b>Africa</b>	54	386	93	44	1	524	20	66*	13	54	3,465	15,475	18,940	7,577
<b>America</b>	290	2,194	888	482	4	3,568	366	1,038*	106	188	36,768	55,035	91,803	59,368
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,262</b>	<b>8,417</b>	<b>2,940</b>	<b>1,694</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>13,114</b>	<b>1,179</b>	<b>3,804*</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>913</b>	<b>98,237</b>	<b>190,092</b>	<b>288,329</b>	<b>144,645</b>

**Europe:** Germany; Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Czechoslovakia; Dodecanese; Spain; Greece; Holland; Hungary; England; Ireland; Italy; Luxembourg; Malta; Monaco; Poland; Romania; Switzerland. **Asia-Oceania:** Australia; Philippines; India; Indo-China; Syria; Palestine; Turkey. **Africa:** Algeria; Canaries; Belgian Congo; Egypt; Cape Town; Madagascar; Morocco; Mauritius; Reunion; Tripolitania; Tunisia. **America:** Argentina; Bolivia; Brazil; Canada; Colombia; Cuba; Chile; Ecuador; United States; Mexico; Nicaragua; Panama; Peru; Venezuela

1939

Zone	Com	PV	TV	AV	WV	TB	N	JN	Pr	Bac	TTC	O	TP	GP
France	401	2,695	624	396	65	3,780	181	869	52,918	6,056	-	3,841	62,815	19,205
Europe	393	3,214	764	626	76	4,680	291	1,132	68,561	16,483	1,365	8,582	94,991	52,928
Asia-Oc	76	584	175	85	-	844	41	130	24,024	6,048	-	2,308	32,380	6,052
Africa	61	439	100	35	4	578	8	49	18,045	2,780	268	434	21,527	9,588
America	334	2,863	1,141	525	4	4,533	326	1,126	71,141	33,353	401	6,653	111,548	66,528
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,265</b>	<b>9,795</b>	<b>2,804</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>14,415</b>	<b>847</b>	<b>3,306</b>	<b>234,689</b>	<b>64,720</b>	<b>2,034</b>	<b>21,818</b>	<b>323,261</b>	<b>154,301</b>

**Europe:** Germany; Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Czechoslovakia; Dodecanese; Spain; Greece; Holland; Hungary; England; Ireland; Italy; Luxembourg; Malta; Monaco; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Switzerland; Yugoslavia. **Asia-Oceania:** Australia; China; Philippines; India; Indo-China; Japan; Lebanon; Manchuria; Palestine; Papua; Sri Lanka; Turkey. **Africa:** Algeria; Canaries; Belgian Congo; Egypt; Cape Town; Eritrea; Libya; Madagascar; Morocco; Mauritius; Reunion; Tunisia. **America:** Argentina; Aruba; Bolivia; Brazil; Canada; Colombia; Costa Rica; Cuba; Chile; Ecuador; United States; Mexico; Nicaragua; Panama; Peru; Santo Domingo; Venezuela.

1946

Zone	Com.	PV	TV	AV	WV	TB	N	JN	Pr	Bac	TTC	O	T.P	GP	Or
France	413	2,549	337	544	9	3,439	155	798	66,792	9,595	-	4,774	81,161	13,175	160
Europe	432	3,387	882	533	12	4,814	265	1,131	81,693	20,651	1,235	9,811	113,390	55,633	1,163
Asia-Oc	77	610	74	45	-	729	36	145	26,351	8,779	75	429	35,634	7,146	393
Africa	54	414	34	40	-	488	25	104	18,621	2,730	188	733	22,272	9,842	-
America	353	3,449	740	547	1	4,737	348	1,322	85,342	43,858	380	8,685	138,265	70,893	2,153
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,329</b>	<b>10,409</b>	<b>2,067</b>	<b>1,709</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>14,207</b>	<b>829</b>	<b>3,500</b>	<b>278,799</b>	<b>85,613</b>	<b>1,878</b>	<b>24,432</b>	<b>390,722</b>	<b>156,689</b>	<b>3,869</b>

**Europe:** Germany; Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Czechoslovakia; Dodecanese; Spain; Greece; Holland; Hungary; England; Ireland; Italy; Luxembourg; Malta; Monaco; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Switzerland; Yugoslavia. **Asia-Oceania:** Australia; China; Philippines; India; Indo-China; Japan; Manchuria; Syria; Palestine; Turkey. **Africa:** Algeria; Canaries; Belgian Congo; Egypt; Cape Town; Ethiopia; Libya; Madagascar; Morocco; Mauritius; Reunion; Tunisia. **America:** Argentina; Aruba; Bolivia; Brazil; Canada; Colombia; Cuba; Chile; Ecuador; United States; Mexico; Nicaragua; Panama; Peru; Santo Domingo; Venezuela.

#### ABBREVIATIONS USED IN COLUMN HEADINGS

**H:** Houses  
**Com.:** Communities.  
**PV, TV, AV, WV:** Brothers with perpetual vows, triennial vows, annual vows, without vows.  
**Pr:** Pupils in primary schools.  
**Bac:** Students studying for baccalaureat. After 1956, students preparing for university, or higher.  
**TTC:** Students at teacher training colleges.  
**O:** Pupils following courses, or on levels, not specified in the other columns.  
**TP:** Total of pupils.  
**GP:** Gratuitous pupils.  
**Or:** Orphans or others included in group.  
**Del:** Delinquents (pupils in detention or corrective institutions).

Zone	1956											Del.			
	Com.	PV	TV	AV	TB	N	JN	Pr	Bac	TTC	O		TP	GP	Or
France	361	2,630	159	277	3,079	68	778	70,798	15,364	-	6,929	93,091	8,337	336	-
Europe	465	3,833	496	736	5,067	447	2,186	86,152	37,370	1,631	12,703	137,856	69,222	1,958	1,388
Asia-Oc.	103	759	108	92	959	84	285	43,733	27,865	14	555	72,167	17,794	276	-
Africa	77	570	85	85	740	38	251	48,883	4,457	2,043	2,523	57,906	38,184	-	305
America	418	3,988	767	897	5,653	554	1,854	101,821	76,552	707	7,229	186,309	93,284	1,771	1,527
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,424</b>	<b>11,780</b>	<b>1,615</b>	<b>2,087</b>	<b>15,498</b>	<b>1,191</b>	<b>5,354</b>	<b>351,387</b>	<b>161,608</b>	<b>4,395</b>	<b>29,939</b>	<b>547,329</b>	<b>226,821</b>	<b>4,341</b>	<b>3,220</b>

**Europe:** Germany; Austria; Belgium; Czechoslovakia; Spain; Greece; Holland; Hungary; England; Ireland; Italy; Luxembourg; Malta; Monaco; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Switzerland. **Asia-Oceania:** Australia; Burma; Borneo; Cambodia; China; Philippines; Israel; Japan; Jordan; Lebanon; Malaysia; New Zealand; Papua; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Turkey; VietNam. **Africa:** Upper Volta; Algeria; Camerouns; Belgian Congo; Dahomey; Egypt; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Libya; Madagascar; Morocco; Mauritius; Nigeria; Reunion; Rwanda; Somalia; South Africa; Togo; Tunisia. **America:** Argentina; Aruba; Bolivia; Brazil; Canada; Colombia; Costa Rica; Cuba; Chile; Ecuador; United States; Honduras; Mexico; Nicaragua; Panama; Peru; Santo Domingo; Venezuela.

*N.B.:* In the TB are included 6 Brothers without vows: 3 in France, 2 in Europe, 1 in America.

Zone	1966											Del.			
	Com.	PV	TV	AV	TB	N	JN	Pr	Bac	TTC	O		TP	GP	Or
France	321*	2,441	103	166	2,711	22	723	61,841	33,615	46	8,668	104,170	6,380	98	233
Europe	474*	4,193	440	788	5,422	325	2,713	100,211	59,920	2,325	14,308	176,764	90,846	2,598	1,732
Asia-Oc	133*	884	136	145	1,165	66	549	86,247	47,187	323	1,425	135,182	42,832	249	48
Africa	102*	678	65	69	812	22	295	37,746	13,509	1,434	3,591	56,280	29,139	-	354
America	518*	4,847	658	1,017	6,522	317	1,604	114,253	155,212	2,079	7,748	279,292	100,744	1,957	1,463
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,558</b>	<b>13,043</b>	<b>1,402</b>	<b>2,185</b>	<b>16,632</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>5,884</b>	<b>400,298</b>	<b>309,443</b>	<b>6,207</b>	<b>35,740</b>	<b>751,688</b>	<b>269,941</b>	<b>4,902</b>	<b>3,830</b>

**Europe:** Germany; Austria; Belgium; Czechoslovakia; Spain; Greece; Holland; Hungary; England; Ireland; Italy; Luxembourg; Malta; Monaco; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Switzerland, European Turkey. **Asia-Oceania:** Australia; Burma; North Borneo; Cambodia; Philippines; Hong Kong; India; Israel; Japan; Jordan; Lebanon; Malaysia; New Zealand; Papua; West Pakistan; Sarawak; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Asian Turkey; VietNam. **Africa:** Upper Volta; Algeria; Camerouns; Congo; Dahomey; Egypt; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Spanish Guinea; Morocco; Mauritius; Niger; Nigeria; Reunion; Rwanda; Somalia; South Africa; Sudan; Tanzania; Togo; Tunisia. **America:** Argentina; Aruba; Bolivia; Brazil; Canada; Colombia; Costa Rica; Cuba; Chile; Ecuador; United States; Guadelupe; Guatemala; Honduras; Mexico; Nicaragua; Panama; Peru; Puerto Rico; Santo Domingo; San Vicente; Venezuela.

#### ABBREVIATIONS USED IN COLUMN HEADINGS

**Com.:** Communities.  
**PV, TV, AV, WV:** Brothers with perpetual vows, triennial vows, annual vows, without vows.  
**TB:** Total number of Brothers.  
**N:** Novices.  
**JN:** Junior Novices.  
**PuS:** Public Schools.  
**PrS:** Private Schools.  
**PPuS:** Pupils in public schools.  
**PPrS:** Pupils in private schools.  
**Pr:** Pupils in primary schools.  
**Bac:** Students studying for baccalaureat. After 1956, students preparing for university, or higher.  
**TTC:** Students at teacher training colleges.  
**O:** Pupils following courses, or on levels, not specified in the other columns.  
**TP:** Total of pupils.  
**GP:** Gratuitous pupils.  
**Or:** Orphans or others included in group.  
**Del:** Delinquents (pupils in detention or corrective institutions).



### 3. GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1956

#### **Report of the 5th Commission on technical education** (*Extracts*)

Christian technical education is in fact an efficacious weapon against communist atheistic materialism, and against all forms of materialism. It alone can make a young person realise that faith does not prevent progress. It can make him understand that despite its power, technology will never replace God. It will be one of the means to bring God into the workplace through the presence of young people who will carry God within themselves.

Almost all the notes insist on the need that Brothers have to prepare for this kind of teaching. The training of the Brother - not that we can blame him for it - is of a middle class type, and far removed from the working class world: the gap is almost complete, and his ignorance of the working class is almost total. His formation is strictly individual and totally unconnected with the needs of the apostolate among working people. If this idea is gaining ground, it does so almost of its own accord: its progress is not encouraged.

So we should not be surprised at the attitude adopted by several of our Brothers to the problems of education in modern situations. No doubt there exists a certain concern regarding this new mentality, which is a technical one. Let us accept, however, that

this concern goes no further than the perception that our young people are impervious to religious education. We would be surprised if we were told that we are in disagreement with the evolution of the industrial world and the surrounding technical civilisation. The relationship between the individual and the world around him is not perceived. If it is perceived, it is only in terms of sterile complaints.

Perhaps we have insisted too much on the primacy of personal salvation through dedication to teaching and to the personal salvation of the pupils; the apostolate has been reduced to a means of personal salvation; the school has become a ghetto, a closed world, a detoxication centre for young people, through a lack of knowledge of needs, and a lack of daring in confronting them in their reality. We were successful in the past: there was no need to adapt, and we allowed ourselves to drift away from the working class without realising it.

Our young Brothers have become aware of this phenomenon. More than we perhaps, because we have opened our eyes, but they have opened them even more and wish to react. It is the notes on gratuity that have interpreted for us this phenomenon.

It seems that to have an impact on the workers that we are speaking of rechristianising by sending them young people

bearing Christ, it is especially our technical students who should be given this training. That is why, when we speak of the complete Christian formation of young workers, it seems to be prerequisite to link intimately technical teaching and the A.C.O. (Action Catholique Ouvrière).

*[As the training of the Brothers for technical teaching, and their actual teaching are discussed, it is pointed out that it is all compatible with the Rule.]*

*Incompatibility with the Rules:* Generally, no difficulty. It perhaps ought to be admitted that often, Brothers studying in the School of Engineering cannot attend all their evening spiritual exercises. They need to have a special regulation drawn up by Brother Visitor and Brother Assistant.

The life of a teacher [in a technical school] is often no more over-loaded than that of other Brothers. However, relations with parents, workers themselves, with former pupils, workers also, can take place only after work, that is, during the time of the spiritual exercises. Perhaps, this is a

proof that often the population of our schools belong already to a well-off class.

Another thing necessary, is to go on work-experience courses, periods of professional hands-on experience, study courses, update courses, research, courses, in any case, which take place outside the community, and leaving the Brother free to follow only the morning exercises, generally attend meals, and go to evening exercises only if work at the factory makes it possible. Sometimes these courses have to be followed in civilian clothes.

Far from changing the Rule, training for technical teaching may help to clarify its purpose, the social aim: the Christian education of the poor, as well as its spirit: a personal and community vocation (devotion to Christ), which is different from an individualistic and a collective vocation.

*(GA, ED 243, dossier 4: The text betrays a certain haste and agitation. The syntax is faulty in places, and has been improved slightly to make more sense.)*

## CHAPTER 9

### AFTER VATICAN II

The Institute which set out to face the second half of the 20th century came under the influence of cultural and social forces going under such names as democracy, subsidiarity, participation, secularisation, autonomous terrestrial reality, pluralism, development and under-development, means of social communication, formal and non-formal education.

The Vatican II Council was the decisive ecclesial event which, by its renewed vision of nature, of the activity of the Church and of its relations with the world, made all expectations possible, and imposed a new set of urgent tasks by calling for the “adapted renewal” of religious life. *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Perfectæ Caritatis*, *Gravissimum Educationis Momentum*, became indispensable, if not exclusive, points of reference for a religious Institute consecrated to education.

*Perfectæ Caritatis* in particular preached “a continuous return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original inspiration behind a given community, and an adjustment of the community to the changed conditions of the times”. Contrary to a certain tendency to make congregations uniform, the text declares “that it serves the best in-

terests of the Church for communities to have their own special character and purpose. Therefore, loyal recognition and safe-keeping should be accorded to the spirit of founders, as also to all the particular goals and wholesome traditions which constitute the heritage of each community”.

The same decree, by affirming that in institutes consecrated to apostolic work “the very nature of the religious life requires apostolic action and services, since a sacred ministry and a special work of charity have been consigned to them by the Church and must be discharged in her name”, helped many Brothers to overcome the unfortunate dichotomy between “religious” and “apostle” which often paralysed their lives <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Perfectæ Caritatis* 2.8. A proof of the seriousness with which the Council considers the world can be found in N°3: “The manner of living, praying and working should be suitably adapted to the physical and psychological conditions of today’s religious and also, to the extent required by the nature of each community, to the needs of the apostolate, the requirements of a given culture, the social and economic circumstances anywhere, but especially in missionary territories. The way in which communities are governed should also be re-examined in the light of these same standards”.

The spirit of the Council extended also to the Roman Congregation for Religious. The process of revising the Rules of the

Brothers can be taken as an example of a change in climate.

## 1. THE REVISION OF THE RULES

In 1952, Brother Athanase Émile died convinced that he had fixed the text of the Rules for all time. Four years later, the General Chapter realised that a complete revision was necessary. Knowingly or not, it was the death certificate of the great effort of fundamentalist consolidation, heroically pursued since the time of Brother Gabriel Marie, and occurred at a time when there was no hint in the Church of an imminent new Ecumenical Council.

Hardly had the Chapter finished, than the Regime set in motion the long process of implementing the mandate it had received. The first draft, which the Visitors received during their meeting in 1961, was followed by a second one (1964) and a third (1966). The third one was given them even as the 4th was already in preparation, based on different principles and at great speed. The Visitors examined it with their respective councils: some of them extended the consultation to a wider circle<sup>2</sup>. In this way, participation, while not including all the Brothers, was much wider than in all previous revisions of the Rule.

By taking from the successive drafts whatever concerned the educational service of the poor, we can obtain an idea of the

evolution in thinking in the years immediately preceding the 1966 General Chapter.

### First draft

It divided the Rule into "Constitutions" and "Directory". It was clearly regulative. The beginning of the first chapter of the Constitutions indicates "the nature and the purpose of the Institute" in the following terms: "1° The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a lay religion of pontifical right, whose overall purpose is the glory of God and the perfection of its members, and the specific purpose, the Christian education of children and young people, especially the poor. 2° For this purpose, all kinds of schools are conducted in it, according to the needs of young people, but preference is given to the education of the working class. 3° To guarantee this fidelity

<sup>2</sup> However, the letter accompanying the 3rd draft (January 26th 1966) sent to delegates of the next Chapter, asks them not to communicate the text, nor publish extracts from it, and to bring it with them to the Chapter. The letter states also that the 4th draft, which was being prepared in accordance with the new norms of the Sacred Congregation for Religious "would not substantially change the present draft" (GA, ED 268/11).

and counteract an attraction to the higher social classes to the detriment of the less privileged, it is the duty of the Regime to establish the norms to be followed, and to ensure their exact observance when schools are opened or developed". There follow the principles governing these norms, and a distinction is made between countries where private schools are generally gratuitous, and those where they are not. There is a concern to ensure the numerical predominance of schools accessible to the ordinary people and an improvement in the way they function.

Article 5 contains the well-known prohibition to accept presents from the pupils or their parents, whether destined for the Brothers or the community.

In Chapter XVI, on "conduct in school", article 128 warns the Brothers against all familiarity and favouritism in relations with pupils, "and if they show any special solicitude, it should be for the poor and the deprived, since special concern for them is demanded by their Institute".

This draft mentions only the three classic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience for the Brothers. The authors were convinced that the other vows added nothing, or that they did not respond to the needs or the present situation of the Institute.

### **Second draft**

It kept the same overall characteristics and, regarding the service of the poor, the

same substance. The first chapter, with the same title as in the first draft, says the following: "1° The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a religion of pontifical right composed exclusively of lay religious. 2° The specific aim of this Institute is the Christian instruction and education of young people, especially of those from the working classes.

"In view of this aim and for the purpose of serving the Church, the Institute conducts schools of all types, suited to time and place. The work of the school is completed and continued through pious associations, youth movements and apostolic activities.

"The achievement of this specific aim constitutes the special aspect of the general purpose of the Institute: the sanctification of its members".

The rules governing the opening and development of schools, now omitting the previous distinction between countries favourable or not to private and gratuitous education, are relegated to article 530 of the Directory. It includes a comment in favour of schools in missionary countries "intended for a particular category of poor people".

The article referring to impartiality is formulated differently: "The Brothers will avoid all forms of favouritism in their dealings with the pupils, especially to the detriment of the poor and less gifted" (ch. IX, art.48).

### Third draft <sup>3</sup>

This is a good example of the maximum that could be obtained in a pre-conciliar context. The place of the poor is reduced a little more in the first chapter: "The specific aim of this Institute is the instruction and Christian education of young people, principally of the least favoured in society".

The poor are given back their place, in part, in the following chapters. Article 24 re-instates the specific vows: "The religious consecrates himself entirely to God and to his service in response to a call from the Lord. The Brothers express this consecration by making simple vows, initially temporary and then perpetual, of poverty, chastity, obedience, stability and teaching gratuitously".

In chapter XV, entitled "Apostolate through the school", we read: "99. The work of the education of children and adolescents, especially of those from the deprived classes, offers the Brothers a providential means of sanctification and of witnessing before men to the preferential love which Jesus and the Church have for the poor. It is by devoting themselves to this work, whatever the specific task assigned by obedience, that all the Brothers cooperate in the salvation of the world. 100. When there is a choice of works to establish or develop, preference will be given to works intended for the humblest and most neglected classes...111. The Brothers will not accept, nor will ever be authorised to accept, for themselves or for the community, presents from

pupils or their parents. The acceptance of gifts made to the school is authorised, on condition they are not intended for the personal use of the Brothers".

Article 375, already in the Directory, repeats the norms governing the opening or development of educational establishments, and N°392 adds for the missions, a special preference for teacher training colleges. But the reference to impartiality in schools disappears.

### Fourth draft

The fourth draft was written in a hurry and looks quite different. The numerous references to the New Testament, the writings of the Founder and Council documents, reflect a new approach which seeks to translate into concrete terms its evangelical inspiration, the spirit of the Founder and, at the same time, the guidelines of the Council <sup>4</sup>.

The new text is divided in two parts. The first part is entitled "Rules" (fundamental and lasting), and the second "Constitutions" (concrete and detailed dispositions). The

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the Constitutions and the Directory, it included also the text of the Common Rules of 1718.

<sup>4</sup> The first principle governing the renewal of religious life indicated by the Council says: "Since the fundamental norm of the religious life is a following of Christ as proposed by the gospel, such is to be regarded by all communities as their supreme law" (PC 2a). An interesting similarity with "their first and principal rule" which De La Salle saw in the New Testament (RC 2.3).

poor are not simply the beneficiaries of the Lasallian mission: because of the mission, they have an impact also on consecration. In the paragraphs relating to mission, there appears a social component never mentioned specifically before. It can be seen in the following passages:

**“Art.1.** *The Institute, a Church institution, and its significance.*

“§ 1. The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, established in the Church by St John Baptist de La Salle, for the catechesis and Christian education of school children, principally of the poor, is a lay religious congregation of pontifical right.

**“Art. 6.** *Service of the poor.*

“The Brothers are called by Christ so that the Gospel may be preached to the poor. That is why the Institute will seek above all, in choosing its apostolates, to conduct schools which are at the service of deprived youth (Lk IV,18; Bull, art.1)”.

The five traditional vows are kept:

**“Art.10.** *Consecration*

“§ 1. The Brothers make simple vows, initially temporal and then perpetual, of poverty, chastity, obedience, stability, gratuity (Bull, art.9)”.

Its explanation of the meaning and practice of the vows goes beyond a concern for regulating:

**“Art.14.** *Meaning of the vow of poverty.*

“§ 4. Called in their apostolate, to share in the predilection of Christ and of his Church for the poor, the Brothers commit

themselves to living in poverty and humility themselves, so as to make themselves more like those to whom they have to announce the good news of salvation (MF 86).

**“Art.16.** *The practice of community poverty.*

“§ 1. Regarding the food, travel, leisure and house of the community, lifestyle will be kept simple, and all forms of vanity will be avoided, as well as anything that might mislead or drive away the poor (RC XIX 5; PO 17, § 5)”.

**“Art.32.** *The vow of gratuity.*

“§ 1. The vow of gratuity binds the whole Institute together: it reminds the Brothers that their Institute was established in the Church in order to give, through schools, education and Christian instruction to youth, especially to those lacking the goods of the world or intelligence, those deprived of affection, the support of a family, or who are strangers to the faith (Bull, N°1, GE 9).

“§ 2. When he pronounces this vow, the Brother declares he is jointly responsible for the accomplishment of the purpose of the Institute in its choice of works and their field of action; he affirms his desire to devote all his strength, his time and his whole person selflessly to the accomplishment of his task.

**“Art.33.** *Meaning and practice of the vow of gratuity.*

“§ 1. In imitation of Christ and his Apostles, the Brothers will seek always to give preference to deprived youth, so that their ministry may be seen as a messianic sign of the evangelisation of the poor, and

so that through them, the Church may be seen by the world as the servant of the poor (PO 6, § 3; LG 8, § 3; CD 13, § 1).

“§ 2. By complying with the prescription of the Bull of Approbation of the Institute, which requires them not to accept money or presents offered by their pupils or their parents, the Brothers will be disposed to proclaim the Gospel of God free of charge. They will not put their hope in the gratitude of men, but will await their reward from God alone for their apostolic labours (Bull 5; 1 Co 8,9; 2 Co 11,7; Mt 10,10; MR 27-208).

“§ 3. Conscious of having received from God the call to existence, to Christian life, to religious life and the apostolate, they try, by ridding themselves of all desire of self-interest, controlling influence over others or worldly prestige, to seek solely the glory of God and the service of their neighbour.

“§ 4. They shall often examine, personally and in community, their fidelity in practice to the spirit and practice of apostolic gratuity, a characteristic trait of their vocation in the Institute.

“In accordance with a Church which proclaims more openly its option for the poor, the Institute recognises that its own mission is to participate in the fight for justice, human development and peace in the world.”

**“Art. 41. Education in social awareness.**

“§ 1. The Brothers will take care to prepare their pupils, especially the older ones, for life in society, so that they are able to

become active members of the various groups that constitute the human community.

“§ 2. They will teach them, as much as their age allows, the doctrine of the Church on human dignity and rights, and their implications for the creation of a world permeated with the Spirit of Christ.

“They will base this teaching on the doctrine of the Mystical Body, so as to lead them to live a life of charity which has its source in the grace showered on the faithful by the Holy Spirit, the soul of the Church.

“If they have to teach well-off pupils, they will try to show them the poverty of those around them”.

**“Art.44. Schools in missionary countries.**

“§ 2. Missionary schools will respond as much as they can to local needs, and will adapt themselves to the concrete circumstances of life, and to the characteristics and situation of the population (AG 40, § 3).

“Preference will be given to works which care for the very poor”.

In the “Constitutions”, articles 232 and 237 list the norms governing the opening and development of educational establishments, and those forbidding the acceptance of gifts which wound charity <sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> There are copies of these 4 drafts of the Rule in GA, ED 268/4; 268/8; 268/11 and 268/13.



## 2. THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1996-67

To say that the 39th General Chapter was an exceptional event because of its preparation, its proceedings and its consequences, needs no justification.

Its preparation included the revision of the Rules, which we have just mentioned, and a consultation of the whole Institute, which we shall see later. To this specific preparation for the Chapter, we have to add other factors, less direct but no less telling. One of these was the increased numbers of Brothers studying at university or following comparable courses, especially in theology. The existence of *Jesus Magister* was one of the pointers indicating this trend, but not the only one, nor the first. Another telling factor was the great progress made in Lasallian Studies, spurred on by the publication of the *Cahiers Lasalliens*. All these factors left their mark on the proceedings and application of the Chapter.

The Chapter, which began just a few months after the closure of the Council, felt the strong impact of this great ecclesial event. The inauguration of simultaneous translation was no doubt of smaller significance – while being important – in a Chapter which resolutely undertook to mould the future of the Institute<sup>6</sup>.

Its consequence was a real renewal of the Institute, however one may judge its tendencies and profundity.

What follows is not a history of the Chapter, simply a rapid glance, with special attention given to the educational service the Institute wished to offer the poor.

### \* Preliminary consultation

Two years ahead of time, Circular 379, dated December 18th 1963, invited officially all the Brothers to collaborate in the preparation of the Chapter. To facilitate this participation, the Brothers were informed that a questionnaire, containing 76 questions regarding all aspects of the life of the Institute, had been sent shortly before to the Visitors. The process of consultation provided for community discussions, and imposed the examination of notes and memoirs sent in by Brothers to the District, by the Visitor, Council and more broadly-based commissions<sup>7</sup>. This was quite new by comparison with past practice.

In the questionnaire-guide, questions 31 to 34 refer to “our schools and the poor”.

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<sup>6</sup> For the first time, in addition to the members of the Chapter, other Brothers were invited in their capacity as experts.

<sup>7</sup> The period of two years' preparation, and the process of studying notes sent in by the Districts had been decided by the 1956 Chapter. There was nothing to prevent Brothers from sending in their notes directly to the General Chapter.

They asked: To what social categories do the pupils belong? What position do they occupy in relation to the rest of the local or national population? What form does the problem of school gratuity take in the country and in our schools? Which works are intended for certain special categories of poor children (orphans, delinquents, refugees, mentally handicapped...)? How are they organised? What do the Brothers think of them? Is there concern in the District for the missions? Question 48 asks, among other things related to poverty, if the individual and community witness that we give to it is noticeable.

### Answers to the questionnaire

The answers to questions 31, 32 and 33 were summarised in a report 22 pages long, and made available to capitulants<sup>8</sup>. The impression it makes on an outsider, is that it does not give a complete and well-pondered picture of the reality of the Institute, but rather a sample, quite broad, of situations and opinions.

In response to question 31 ("To what social categories do the pupils belong?"), there were 84 individual or community notes and 34 district summaries. The school population included all kinds of cases. However, there seemed to be fewer very poor pupils than very rich pupils. Most Brothers, and the best qualified, intended to teach in schools for the higher classes. Often, the solution does not lie in admitting poor children in schools for the rich: the latter have a lifestyle the poor cannot afford, and they

do not fit in with the rich, if they are separated from other poor children. In any case, history does not stand still: a poor school in a poor part of town, can find itself, after a period of time, in a rich area because of a change in the local population. The school stays there, but the poor have gone elsewhere. Some schools are mentioned which impose very burdensome conditions on the poor regarding personal appearance (uniform, type of shoes...), which place them out of the reach of the poor, even though they do not ask them to pay school fees. Finally, quite apart from their relative number, it seems that it is the colleges for the rich which set the tone in Districts and in countries, and not those for the poor.

In response to question 32 (school gratuity in general and in the Brothers' schools) there were 78 individual or community notes and 34 District summaries. Many countries maintained gratuity at certain levels, but in State schools. Certain countries subsidised private education at some level or another. In very numerous cases, however, private schools had to count on their own resources. That is why gratuity in schools is not very common. But there are many differences: the figures received varied greatly from country to country, and from social category to social category. Also, the figures given

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<sup>8</sup> GA, ED 256: The summary of the notes for the 2nd Commission includes documents 13, 13a, 13b, 13c and 13d. The last document is the one which interests us here. Its complete classification is : 2.6.1 - Document 13d.

represent great differences in the help given to the various sections of the school population. A certain number of notes are opposed to the vow of teaching gratuitously: they see it as irrelevant and unrealistic, and when it is pronounced publicly, in the presence of the families of the Brothers, or in that of the pupils, it is seen as a joke.

80 individual or community notes and 37 District summaries were sent in response to question 33 (educational works for the special needs, and Brothers responsible for them). It is surprising that only 3 Districts indicate the existence of such works in their respective sectors. On the basis of these answers, one could think that this type of work was of little interest to the Brothers, and that the staff appointed to them were far from brilliant and had no specific training. This impression certainly needs some correction: one of the District says it is proud to have several institutions of this type in which can be found the "most poor", and which are supported by many Brothers who call upon the Institute to commit itself more to this kind of work.

Document "2.4.3.1"<sup>9</sup> summarises much more succinctly in one page the answers of the Brothers: "In all parts of the Institute, Brothers ask us to go to the poor with much more attention and imagination, especially to the economically poor, but also to the intellectually weak, to the physically handicapped and to the mentally deficient. It would seem that Brothers in general do not consider the working class children they have to teach as poor. They consider the

working classes, in fact, relatively well-off, given the benefits obtained for manual workers by the working men's unions. Our preferred apostolic field of action should be among the really poor, the outcasts of town suburbs, the children of rural labourers, those whose economic conditions cannot be improved by trade union action, the poor in developing countries. Most specific situations and problems encountered in given places can be studied and improved only at the local level, but what the authors of the notes and the memoirs ask for is the principle that, by virtue of a determined policy, the Institute allocates most of the Brothers to the service of the poor. As a way of implementing this policy concretely, they asked the Institute to adopt the following measures:

a) that each District, when the choice is possible, always decide in favour of schools which will serve best the cause of the poor;

b) that the number and quality of the Brothers allocated to poor schools be a witness to our dedication to this cause;

c) that every school whose clientele, by reason of its economic advantages, pays school fees, support a school for the very poor, or at least, admit as many gratuitous

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<sup>9</sup> GA, ED 257: Summary of notes and memoirs for the 1966 Chapter, Section "Our schools in the world and in the Church", p.6. Up till now (November 1997), I have not found the answers from the Districts, but only a few individual or collective notes about the service of the poor: GA, ED 264; ED 268/3.

pupils as possible, even if the Brothers are obliged to make certain sacrifices as a consequence;

d) that when it is necessary to charge school fees, they should be kept as low as possible, without detriment to the salary that is paid to the lay teachers;

e) that every District study the possibility of concentrating its apostolic efforts more and more on technical schools which can teach skills to the children of the poorer classes and to pupils less gifted for academic studies.

The notes and memoirs deal also with the education of the less gifted, the physically or mentally handicapped, delinquents, orphans, in schools adapted to their needs, and in which Brothers will work who are especially trained for this form of the apostolate.

Some notes suggested that our ministry to the poor be extended to non school-based education programmes:

a) social centres in town centres, where instruction, career counselling and recreational activities could be available in a less formal setting, and to which, in particular, non-Catholic children could be admitted;

b) reception centres for young workers coming from outside the big cities;

c) agricultural schools in rural areas to provide young people the means to live decently on farms;

d) increased interest in overseas apostolate in developing countries, whose economic, cultural and educational poverty

offer the Brothers' zeal for the poor multiple and fruitful opportunities for apostolic work".

Without judging the objective value<sup>10</sup> of this summary, we can highlight some of its aspects. On the one hand, there is the universality which is attributed to a particular trend: Everywhere Brothers ask for a greater commitment on the part of the Institute to the poor, and indicate as being particularly urgent help for those who are victim of more or less desperate situations. On the other, what catches the attention, is that the Brothers in general do not consider poor the children of employed workers protected by trade unions: such a point of view could be possible in areas or times of widespread economic prosperity, and would become a useful indicator to know the places where the Brothers should put their schools.

#### \* The proceedings of the General Chapter

The Convocation Circular, N°383, had nothing special about it. Its date (October 20th 1965) fell six months before the opening of the assembly. The paragraph devoted to the importance of the Chapter was correct but no unexpected<sup>11</sup>.

Constituted on April 28th 1966 (although it had assembled on the 20th), and was al-

<sup>10</sup> Objective value: a) as a summary of the notes; b) as a reflection of the situation of the Institute.

<sup>11</sup> Except, perhaps, in the announcement of the Superior's wish to resign.

ready at work, it arrived very quickly at the conclusion that a single session would not be enough. On June 2nd, it decided to hold a second session during the last part of the following year, a decision which was approved by the Sacred Congregation for Religious on June 17th. Four days later, the Chapter interrupted its sessions. It returned to its work on October 1st 1967 and ended definitively two and a half months later on December 15th<sup>12</sup>.

During the 15 month break, there was must intense work on the rewriting of texts. In particular, the 5th draft of the Rule was sent to all the Brothers for them to study it and propose modifications<sup>13</sup>. At the same time, the Declaration: "The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World of Today", a fundamental Chapter document, was taking form.

The second session was not satisfied simply with approving what had been drawn up in the interval. Everything was examined carefully by the Commissions and plenary sessions<sup>14</sup>. This was especially the case regarding the subject that concerns us here: there was more and more evidence to show that the identity of the Institute was linked to its mission, and that, through this mission, it was first and foremost concerned with the poor. If the thinking of the Chapter

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On August 6th, in his *Motu Proprio* "Ecclesiae sanctae", Pope Paul VI promulgated the rules for applying, among others, the decree *Perfectae Caritatis*. The 3rd § prescribed the holding of a special General Chapter to promote the renewal of the Institute. The 12th § indicated the points that had to be introduced into the legislation of every institute: evangelical and theological principles, the original spirit and intentions of the Founders, healthy traditions, the indispensable juridical norms in order to define the nature, the purpose and means of the Institute. On December 12th 1967, the Sacred Congregation recognised that the 39th General Chapter of the Brothers satisfied the requirement of holding a special General Chapter (Circ. 391, p.33).

<sup>13</sup> In a report from the Commission on "Consecration and Vows", it is stated that: "The lack of doctrine on the vows (a lack common to all congregations, in which the vow was reduced in practice to its canonical significance) inspired some very legitimate questions:

"The remarks sent in on draft 5 are almost unanimous: the vows of gratuity and stability must be suppressed, because they do not correspond to any precise obligation.

"The Commission and the General Chapter had to ask itself whether or not this would mean accepting them as a simple legality; whether one would not be sacrificing in this way a rich spiritual tradition which, in fact, characterised the original image of our Institute. We ran the risk of suppressing something specific and losing our identity in a mass of other religious institutes. Thought had to be given first to the spiritual meaning of the words 'gratuity' and 'stability', that is, to the spirituality they represented.

"Gratuity: exercising our ministry without any self-seeking" (GA, ED 255; "Consecration and Vows" p.3).

<sup>14</sup> Regarding the writing of the Rules and Constitutions, see the work of Brother Paul Antoine Jourjon: "Pour un renouveau spirituel".

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<sup>12</sup> GA, ED 250/4. Chapter Book, p. 5, 76, 149, 151, 152, 362. During the second session, on October 29th, Brother Bénilde (Pierre Romançon) was canonised.

was communicated to the Brothers through a mass of documents<sup>15</sup> more numerous than ever before, so also the space occupied by the service of the poor (in centimetres of text and in importance) broke all records.

The centrality of the mission, this was what the Superior General hinted at when he presented the Declaration the day after the closure of the Chapter: "In the course of the first session, it became more and more clear that we were in need of a document that would give a synthesis of the many facets of the Brothers' life and mission in the world of today. As it studied the questions of the vows, of formation, our life of prayer and community, the Chapter increasingly sensed the need of an authoritative statement that would serve as foundation and unifying principle of all the Chapter's work"<sup>16</sup>. A Chapter which had to promote the overall renewal of the Institute was led to clarify the major questions relating to the mission, because that was where the "backbone" of the Institute was to be found.

### \* The poor: a central theme

The text of the document fulfilled all the promises: the constitutive components of the Brothers' life (religious consecration, community life, apostolic mission, if we accept this definition) must be integrated "under the sign of the apostolate"<sup>17</sup>.

And if the apostolate means being sent, "solidarity with the men of today, attention to the appeals of the Church, our religious vocation which dedicates us in a special manner to the imitation of Christ, fidelity

to the specific intentions of the Founder, indicate clearly to us the poor as the ones to whom we are sent by preference"<sup>18</sup>.

A positive response to this "sending" brings with it profound consequences for the person "sent": "An authentic educational and apostolic service of the poor will contribute greatly to an integration and deepening of the personal life<sup>19</sup> of a Brother, helping him to overcome more easily the difficulties sometimes encountered by those who have staked their whole lives on Jesus Christ"<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Eight titles apart from the Superior's circulars:  
\* The Brother of the Christian Schools in the world of today (D)

\* Rules and Constitutions (R)

\* Book of Government (G)

\* Official Records of the 39th General Chapter (A)

\* Lay Character of the Institute (L)

\* Religious consecration and Vows (C)

\* Community Life (V)

\* The Missions (M)

The references given here are those of the Spanish edition.

<sup>16</sup> D P.6; See also Circ.391 (February 2nd 1968, p.60), on the work of the 2nd Commission.

<sup>17</sup> D 12-25, especially the last number.

<sup>18</sup> D 28.1

<sup>19</sup> The Spanish edition has "vida espiritual", but the French and English editions have respectively "vie personnelle" and "personal life". At the end of the paragraph, I have translated "ont misé" by "han apostado" instead of "han confiado": the comparison with a gambler who has staked all his chips on the number "Jesus Christ", seems to me to be the correct version.

<sup>20</sup> D 34.3.

Chapter documents, consequently, come back regularly to this fundamental characteristic of the Lasallian vocation. We find a good example of this at the beginning of Chapter VIII of the Rules: "The vocation of the Brothers is a total gift of themselves to God for the service of the poor through education"<sup>21</sup>. This is the purpose of the Congregation, which each Brother individually, and all Brothers as a group, promise to pursue. And even though obedience sends a Brother to serve better-off pupils, "in his teaching, he always has in view the service of the poor. He teaches everyone the duties of responsibility, of justice, and of universal charity" (R.VIII.c).

If "the Institute is devoted to the poor in a special way" (R 1.g), although not exclusively, in the Chapter and in the Institute once again the question is asked: who exactly are the poor?<sup>22</sup> Answers indicate before anything else the poverty of frustration<sup>23</sup>, described as "the impossibility of certain people, groups or individuals to obtain a standard of living which would allow them real freedom. They live in a kind of slavery from which they cannot free themselves because of the deprivation in which their material and cultural poverty holds them. Such a situation...does not allow human beings to develop in keeping with their dignity", and it constitutes, consequently, "an evil which must be fought". "As a witness and a teacher of this Christian attitude to poverty, the Brother is called also to wage war against the poverty of frustration" (D 29.5 and 30.1).

Attention is then turned to those "most in need", who bear the full weight of the poverty in the world, of racism, of the exploitation of others, of violence, of war, of the fragility of peace, of the enslavement of whole nations, of lack of adaptation, of juvenile delinquency, of illness, of being uprooted, of broken homes. Many of these evils exist in so-called "missionary" territories (D.33. 1-3).

However, none of the definitions of the poor to whom the Institute should go are entirely satisfactory, especially if they are described from the outside. A sincere and thought-out commitment to the poor, on the other hand, makes it easier to recognise them.

The renewal of the awareness of individual Brothers that they are sent especially to these sections of the human community, to bring the Gospel to them through education, presupposed other areas of revision for

<sup>21</sup> Here, the Spanish translation follows a text in French ("La Vocation des Frères est un don total à Dieu pour le service éducatif des pauvres") which was somewhat critically received in the assembly (cf. Chapter Book p.337), and was given a less harsh formulation ("La vocation des Frères est un don total à Dieu, orienté vers le service éducatif des pauvres"), that is "The vocation of the Brothers is a total gift to God – not "for" but "directed towards" – the educational service of the poor".

<sup>22</sup> D p.5: the first (with "schools") of the "fundamental points" that the Chapter had to clarify, on Brother Charles Henry's list.

<sup>23</sup> The French version. In Spanish it is cacophonous. This is perhaps the Spanish edition has "pobreza material", but the meaning is not the same.

the Institute. A whole group of them concerns the personal and community life of the Brothers. By faith, which is the spirit of the Institute, "it becomes possible for the Brothers, little by little, to see in everything that happens, in every person they meet, especially the poor, the unwanted and the persecuted, a sign and an invitation of the Holy Spirit" (R II.g). The meaning and practice of poverty implies reference to the real life of the poor, a desire to resemble them in order to be able to serve them from a position as close as possible to their own, so as not to be strangers to them. On the one hand, the poverty of the poor is a "reference" by which to measure the reality of the poverty of the Brothers and of their communities. On the other hand, and at a deeper level, the encounter with the poor is a "sacrament" of the meeting with Jesus, followed and served<sup>24</sup>. Chastity, correcting human love, endows him with an "exquisite tenderness in his relations with sinners, children and the poor" (C. p.69). The vow of serving the poor through education supposes that the Brothers accept joint responsibility for maintaining the Institute faithful to its purpose, as well as questioning their own attitude, so that dedication grows and is purified constantly (R VIII,d.1).

Another area for revision is that of works: the location, type, clientele, economic status, of existing and future works. There is proof, that in poor areas, Lasallian schools cater for better-off minorities. In general, works ought to respond to needs, and especially of those most in need. In the estab-

lishments themselves, study programmes need to be thought out in view of the different kinds of poverty that need attention; in view of qualifications for the real world that can be foreseen; in view of the social responsibilities that have to be recognised and accepted. All this tends to go beyond the bourgeois and individualistic limitations some people attribute to Lasallian schools.

Consequently, the way the Brothers are divided up among the schools needs looking at "so that the local needs of each District will not prevent a response to other areas where the needs are urgent" (D 33.4).

This affects also the formation of the Brothers: "Every Brother must make his own the decision of St John Baptist de La Salle to go to the poor 'with the heart of a poor man'. He will discover as he does so a deeper understanding of the meaning of his consecration to God...". To this spiritual attitude, if we can call it that, must be added a professional qualification "on the part of those who would respond adequately to the person and the milieu that are in need. A Brother who makes this choice must be qualified by a thorough study of social, economic and political affairs which will help him understand the full dimension of the Christian struggle for the dignity of man" (D 34, 1-2).

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<sup>24</sup> See for example: R VI, b, f, h; C p.84-114. This is what St John Baptist de La Salle says in his meditations for Christmas and the Epiphany (MF 86,3 and 96,3).



In the eyes of the General Chapter, all this must be accompanied by conversion: conversion of attitudes, because a simple change in the field of the apostolate does not guarantee fidelity to the service of the poor (D 29.2). At the same time there has to be a genuine institutional conversion involving the whole Institute: Every level of authority, then, every dialogue and decision in the Institute must be in harmony with this orientation, so that all our plans and work will show in deed and truth our "return to the poor" (D 34.4).

### \* Rules and Constitutions

This "description of the ideal Brother" – as the Superior General said when he presented this new text – begins by putting back the Institute into the context of its original inspiration: "With the intention of forming teachers animated by an apostolic spirit and ready to dedicate themselves totally to the instruction and Christian education of the children of the working class and the poor, St John Baptist de La Salle founded the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools" (1.a).

The world in the 20th century is not the same as it was in the Founder's day, for while "the Institute is devoted to the poor in a special way...it offers its apostolic and educational services to all young people who are able to profit by them. Every Brother is called upon to show special interest in those whose poverty is an obstacle to their development as persons, or to their ability to re-

spond to the message of salvation revealed in Jesus Christ" (1.g).

And so a distinction, at least linguistically, is established between the Founder and the first Brothers, and the present-day Institute. The former were "totally consecrated" to the children of the artisans and the poor; today, these constitute the preferential option, but all ideas of exclusivity are studiously avoided. This inevitably offers food for thought.

Seeing the poor with the eyes of faith, so often mentioned in the Meditations of the Founder, has its place in the chapter on the spirit of the Institute, as we have just seen.

The specific vows receive a different name which adds to their profound meaning more than is juridically observable. The vows are now called "the educational service of the poor" and "fidelity to the Institute" (4.1). In the description of the various aspects of the Brothers' consecration, a link is established, but not always perceived, between the service of the poor and fidelity to the Institute: "Obedience unites them...in fidelity to the Institute and in the service of youth and of the poor through education" (4.f).

The connection between the poverty of the Brother and his mission is certainly clearly defined: "The Brothers choose to be poor because Christ was poor. They choose poverty in order to understand and practise Christ's teaching more completely, and to serve men as their brothers, especially those most in need...they do not seek wealth that

they may seek the poor effectively and be accepted by them" (6.a).

The paragraphs of chapter VIII concerning the service of the poor through education deserve to be quoted in full, even if this involves some repetition <sup>25</sup>. As a chapter it contains both inspiration and a practical application, and commits all the Brothers and the various groups that constitute the entire Institute.

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<sup>25</sup> "The vocation of the Brothers is a total commitment directed to the service of the poor through education. The Brothers assume a personal responsibility to further this mission of their congregation. They consecrate to God their love for youth, uniting themselves to Jesus Christ who teaches men the way of salvation. They share in the educational work of the Church to make their presence felt among the poor.

"The Brothers declare their intention to consecrate their energy, their time and their persons to the accomplishment of their mission; they want only to be generous and unselfish in teaching the truths of the Gospel.

"In their educational activity the Brothers have always in mind the service of the poor. They show a special concern for those who lack material goods, personal talent, or human affection; this is the essential part of their mission. When obedience requires, they serve the youth of families that are better off, because they also are poor before God, and because those who learn this truth merit the King-

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dom. The Brothers teach all their students that they have a responsibility for universal justice and charity.

"Throughout their lives the Brothers maintain a special affection for this purpose of the Institute. They help the congregation to maintain the Christian orientation of its institutions and they evaluate their own attitude from time to time in order to strengthen and purify their determination to prepare the way of the Lord" (R 8, a,b,c,d).

"In vowing themselves to the service of the poor through education, the Brothers affirm the responsibility that each has in union with the others for realizing the purpose of the Institute in the choice and orientation of its apostolic work.

"Personally and in community, they examine themselves often on their fidelity to the spirit and practice of the service of the poor through education.

"Their educational activity has in view the betterment of the poor. They participate in the attempts that are being made to bring the advantages of education to everyone.

"The Brothers are particularly attentive to those pupils who find it difficult to adapt to a normal course of studies or to family and social life.

"Through a teaching inspired by the social doctrine of the Church, the Brothers prepare their students to play an active part in the help given to developing countries and in movements for justice and peace.

"Regional chapters, district chapters and district councils are careful to define a common policy which, while taking into account local economic situations, makes effective provision for the care of the poor" (R 8, Constitutions 1,2,3,4,5,6).

### 3. BROTHER CHARLES HENRY

#### \* After the General Chapter

During the course of 1968, a Circular was published which included a report on the second session of the Chapter, and the 8 booklets which constituted its "library": the doctrine and the decisions which are to guide the renewal. By its purpose and its characteristics, the Declaration became the essential reference. "It is, then, in the light of the Declaration that we must read and understand the other texts of our General Chapter, including the Rules and Constitutions; it is the basis of the doctrine that you will find in each of them. In its turn, the Declaration will be further appreciated in the light of the developments that will be found in these other documents. The spirit of the Declaration, the spirit that is basic to an understanding of all the capitular texts..."<sup>26</sup>

Regarding the poor and the service the Institute feels it is called to offer them, such explanations are numerous. The longest passages can be found in chapters VI and VIII of the Rules, chapters XI, XII and XIII (poverty) and XXII (service of the poor through education) in the booklet "Religious Consecration and Vows"; chapter III (missionary activity) in the booklet on the "Missions". But much can be learnt by leafing through all these documents, even through the "Decisions" and the "Lay character of the Institute".

The volume and the quality of the texts produced by the General Chapter did not fool anyone: everyone knew that renewal did not consist only in documents. It is not possible to follow its progress day after day: it was not a smooth process and often it was very painful. We shall hear more about it from the reports of subsequent meetings. For the time being, let it suffice to recall one of its signs.

#### SECOLI

During the General Chapter an unplanned Commission was set up, entrusted with the task of studying everything to do with the missions. One of its concrete results was the renewal of the International Missionary Secretariat which existed in the Generalate, and the appointment of the Vicar General as the one directly in charge of this sector.

Under the direction of dynamic and efficient Brothers, the Secretariat stimulated throughout the Institute an increasing solidarity with the most needy sectors in various areas of the Third World. The expansion of its services brought about quickly a change in its name. As the Service of Lasalian International Cooperation (SECOLI),

<sup>26</sup> D, p.7-8: introductory letter from Brother Charles Henry, Superior General.

it became the official representative of the Institute regarding whatever concerned the missions. Subsequently, SECOLI channelled a considerable volume of financial aid from the Institute and aid agencies to institutions caring for the poor or training their teachers. SECOLI created also a great many personal contacts. In these meetings between the more or less rich and the very poor, it was often the former who unexpectedly were evangelised.

By the direct action of its Directors, by its publications, by the connections it helped to create, SECOLI, by its widespread and permanent presence, ensured that the Institute remained aware of its missionary vocation and of its original purpose to help the poor.

### \* The 1971 Visitors' meeting

In October 1971, half-way between two General Chapters, the Brother Visitors had a meeting with the Regime.

### Preparation

Much time and care were devoted to the preparation of this meeting. Circular 393, dated June 1st 1971, anticipated the major problems and offered some guidelines on the basis of information that had been previously received.

It seems that what was said in it about "religious life"<sup>27</sup> could be applied, with the necessary changes, to other matters that were envisaged: the presence of doubts, insufficiently coordinated individual initiatives, a

general fatigue, problems in the apostolate, the validity of schools being called into question, loss of freedom in private schools in certain countries, difficulties in education in the faith, difficulty of planning and coordinating the initial formation of Brothers, increasing difficulties regarding the ministry of vocations and, even if the Circular does not say so, a considerable decrease in the number of Brothers.

These worrying aspects affected greatly the generous and sincere efforts made everywhere to implement the intentions of the Chapter. Understandably, they were more visible than the successes, because they prevented the Institute from enjoying all the fruits that it could have expected in the aftermath of the Council and the Chapter.

The service of the Institute to the poor was rooted in these difficulties. The short page devoted to it in the Circular takes on a greater importance if, as we ought, we take this back-cloth into account:

"4.1. Concern for finding solutions to the grave problems imposed by the urgent need

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<sup>27</sup> "Notes from the Districts reveal that the degree to which they have assimilated the General Chapter varies greatly from District to District. The Institute has begun to move forward under its impulse – this is a proven fact. However, in this first stage, it seems to have concentrated especially on adaptation, which has often been undertaken where it was easiest to accomplish" (Circ. 393, p.7). From the beginning of his mandate, the Superior had set his sights more on renewal than on adaptation (Circ. 388, January 26th 1967, p.19, §6).

for the education of the poor has already given rise to no small number of initiatives. This is in answer to what is required of the Brothers by our Rules and Constitutions (RC 8), as well as by the Declaration (D28).

“These efforts have not always had the effects expected of them.

“4.2. The service of the poor presents a whole scale of possibilities ...Those Brothers who are labouring in the educational field of the Third World, will ensure that the type of education they provide is not contrary to collective advancement, by encouraging excessively access to office jobs, or emigration to more developed countries.

“4.3. In general, the Brothers are disposed to seek and adopt the best apostolic approach to education. And so, in many places, Brothers are called upon to coordinate and run non-scholastic education works.

“4.4. Further, in some places, religious communities give outstanding service to society by organising the economic efforts of individuals and private institutions in support of education. This is particularly beneficial in countries in which the educational budget cannot meet the needs of the country”<sup>28</sup>.

When the Visitors arrived in Rome, they found a summary of the information sent in by the majority of Districts, in which they could read observations such as the following: “The money factor seems to oblige Lasallian schools to move away from the service of the economically poor to the ben-

efit of the privileged classes – well-off people, rich families. The Christian school...is separated from the educational world in general...it broadens the gap between poor and rich. What needs doing is to break down the barriers between private and public schools. If we do not do this now, perhaps we shall be obliged to do it tomorrow. This is a social trend and we cannot resist it”.

Following the previous General Chapter, in a certain number of Districts, there had been initiatives, organised by individuals or by groups who wished to confront present-day social and educational problems. The list we give of these is not exhaustive, nor does it imply any value judgments: help in rural areas, working with gypsies, immigrants, illiterate people, displaced persons, education of mountain people, of people far from population centres, care of maladjusted or sub-normal children, education of drug addicts, help to prisoners (Catholic prisoners teaching religion to their fellow inmates), rehabilitation centres for young people, help for children with socio-affective problems, or children from problem families, education of handicapped children, literacy centres, children’s villages, etc.<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> Circular 393, p.33.

<sup>29</sup> GA, EP 112; RVB 1, p.68. 11-13. England reported on the new situation created by its approved schools: “Work in these rehabilitation establishments is a special and important form of apostolate for the Brothers of England, and their experience stretches back over 116 years. Relations with the

## The meeting

From group work and plenary sessions there emerged some aspects of the multi-form reality of the Institute and of the world in which it operated.

The world – and particularly the Third World – invited the Brothers to become “witnesses to poverty” (calling into question their food, their cars, their administrative practices). The world stimulated the re-awakening of a social conscience, a concern for situations which challenge their conscience, and oblige them to be the conscience of society, and an unequivocal witness to the Gospel. The utilitarianism which was spreading in the world obliged the Brothers to react by seeing in the transcendence of their witness to a freely undertaken commitment, a form of denunciation, scandal, almost madness<sup>30</sup>.

The obstacle that always appeared was the great diversity of situations which could be called “poor”, and the varying strength of this term, given the socio-economic differences existing between countries. The point was reached when it was said that Brothers would have to leave their own country if they wished to serve the poor directly. The solution was not automatic, however: there were Brothers who complained that, having been sent to the Third World as missionaries, they were normally sent to institutions which had little or nothing to do with the service of the poor<sup>31</sup>.

Some saw that, in certain countries at least, the fact that the Institute was part of

the Church (a stranger to the people and to the poor), and of the educational world (and consequently, in contact with the State, that is, with the established order), added to the fact that some of its institutions were intended for a privileged social class (and whose image affected all their works as a whole), constituted real difficulties for making the Institute acceptable to the poor. The security enjoyed by a religious had nothing in common with the lack of security of the poor: religious had no real idea how the poor lived. They would have to live closer to them – geographically or economically – in order to know them.

There were other barriers too which kept the poor out of the Brothers’ schools: the absolutisation of the concept of “order”; the system of classification, and the selection system which encouraged individual progress and eliminated those who could not keep up with the pace; school fees (even the lowest); the influence of established

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authorities have always been marked by mutual understanding and respect, and the schools have always offered a wide choice of professional training. But a new law (1969) has brought about a change in the control of the schools, which has now passed from the Home Office to the local authorities. The schools also have undergone a profound modification. From being establishments restricted to Catholic children, our approved schools are now open to all young people sent to them from a designated region” (p.15).

<sup>30</sup> GA, EP 114/1: RO 23, p.4-5 (Spanish-speaking group: report on “religious life”).

<sup>31</sup> GA, EP 114/1: RO 82: reflection on the sending of Spanish Brothers to Latin America.

families (who opposed changes for the benefit of the less rich), etc. Many Brothers, after completing university, were automatically given work or sent to institutions which took them away from the poor<sup>32</sup>.

While, understandably, the shortcomings and delays accompanying the process of renewal launched by the Chapter were noted, they did not give the whole picture: there were Districts and Visitors who said they were satisfied. Their reason for this was the number of institutions intended for the poor, and the efforts that had been made in recent years. But even in these cases, it was thought that, if they wanted what was really best, they still had a long way to go. Many of the social needs were not addressed, and it would be worth the trouble to move Brothers to the place where the needs existed. And so the idea of "trans-humance" was born: after spending some time in one place, the community or the work would move to another which was more deprived<sup>33</sup>.

Brothers who, because of their geographical location or for other reasons, worked with well-off pupils, had, nonetheless, the possibility and obligation to awaken the social conscience of these pupils.

Another sector which needed attention, was that of people suffering from handicaps of a social, intellectual, affective or psychological nature.

In certain countries, the nationalisation of schools had not discouraged the Brothers: some of them continued to work in

them, others had invented other forms of educational or catechetical activities, especially for those who had been abandoned or marginalised by the normal educational system<sup>34</sup>.

It was said also that, apart from observing and reporting facts, it was necessary also to call into question the methods used to interpret them. The same facts were interpreted differently by people with different mental attitudes. These mental attitudes were influenced (and not less so even if unconsciously) by the sociological context of the person interpreting. Certain members of the assembly drew attention to the attitude of the poor to poverty, as was recommended by liberation theology in South America<sup>35</sup>.

### Propositions

Drawn up first in language groups or sub-groups, a certain number of proposition were approved by vote in the last days of the meeting, and were made available to the government of the Institute to guide its work during the second half of the intercapitular period. Some of these proposition which are included under the heading "The Brothers and Education" are more especially concerned with commitment to the poor and concern for social justice:

<sup>32</sup> GA, EP 114/1 RO 91 and 93

<sup>33</sup> GA, EP 114/1 RO 82 and 85.

<sup>34</sup> GA, EP 114/1 RO 99: The Brothers in Burma are quoted as an example.

<sup>35</sup> GA, EP 113/1 M.13: plenary assembly, October 15th, p.3-4.

“4. The Institute must give special attention to sectors where the Latin American social process is most dynamic, that is, among the intellectuals and the marginalised. We believe that our presence in these fields is a true service of the Church to the social community.

“5. The presence of Brothers in national or international organisations concerned with education and development is indispensable if we are to contribute to the much needed democratisation of education, and to a more just educational policy.”

“10. Our poverty will consist in a total availability to go to places where others cannot or will not go, and to take charge of works that no one can or is willing to accept. We should respond to an appeal in a missionary spirit, rather than under pressure from politico-social conditions.

“11. The new needs of the world, especially of the poor, as are defined in the Declaration, call for personal initiatives from Brothers, supported by their communities, and endorsed by the administration of the District.<sup>36</sup>

“12. Generally speaking, the poor do not have the means to join schools maintained in great part or completely by school fees. However, normally, they can go to schools partly or completely supported by grants from the State. We encourage the Brothers in their apostolate in these latter schools because they teach the poor in them. We encourage in particular Brothers who teach in schools in which government control can

restrict movement from one school to another.

“13. That a study be undertaken and practical steps taken at all levels, especially in Districts and communities, so that the practice of evangelical poverty (accommodation, lifestyle, kinds of relations, community administration) can make the vow of the educational service of the poor become a reality.

“14. That the knowledge of the world of the poor, accessible directly to some, be made available to the majority of Brothers by contacts and meetings with representatives of trade unions, Catholic action, social welfare, pastoral care and charity organisations. The responsibility for undertaking this scheme and taking part in it rests with communities.

“15. That exemplary and significant measures be taken that will demonstrate clearly our will to go to the very poor:

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<sup>36</sup> As the propositions were sent in by various groups, and the translation could be hurried, there could be quite wide divergencies between the various languages, as in this case. The English-speaking group, whose proposition it was, became in the French version: “initiatives of Brothers as individuals, helped by the community and endorsed by the government of the District”. There were protests: “It is not enough for the community to help and encourage, it must commit itself”. It was answered that it was a question of strategy: “Sometimes, a District or a community...can exert pressure to slow things down, and the only way to avoid that is personal initiative” (GA, EP 113/1. M 16, plenary session, October 22nd 1971).



“a) style of formation of young Brothers, preparing some to teach professional skills;

“b) freeing some Brothers, or better still, communities, to work in the most deprived sectors of society (retarded children, children in moral danger...);

“c) specialised training and retraining of Brothers for group promotion and teaching, for running youth centres...

“16. That the reasons given for the evolution of schools be reinforced with evangelical motives and provide the courage needed to modify school structures, or have them vigorously modified, especially in order to benefit the very poor.

“17. That a study be undertaken to stimulate the reflection of the Brothers on the following points:

“a) a brief historical outline showing the poor that St John Baptist de La Salle and the Institute after him were interested in;

“b) an analysis of what in practical terms is meant by the word “poor” in the world of today, and in the area in which the school is located;

“c) references to papal and episcopal documents, and to sociological surveys that have been carried out. These could reinforce the significance of the vow of the educational service of the poor as a perpetuation of the Founder’s charism.

“18. Our responsibility extends also to the social training of the young people belonging to the well-off classes, not only to

induce them to do charitable works, but especially to sharpen their sense of social justice.

“20. As a way of showing our fundamental concern for the poor, we propose that the Districts which can do so, undertake to give concrete help for the formation of candidates and Brothers of our needy missionary Districts (without detriment to the help they already receive)”<sup>37</sup>.

### \* **Circular 394: Guidelines for the next 5 years**

In November, Brother Charles Henry sent this important Circular which included all the important points of the meeting. If the Superior thought he was justified in saying that none of the participants went away from the meeting completely satisfied with the work accomplished or the results obtained, it can also be said that they all received much help from these fraternal discussions.

<sup>37</sup> GA, EP 114/1 RO 114: the subject comes up also in the “religious life” section. For example: “Poverty consists more in a commitment to solidarity with those who suffer misery, than in the simple fact of possessing fewer goods”. “The option of the Institute in favour of the poor implies, in order that its prophetic value may be perceived, the condemnation – in accordance with our educational mission – of everything in the structures which engenders, conditions and maintains poverty, as well as determined cooperation in the construction of a society that is more just for all men”. “The embodiment of this idea and of this charism gives the Brother the specificity of his real identity” (Propositions 11 and 21; cf. Proposition 6. GA, EP 114/1, RO 129).

We can say also that, in the midst of a growing crisis, the Circular was a sincere and lucid message of hope. The validity and necessity of religious life (and as part of it, community cohesion), and attention to the needs of the world, were the major points the text developed.

In chapter III (“Christian education in the Modern World”), the third orientation deals with the educational service of the poor: “That the Brothers strive courageously to consecrate their educational mission in a special manner to the service of the poor. It is the sign of the evangelical authenticity of their mission”. This orientation is developed in three parts:

\* A significant service through many Brothers and a representative number of communities; a “dissatisfied” attitude, which leads each community to be alert to the possibility of a greater service of the poor through education.

\* That the Brothers become more sensitive to the needs of the poor: “Knowledge of the world of the poor should not be the privilege of a few Brothers, it should be the possession of all”. It is important also to take significant measures in the midst of the poor: simpler lifestyle, leaving certain works to found new ones in more needy areas (and make sure the Brothers have specific training for this work); and the basis of everything is to learn to think like the poor.

\* Awaken and form in all young people a social conscience, as a constitutive component of a truly Christian conscience <sup>38</sup>.

The message – which deserves to be read in its entirety –<sup>39</sup> was concrete, courageous, and covered the principal aspects of the current situation in the Institute; and for Districts, communities and individual Brothers, it was an example of the reality and rightness of the Superior’s commitment to renewal.

By a curious paradox, while the Institute was re-asserting so vigorously its fundamental and foundational commitment to the poor, these latter were the victims – as a matter of historical interest – of the “liturgical sequestration” of the Holy Founder. In the turbulence, which was not so turbulent, of the liturgical renewal, the ancient Collect disappeared, which was very explicit and even a little sharp in tone: “Oh God, who for the Christian education of the poor and for the preservation of youth in the way of salvation, didst raise up St John Baptist, Confessor, and didst form by him a new religious family in the Church...”. In its place, there appeared another version, dealing in generalities and perfectly inoffensive. “God, who chose St John Baptist de La Salle for the Christian education of youth, raise

<sup>38</sup> Circular 394, p.3, 32-35.

<sup>39</sup> Differences continue to appear between the texts in different languages: “Se sont voués” (dedicated themselves) is not the same as “se consagraron por voto” (they consecrated themselves by vow), p.32; “Connaissance” (knowledge) is not exactly the same as “experiencia”, p.33; “qui ne peut pas s’entreprendre” (which cannot be undertaken) is exactly the opposite of “que se puede emprender”, p.134; and so on.

up again in your Church teachers who will devote themselves entirely to the human and Christian education of youth..."

Perhaps this was the price that had to be paid for the extra glorification of 1950. The requisite steps had resulted in the brief *Quod ait*, by which Pius XII declared John Baptist de La Salle heavenly patron of all teach-

ers of children and youth. All teachers, and not only the new congregation. Children and youth in general, and not only the poor.

Whatever the significance of this fact may be, its symbolical value was considerable: in the Institute and around it, not everyone understood renewal in the same way.

#### 4. THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1976

The 40th General Chapter provides a good opportunity to see how much ground had been covered by the Institute in its process of adapted renewal. In those 10 years, there had been great unrest in the world: the Vietnam war, the student revolt of 1968, the Prague Spring, the seething tensions in Africa, the apparition and disappearance of military regimes in Latin America...led quite naturally to people taking up positions, and different positions, based quite often on partial information.

The post-conciliar Catholic Church, guided by Paul VI, sent out strong signals. Official Catholic social teaching was enriched with such documents as the basic encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, the letter *Octogesima Adveniens* and the documents of the bishops' synod on justice. The Pope, who delivered his message to the United Nations, who went to the Holy Land and Bombay to build bridges of peace, instituted the World Day of Prayer for Peace.

With the advent of liberation theology, an attempt to build up a theology based on the situation of oppressed poor people – the first movement of theological thought born in Latin America – caught the attention of other parts of the globe. It was a movement that lent itself to debate and which, in fact, was debated by Catholics and non-Catholics. Conservative and affluent circles tried to discredit it because of its marxist roots. On the other hand, the second Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, held in Medellin in 1968, seemed much more in agreement with it. In any case, this Conference, which adapted the Vatican II Council to Latin American reality, adopted a vigorous stance in favour of the poor. Despite all its human weaknesses, the *Medellin Document* became a necessary reference.

The change in situation, the seething mass of contradictory ideas, often half thought-out, either in the world, or in the Church or the Institute, added to the rare

experience and the difference of speed in the implementation of the renewal launched by the 39th General Chapter, went some way to explain the tensions and polemics which racked the Congregation. The service of the poor was precisely one of the points of great friction on the ideological and the practical level.

### \* Careful preparation

The Central Government of the Institute began preparing for the 1976 assembly well in advance. Two international Commissions were appointed to prepare, one a report on catechesis, and the other, a report on the vows. On the other hand, the research on “who were the poor to whom the holy Founder and the first Brothers devoted themselves” was not completed. On the basis of a study made by Brother Henri Bédél, complemented by other material, Brother Maurice Auguste presented a document which gave, in a provisional form, some idea of the clientele of the Brothers at the beginning of the Institute <sup>40</sup>.

### The 1974 questionnaire

December 8th 1974 was proclaimed “Institute Day” for the whole Congregation. In theory, on that day, all the Brothers in the whole world answered a questionnaire entitled “What do I say to the Institute on the occasion of the General Chapter?” Must time was spent drawing up the questionnaire, from which it was hoped to obtain a scientifically structured profile of the Insti-

tute <sup>41</sup>. Certain items concerned the Lasalian service of the poor.

1. Religious consecration: 3.031:” If from now on we had to make only one vow...I would choose: d) the vow of the educational service of the poor”

Regarding community attitudes, whose value it was considered important to re-assert, there was item 3.037: “Knowing how to serve the poor, the very poor, better (in concrete and practical ways)”. A scale of 1 to 3 made it possible to rate this as important, relative or accessory.

2. Renewal of the mission: 4.057 and 4.059: Among the attitudes teachers can find in their pupils there is “a greater awareness of the needs of the oppressed and the out-cast” and the idea that “society is challenged by social injustice”. A scale of 1 to 4 makes it possible to rate the frequency from “a lot” to “rarely”.

Social situations found impossible to solve (item 4.068) figure among the possible causes for the obstacles encountered by catechists.

Regarding motives for volunteering to go to work in the Third World (item 4.075),

<sup>40</sup> GA, ED 275/8: Henri BÉDEL: *The artisans and the poor* at the beginnings of the Institute. The document: *The poor to whom St John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers dedicated themselves*, drawn up by Brother Maurice AUGUSTE, was presented as coming from the Preparatory Commission (GA, ED 277/2, document N°11).

<sup>41</sup> There were criticisms regarding the validity of the instrument (GA, ED 276/2).

the Brother is asked to give his views about "wishing to see all the peoples of the world, especially the poorest ones, in order to ensure the collective advancement of populations in various fields: human, social, cultural and economic."

3. Formation of the Brother (item 6.096) and Vocations Ministry (item 6.119). Regarding the first, Brothers were asked to give their views about "a better knowledge of the everyday life of the people of our times"; and regarding the second, on "the excessively bourgeois standard of our lives" (given as a motive for leaving the Institute).

The answers give the following results: about 20% of the Brothers opt for the vow of educational service of the poor (most support coming from the under 43's) if the vows had to be reduced to one.

Among community attitudes which ought to be re-asserted, the educational service of the poor came in 3rd place out of a total of 7: 68% of answers considered it "important", 26% "relative", and 3% "accessory".

The image of present-day youth as being "more aware of the needs of the oppressed and outcast" is "very strong" for 19% of the Brothers, "strong" for 36%, "average" for 23%, and "weak" for 8%.

"Are social situations one feels one cannot solve" an obstacle to catechesis? "Usually" for 14%, "often" for 32%, "sometimes" for 30%, "never" for 8%.

For going to work in the Third World, the intention to collaborate in promoting

advancement is very strong or strong for 2/3 of the answers.

The desire to update one's knowledge of the real life of present-day people is placed 5th among the 6 subjects proposed. Our excessively bourgeois living standard appears in the penultimate position out of 12 as a reason for leaving the Institute <sup>42</sup>.

### **Reports from Commissions or equivalent groups**

1. The report of the International Vows Commission draws attention to the link between the poverty practised by the Brother and the service of the poor. The Brothers concentrate less on the ascetic aspects of poverty, and the practice of submission by asking for the necessary permissions, than on the coherence between their dedication to the poor and modesty of their own lifestyle. Also, the aims and appearance of certain Institute establishments are the target of strong criticism, because they are contrary to, or very far from being, what should be a witness to the Gospel.

The Commission proposed, therefore, to integrate the Gospel values of the vow of poverty with the apostolic values of the vow of the educational service of the poor. And if it were decided to express the consecration of the Brother by the one vow of association, fraternal sharing and the educational

<sup>42</sup> Document N°6 for the General Chapter. In all the items there are abstentions which are higher than 10%.

service of the poor should be essential components of it <sup>43</sup>.

2. The report of the Lasallian Bureau of Education recognised that, in places where financial help from the State was insufficient or nil, schools were closed or fees were raised. In the last case, the Brothers moved away from those who should be their primary concern: the children of workers and of the poor.

And it added: "It is not always clear why the size of school fees always entail selection in recruitment of pupils. If the question of money is considered in its true light, moderately rich parents will make the same sacrifices for education as they will for other things they really want. And nowadays, parents pay much more attention to the quality of the education their children receive.

"In a society where there are two classes, we must charge the rich sufficiently to be able to give study scholarships to poor children, or to open separate schools for the poor. In this way, the rich will pay for both indirectly.

"What happened in practice, was that the real costs of education were hidden from the Catholic population because they were paid by religious. With the decrease in vocations, the people had to pay sums which matched approximately the real costs – something they were not used to doing" <sup>44</sup>.

3. Given the impossibility of translating into figures the diversity of the school and after-school commitments of the Brothers, the statistical report describes in detail the

situation of the Brothers and of the evolution in their numbers in the previous 11 years (Jan. 1st 1965 - Dec. 31st 1975). Two things are immediately obvious: the high number of departures, and the brutal decrease in new entries <sup>45</sup>.

### Reports from the Assistants

A much more abundant source of information are the reports presented by the regional Assistants <sup>46</sup>. From them, we learn something about the works and the attitudes of the Institute towards the poor.

1. If, in Great Britain, the Brothers have had to give up most of their rehabilitation centres because they were unable to meet

<sup>43</sup> GA ED 277/2, Document N°10, p.24-27, in French.

<sup>44</sup> GA, ED 277/2, Document N°15, p.8 (in French, but the end of the paragraph is missing. It can be found in the English and Spanish versions). Page 13 gives examples of work done with the handicapped or very needy: "The care of itinerants and gypsies (France, Spain), deaf and dumb (France, England), help for people in moral danger (France, Spain, England), hostels (Canada, Spain), help with courts of justice and for ex-prisoners (Canada), courses for prisoners (Santa Fé), rehabilitation of drug addicts (United States, France), Boys' Towns and schools for delinquents (Ireland, Sri Lanka, Australia, Brazil, England, United States, India, Israel), help for spastics (England, India), help for the blind (Vietnam). I think that the paragraph introduced into the text is very much typical of a certain mentality.

<sup>45</sup> GA, ED 278/1, Document N°56. A page from this text is included in the appendix at the end of this chapter.

<sup>46</sup> GA, ED 277/2 and 277/3, Documents N°16-26.

government policy requirements, they still had 3, plus 2 others in Ireland and 1 in South Africa. In addition some Brothers had become social workers in the same field. In Ireland, a part of the summer holidays was devoted to looking after epileptics. In South Africa, the Brothers organised courses for blacks in government schools. In London, the possibility was being studied of opening a centre for homeless young Irish boys. Thanks to the financial help of the State, the teaching of the Brothers was gratuitous in Great Britain, or would shortly become so, and it would increase in Ireland and Australia. In Poland, the Brothers looked after orphans and the poor. In some places, some young Brothers had undertaken other forms of apostolate (prayer centres, social work...): this caused the inevitable tension when the District was asked to introduce it into its programme.

2. The situation in Canada was paradoxical: the majority of the Brothers worked in State public schools, and in this way, had always had the privilege of working for the "artisans and the poor". Thanks to good State salaries, the financial situation of the two Canadian Districts was very sound, while the quasi totality of the Brothers worked with the working class and the mal-adjusted.

In practice, however, and despite the democratic side of the system, the less gifted pupils were rejected. Several communities and many individual Brothers expressed their concern for abandoned children, and they sought ways of helping them, either in

school itself, or by means of parascholastic activities, or outside the school context.

Some Brothers had doubts out the new relationship between the Brothers and public schools, in which they were simply State employees, working in the midst of people who may not share their faith or their aims.

On the other hand, Canadian Brothers contributed to the presence of the Church in Japan, Cameroons, Nigeria and the West Indies. Several of their works in these places were for deprived children or in situations of great need.

3. In the missions supported and helped by the French Brothers <sup>47</sup>, in Africa, Madagascar, and in the Eastern Mediterranean, the District of the Orient, financially, the most healthy, was making a great effort to promote gratuitous schools. At Nazareth, the Brothers looked after young Arabs sent to them by the Ministry of Justice. The other Districts of this group worked for and among the poor. This characteristic, it seemed to the Assistant, is the only one common to all sectors of this group.

Given this situation, certain Brothers showed great zeal in responding to the needs of young people and in adapting their schools to them. Others, unfortunately, sought an improvement in their material or scientific situation, ignoring the obligations

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<sup>47</sup> The current name, more for the sake of convenience than of accuracy, was "French-speaking Missions". Apart from the French Brothers, there were some of other nationalities (Spanish, Latin American), with more or less strong French formation.

imposed upon them by a true apostolate and adapted catechesis.

4. In Spain, the Brothers had to face an important process of political transition which brought to light social trends which did not exist before or had been suppressed. One of these was the rift that had come about between religion and the working masses and the universities. On the other hand, State aid to private primary education extended the possibilities of school gratuity.

The Spanish Districts considered seriously the evolution of the Institute towards a greater educational service of the poor. They made plans and then they created new works, such as, for example, establishments specialising in technical and professional education. The general feeling of the Brothers and of Districts as a whole was strongly in support of the poor, but it was not enough to dissipate confusion in the face of certain facts.

The existence of educational establishments supported exclusively by school fees created a difficulty: they were considered to be "snobbish" schools, which could give counter-gospel witness. This worried some Brothers.

5. The report on the "South cone" of Latin America seemed particularly attractive. The District Chapters gave a clear preference to the educational service of the poor. All the Districts had well-organised gratuitous schools. In some of them, there were teacher training colleges or other centres for training rural leaders.

This preferential commitment to the poor was the reason for the balance that had been preserved in these Districts, whose paying schools did not admit the rich class<sup>48</sup>, and in which many gratuitous pupils were admitted.

Regarding the Brothers, the service of the poor was a generalised option among them, perhaps especially along the younger ones. But there was still some confusion about this option. In particular, a certain unease of conscience was noted among Brothers sent to well-off schools by obedience; as well as a certain inconsistency among Brothers who set up a scheme for the service of the poor, but who lived like rich people.

6. The presentation of the other Latin American Assistancy was more modest. Some Districts asserted that "special attention had to be given to working class and missionary works"; another District had improved the material conditions of establishments intended for the poor, or constructed a building suitable for a teacher training college for indigenous students; or developed methodology for social advancement courses, or rural promotion.

Two Districts stated that greater evangelical witness and concern for the poor were their principal criteria when planning works, but did not say how they had put them into practice.

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<sup>48</sup> This is repeated in the report: the Brothers have never admitted the affluent class, but the middle and lower middle classes and all levels down to the very poor.



7. Without going into details, the report from the United States declared that the vow to commit themselves to the service of the poor had acted like yeast in their Assistancy. The Brothers were beginning to perceive its importance more, and each time they became more convinced.

As the Brothers sought to make every school a community of faith, concern for the poor, the economically weak and the less privileged in general, was becoming more and more part of their thinking and their programmes.

During the second Regional Chapter, concern for the very poor was a priority commitment. Several traditional schools were closed to make it possible to open other more specialised ones, intended to provide a more direct service to the poor. Certain Brothers who worked outside the school context looked after prisoners and drug addicts.

Here also, it was said that the vow of serving the poor had led to some confusion on certain occasions regarding future guidelines and projects.

8. In the midst of problems caused by Brothers leaving and the scarcity of new vocations, France gave proof of great dynamism, not lacking in conflicts. The recent National Chapter decided to give the educational service of the less privileged a "radical preference".

New relations between State and Catholic teachers had enabled Brothers' establishments, among other things, to reduce the

fees of their pupils to a moderate or low level. A good number of Brothers were not happy with this and would like total school gratuity.

In the traditional types of schools, an effort was made to detect pupils with intellectual, affective or economic deficiencies, so as to help them according to their needs. In sufficiently homogeneous and compact social environments (rural, working class), the Brothers tried first of all to become part of them (with all the repercussions this can have on community life) so as to work on the inside and with other educational or pastoral workers.

While in the school context, much room was given to technical or agricultural studies in areas with a large proportion of pupils with difficulties: outside of the school context attention had been concentrated on the children of foreigners, gypsies, social outcasts and inhabitants of derelict housing estates.

Concentrating mostly on the collective education of immigrants (there were more than 3 million immigrant workers in France), a small number of Brothers were employed in factories. They hoped in this way to gain access to the people with whom they shared living conditions.

9. In Belgium, attention was concentrated on the children of foreigners and street children. Retired Brothers looked after elderly and abandoned people (Belgium, Holland). In general, children were taught to go the poor and to look after them. In Belgium,

Holland and Aruba, the Brothers looked after socially deprived children <sup>49</sup>.

10. In Italy, where the government gave no financial aid to private schools, the Brothers had great difficulty in increasing their attention to the poor. But a fund of good will and initiative made it possible to maintain works for the benefit of the most deprived members of society: orphans, sons of prisoners, mutilated children, and various types of handicapped children. In collaboration with former pupils or with the Union of Catechists, courses for adults and the "arts and crafts" schools were run.

One experiment involving a community located in a poor quarter in the suburbs of a large town failed for a number of reasons: insufficient preparation, lack of acceptance by many Brothers, those involved cut off links with the others, community and prayer life degenerated. Similar cases may have occurred in other parts of the Institute.

11. The report from South East Asia did not treat this subject. The repeated allusion to a permanent state of economic penury in the majority of the Districts, gave the impression that the Brothers were located in poor areas, but cases of bad administration could not be entirely excluded.

### Notes from the Brothers

The educational service of the poor was mentioned in the propositions of 6 regional Chapters, and in 17 individual or community notes sent in to the General Chapter <sup>50</sup>. All wanted the Institute to intensify its commitment to this service.

The objectives they proposed were certainly cultural and evangelical, but there were some more specific expressions: social transformation, promotion of justice and peace, proclamation of the Gospel of liberation.

Attention was centred on the poor, the working class, but sometimes they were referred to in an imprecise way: immigrants, retarded people, maladjusted children, workers, developing countries, those living in the suburbs, technical education. Some distinguished between various types of poverty: economic, affective, intellectual.

This led to remarks about the formation and life of the Brothers: it was inconsistent to train to be and to live the life of a middle class person, while at the same time speaking of the service of the poor. Academic training for this service had be envisaged.

The policy governing the opening and closure of schools was called into question: what could be observed in certain places was that schools for the poor were closed, and the others were made larger <sup>51</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> The extremely concise report says nothing about the economic support of the schools, nor of their relations with the State.

<sup>50</sup> Regional Chapters of Canada, France, Spain, North Latin America, Italy, United states. I was not able to find the corresponding notes. There is a summary in the document mentioned in the next note. Individual or community notes in GA, ED 275/8, notes numbered 6/1 to 6/8 (6/3 is there by error: it has no connection with the subject). Apart from two, all come from Spain.

<sup>51</sup> GA, ED 277/1: summary of regional chapters and individual and community notes, in document N°4, given to capitulants, p.33-34 (in Spanish).

## \* The capitular assembly

### *The poor and preliminary speeches*

A number of interventions, booked in advance, threw some light on the meaning of dedication to the poor.

1. In his message to the Chapter, Brother Charles Henry wondered "which signs of the times does the Holy Spirit wish the Chapter to be attentive to". Giving the answer himself, he said: "Another sign of our times is the zeal which has developed in the Church to promote justice in all sections of society, in response to the appeal made by the Synod of bishops in 1971. Our best way of responding lies in our charism to educate, using the various possibilities offered by our relations to instruct our pupils, our colleagues, parents and former students in the evangelical ideals of charity, justice, fraternity, such as they are proclaimed by Christ, and such as the Synod applies to our times"<sup>52</sup>.

2. Brother Michel Sauvage, the Assistant for Formation, in a disquisition on Lallaian spirituality (an excessively broad topic for the time available and not one that could be shortened), chose to develop the point "Honour and serve Jesus Christ in the poor, living the life of the poor". This point was chapter 5 of a work he was completing with Brother Miguel Campos<sup>53</sup>.

3. Brother John Johnston, Visitor at the time of the St Louis District, USA, pointed out that among the "challenges thrown down to the Brothers today by St John Baptist de

La Salle" there was that of "being signs of the saving presence of the Lord among the poor.

"If it is true that De La Salle founded the Institute especially for the poor, and that in recent years the Superiors have insisted that a greater number of Brothers devote themselves to this essential work; if it is true that the preceding Chapter recalled energetically that the educational service of the poor constitutes the preferential mission of the Brothers, and that, in fact, a great number of them are involved directly in the service of the poor in ordinary or special schools, there are still questions we have to ask ourselves".

"Nevertheless, I wonder if we are doing enough. I wonder if the Brothers, in general, have internalised the concern for the poor, which is of the very essence of our vocation. I am embarrassed when I hear people say: 'We do not serve the poor as we should; we ought to admit that it is impossible for us to face the needs of the poor: we ought to be honest and realistic, and abandon our false claims and our fine talk'. I am embarrassed also when I hear the word 'poor' defined in such general terms that it loses all meaning. I think that the word

<sup>52</sup> GA, ED 278/1: Message rather than report pronounced on April 23rd 1976, p.9 §c (Spanish version). The texts in Spanish and French, wrongly, give 1972 as the date of the Synod. Cf. ED 278/3 (official records of the sessions) R/18 and R/19.

<sup>53</sup> The work in question was *Announcing the Gospel to the poor*, which was published at the beginning of the following year.

'poor' ought to be understood exactly in the same way as the man in the street understands it".

Convinced that the Institute, its communities, its Brothers had to put themselves at the service of the multitude of the poor, he proposed three measures to make this a reality: "a) that as individuals, communities and as an Institute, we show solidarity for the poor, and we examine what the Institute is doing for them; b) that the Brothers do whatever is in their power to promote and support educational programmes advocating social justice and peace; c) that more and more Brothers devote themselves to the direct service of those who suffer from frustration poverty: the economically weak, drug addicts, delinquents, school drop-outs, the handicapped, minority groups, young people in developing countries, etc..."<sup>54</sup>.

### *Confronted by reports and speeches*

Such an accumulation of information and doctrine indicated clearly the existence of widespread and profound anxiety. The Institute did not feel at ease with this question. It was still in the state of effervescence – nothing was clear. It was said that there was confusion and tensions. Some reactions revealed the presence of conflicts and polemics.

On the other hand, information about what the Brothers actually did in their service of the poor was not very precise: perhaps it was difficult to assemble the facts; perhaps there was some kind of censure or self-censure in operation, motivated by

shame or by the fear of making things even more difficult. In any case (and the statistical report says it explicitly) there is no documentation which says exactly what the Brothers were doing for the poor, nor how they really felt about the subject.

There was a more general observation: the fine Chapter of 1966-67 had not filtered down to the Brothers sufficiently. The documents were good, and the guidelines excellent and still valid, but it was absolutely essential and urgent to devise some method to communicate all these riches to the Brothers as a whole<sup>55</sup>.

If we are to judge by the session reports, the various documents and speeches seem to have stimulated a great deal of reaction<sup>56</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> GA, ED 278/5: "The challenge..." p.14-19 (in Spanish). Here too, there is a brief summary of Brother Michel Sauvage's paper.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Luke SALM FSC: *A religious Institute in transition*, p.178. After pointing out that of the 158 capitulants of 1976, 28 had been at the 1967 Chapter, and of these only 10 had been delegates of their Districts, he adds in a note: "As one of the ten elected repeaters, the author had the sense, as the Chapter progressed, or failed to progress, that many of the delegates had not only not been involved in the previous Chapter, but that they had not understood or absorbed, and in some cases seemed not to have read the important documents from 1967" (Note 4, chap.7).

<sup>56</sup> Requests for explanations sent to the Assistants of Spain, South Latin America, France, Italy (GA, ED 278/3: R/11, R/12, R/13, R/16). It is true, all the same, that the Official Records are not the same as the Chronicle. For an insider's view, see Luke SALM, *op.cit.*, p.171-172.

And then there were the commentaries on the speech of Brother Michel Sauvage. A Latin American delegate emphasised the idea of exodus, which he thought suitable for the Districts of his region: leave the institutions for the affluent classes, lose our financial security, and emigrate to the world of the poor. Another delegate, from North America, posed a whole series of questions: If we go to the poor, who will evangelise the others? If we go into public schools – which are gratuitous – what happens to “together and by association”? If we run private schools, we save our freedom, but we lose the poor. Should we do something different from working in schools? In a word, what must we do in concrete terms today to remain faithful to the Founder? <sup>57</sup>.

This mixture and, at times, contrast, of enthusiasm and doubt, seem to be typical of most of the Institute.

### *The report of the Chapter Commission*

Naturally, the specific study of the subject in the General Chapter was the responsibility of the Mission Commission <sup>58</sup>. It took a long time both to draw up its report and to discuss it in the assembly, which eventually approved and adopted it <sup>59</sup>.

1. The first part examined the current situation. It became clear that it was not only the appeals of the Congregation and of the Church that obliged us to combine a concern for social justice with our work for the poor, but also the signs of the times.

In an attempt to define some terms more clearly, the following description of the poor

by the “man in the street” was given: “One can say that they are people living on the fringes of society; their survival depends on trivial jobs from which they do not earn enough to support their family. They are also those who live in inhuman conditions of poverty, which include hunger, violence, illness, social marginalisation and various handicaps. This level of poverty can vary from one country to the next, from one culture to another. Their children cannot adapt to the usual kinds of schools which only confirm their poverty and perpetuate their misery. Suitable education is an essential need, but by itself it is not sufficient to promote the social advancement of their environment.

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In its report on its work, the Commission dealing with the subject believed it could pick out three main trends in the reports of the Brother Assistants:

- 1) To have the courage to maintain entirely gratuitous schools, or accept gratuitous pupils in the colleges;
- 2) In certain parts of the world, a certain number of Brothers devote themselves to the outcasts of society, in organisations outside the school system;
- 3) Fight the causes of poverty by working for the construction of a more just society, and opposing social inequalities (GA: ED 278/6).

<sup>57</sup> GA, ED 278/3, R/28.

<sup>58</sup> It deals with four aspects: Christian education, the ministry of the word, the educational service of the poor, the lay state/priesthood problem in the Institute.

<sup>59</sup> GA, ED 278/3: treatment of the Commission report in the plenary assembly, in dossiers R/56, R/57, R/68, R/74, R/87. The complete definitive text can be found in circular 408.

“In summary, in our century, in the last 10 years, today, the poor are the people in great need; and, in the spirit of John Baptist de La Salle, who responded to the urgent needs of his times, the Institute must give them much more attention, by devising, planning and implementing programmes to help them”.

This description did not seem to be to everyone’s liking. Some questions remained, which were also reflections: Who needs someone today to define for him what are the poor? What is the significance of the fact that, an Institute, which was born for the Christian education of the children of the artisans and the poor, feels the need to define for itself who the poor are?

2. The second part, which concentrated more on the answers, very skilfully recalled that, as in the case of the Founder, the journey of the Institute to the poor had all the components and requirements of a spiritual journey – an embodied spirituality – which in practice it was.

As for concrete works, while the message of the 39th General Chapter had not remained entirely a dead letter, it had to be recognised that, in many places, the Brothers continued to work principally in those which were not poor.

What remained to be done, therefore, was incomparably more than what had been done, if we wished to re-establish a necessary balance which gave an effective priority to works for the poor. This gave rise to a number of concrete propositions which did not lack daring<sup>60</sup>.

“13. The General Chapter:

**“A. Invites the Brothers:**

“\* to develop, personally and in community, new initiatives with regard to the poor, with whom they must be concerned in virtue of their specific vocation;

“\* to work directly in the educational service of economically poor young persons (children of labourers, of under-employed persons, of migrants), of the victims of social injustice, of the handicapped, of delinquents;

“\* to consider this commitment an essential element in the spiritual renewal of each Brother;

“\* to volunteer for this educational service of the poor wherever the most urgent needs present themselves.

**“B. Invites Districts:**

“\* to see to it that the orientation towards the direct service of the poor becomes the rule rather than the exception in District priorities;

“\* to ensure that the formation of the Brothers takes note of these directions;

“\* to place no obstacle, even on the plea of maintaining existing works, to Brothers who volunteer for this educational service.

“14. Each District was to submit, before December 1978, a report to the General Council in which it would show how it had put into practice (and in the immediate future would do so) the principles of the Dec-

<sup>60</sup> The propositions are numbered as in Circular 403.

laration and the orientations of the present Chapter concerning the educational service of the poor, and action on behalf of justice. Annual review and updating by the District itself was also called for.

“15. Districts in developed countries were to evaluate their contribution to the service of the young Churches in the Third World”.

## 5. BROTHER JOSÉ PABLO BASTERRECHEA

A summary of the new guidelines appeared in Circular 403, dated September 8th 1976, which reported on the Chapter which had just finished. In the fairly brief section on the mission of the Brother today, a number of paragraphs commented on the expression “especially the poor”. The corresponding propositions were grouped under the heading “Orientations concerning the poor and justice”<sup>61</sup>.

### \* Circular 408

We have already seen that the Chapter, disappointed that its predecessor had been so little assimilated, asked the new General Council to devise a way in which the Brothers could internalise the guidelines that needed to be followed in order to advance along the path to renewal. An excellent example of this approach is Circular 408, dated June 29th 1978, on “Our Mission. The Institute and the Young Churches”.

The first part (p.17-64) contains the report of the Chapter Commission and its propositions<sup>62</sup>.

The second part (p.67-105) is composed of the commentaries and reflections of the

General Council. The poor are constantly mentioned, but particularly so under the heading “Educational service of the poor and promotion of justice” (p.98-105).

The first page presents concisely and realistically some objections made by Brothers, mentioned so often before as not to be worth repeating here. The next point taken up is “what the Chapter is asking for”. What is said can be summarised as follows: to say that “the exception becomes the rule” is to make a confession without trying to find attenuating circumstances; it is to describe and recognise officially a collective deviation: What for the Founder was the exception, that is, the service of the better-off classes, had become, in the eyes of many,

<sup>61</sup> Circular 403, p.56, 79-80, in the Spanish edition. In this version, the last part of proposition 13 is missing (“to place no obstacle”). The omission caused a great upset at the time. Strangely enough, despite the remarks, it continued to be absent two years later in the Superior’s Letter of May 15th 1978, p.13.

<sup>62</sup> Pages 51-64 contain the Report and the propositions of the Commission on the “Young Churches”.

the general rule.<sup>63</sup> And it (the General Chapter) asked for this trend to be reversed, because there were infinitely more poor in the world than we could ever serve”.

To bring about this reversal, a clear choice was imposed, free of all casuistical tricks: the Brothers had to go to the social groups to which most poor people belonged, rather than try to identify them individually. That went also for social promotion: the Brothers had to promote social groups rather than encourage the escape of a few individuals from their poor world to more comfortable situations. That is why the educational service of the poor was an integral part of the overall fight for social justice.

There were inherent dangers and difficulties in concrete choices, which were not always pure in motivation. The way to avoid counter-productive polarisations was individual and community discernment, and the adoption of commitments that were genuine and realistic.

The third part offers some practical advice regarding evaluation and planning. There is advice for all individuals, for community or school groups, or for the whole District, but none of it is necessarily restricted to a single group. In all of it, except the last item (“Educational programme for an educational establishment”), the service of the poor and the promotion of justice are explicitly mentioned, and sometimes they are the only or the dominant theme.

Following two previous publications in the same style, “The Fostering of Vocations”

(circular 404) and “Consecrated Life” (circ. 406), Circular 408 had every right to expect that, especially the last two “could help all communities to assimilate better and understand more deeply the principles and guidelines which concerned the two focal points of our life: consecration and mission. Please God, the efforts devoted to this study and reflection in common will help us all to put behind us once and for all, the dichotomies and polarisations which too often have distorted these inseparable and complementary aspects of our identity”. In the Circular’s eminently practical instructions on how to act, we find much spiritual inspiration.

**\* Letter from the Superior General:  
May 15th 1978**

About the same time<sup>64</sup>, the Superior addressed a letter to the Brothers that was more personal and familiar in tone, but no less demanding. Its main purpose was to recall, direct and hasten the implementation of proposition 14 of the General Chapter regarding the report from Districts on their service of the poor and the promotion of justice.

Many of his reflections push the scalpel deeper into the flesh! The “academic or unrealistic” question “who are the poor?” continued to be asked. It continued to pro-

<sup>63</sup> Less absolute in the French text: “...became in many places, a general rule”.

<sup>64</sup> Both the Letter (p.13) and the Circular (p.98, note) affirm the fact that the two texts are contemporaneous.



voke bizarre discussion and more or less incomplete or tranquillising answers...It remained true that the many pressing situations of poverty and social emargination were numerous and increasing, and were usually accompanied by a whole range of other different moral and affective needs. To such a degree, indeed, that asking the questions "Who are the poor?", "Where are the poor?" could become a cynical or tragic evasion of problems which admitted of no delay...

"What we profess publicly in church and before the world is far too removed, too inconsistent with our image as seen by the world and the Church...For the fundamental attitude of Christ, whose imitation we profess, was much more evident, and was real economic and social poverty, not merely moral...It is quite clear: there is no possibility of serving the poor as we are supposed to do without first converting ourselves to real, significant, and visible Christian poverty".

Turning his attentions to schools, he observed: "It is heinous, as well as fairly general, that the educational activities of religious, and this includes our own, should be accused of a tendency to favour those who are already better off on the socio-economic scale. We have often been blamed for helping to maintain their advantages and their special position on the social scale, instead of devoting ourselves to raising those who are more in need of our help from their destitution and powerlessness".

As not everything was false in these accusations, there had to be "a methodical and progressive transfer of our human and material potential to the most needy areas, to the suburbs and countries which are most deprived". "Those Brothers also who labour for a clientele in a higher social position can and should be faithful to our preference for those in need". District reports were to mention all this.

Some very tightly written pages commented on the second aspect – the promotion of justice – basing themselves mostly on recent texts giving Church social teaching, especially that of the 1971 Synod. In the context of those days, the page devoted to liberation represents an unequivocal option.

If a school was to promote justice, the religious community which conducted it, needed to take up a position: confronted with the consumer world, which proposed as a model persons who were selfish, voracious and exploitative...the community, in its austerity and sobriety in the use of the same goods, bore witness to man as a servant; faced with the enormous disparity in the distribution of wealth and the exercise of rights...the community was sincerely prepared to give up its privileges; in the face of inertia and reserve which helped to maintain unjust situations...the community involved itself fully in active collaboration with all those who sought sincerely to correct abuses by attacking their unjust roots; faced with the general tendency to flatter

and frequent the powerful (whose power, in many cases, was founded on unjust-ice)... the community drew closer to the exploited and emarginated sectors of society... the community was inculturated in the world of the poor.

This was certainly an “embodied” spiritual attitude. Seeing events with the eyes of faith led to zeal to build up a world more in keeping with God’s Plan <sup>65</sup>.

### \* The report from the Districts

#### *In the letter of Brother José Pablo*

One year later, the Superior himself gave the Institute a preliminary assessment of the reports sent in to the General Council. He drew attention to the globality of the response (“throughout the Institute”, “a global reaction...without exception”), the greater and more generalised attention of the Brothers to the problem, the objectivity and humility of the reports. “In the course of many reflective discussions appears the question that so often is treated in the commentaries received: ‘Who are the poor?’. However, the question is raised with this difference – attempts are made to provide precise and appropriate answers. There is no effort at evasiveness, as was often witnessed in the past”.

The majority of Brothers clearly worked in schools. Efforts made to make them more accessible to the poor, included a decrease in the fees asked of the pupils, the removal of religious barriers in places where Catholicism was not the religion of the majority,

attention to the less intellectually gifted and to handicapped children of all kinds, the provision of some type of education for those who cannot adapt to schools, or at least, normal schools.

The Letter reflected also on the conflict that could arise when fidelity to the poor led the Brothers to leave the kind of clientele with whom they normally worked, or regarding what the service of the poor implied for Brothers’ personal and community life.

A much shorter section commented on the answers regarding the promotion of justice. The brevity was due to the small number of answers, a reflection of the awkwardness with which the Brothers regarded this question, due to a lack of formation, fear and hesitation in the face of what Christian commitment demanded, lack of information: “a lack of information which supposed a rupture with reality, and a culpable ignorance of numerous problems that poisoned the relationships of persons sometimes very close to us”. All that seemed to explain this hesitation.

This call to action which seems to have affected the whole Institute regarding the process of conversion to the poor and the promotion of justice inspired the final wish:

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<sup>65</sup> The Letter is a vigorous document which deserves to be read in its entirety. The small choice of paragraphs we propose here is open to discussion, as all partial texts are. After 20 years, more than one reader has been surprised by the highmindedness and vigour of this and other texts of the period.

“I trust that this enumeration of the issues treated in the answers to proposition 14 will contribute to maintain the awareness and interest awakened and developed during the work done by communities in preparing their responses and reactions. I hope the same will hold true of those sectors which let it be frankly known that participation in the preparation of this material had not been adequate or satisfactory in some parts of the District”<sup>66</sup>.

### *In Circular 412*

The voluminous Circular 412 on “The educational service of the poor and the promotion of justice”, dated September 15th 1980, contains a more thorough analysis of the District reports, and some reflections and guidelines from the General Council.

The first impression given by the reports<sup>67</sup> is “that educational service of the poor is a matter of general concern throughout the Institute. The programmes are varied, the projects numerous, and explicit reference to the Founder is constant”.

Despite everything, the results were still insufficient, and the diagnosis of the last General Chapter remained valid: “Despite such efforts, we must admit that in many countries and in numerous regions, the Brothers are still mainly engaged in institutions which serve the middle classes and even the rich”....Policies differed greatly from District to District: it did not seem that reflection on the service of the poor and the promotion of justice was given the impor-

tance it deserved. As the Letter of the Superior said, the promotion of justice was much less mentioned than the service of the poor.

After this introduction, the first part analyses what the reports say about the service of the poor in schools. Some reflections of the Council urge the opening of schools, the rediscovery of their significance in the overall work of the Brothers, and the maximum development of their possibilities.

The second part refers to a large variety on non-scholastic works in which a somewhat restricted number of Brothers work with the poor. The presentation of facts is accompanied by observations which are intended, in this case, to emphasise the need for such activities to have their roots firmly in the Institute (recognition, discernment, support on the part of the community and of the District), and be part of an overall

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<sup>66</sup> Superior’s Letter of May 15th 1979. The word “conversion” occurs at least twice: “The analysis of our position regarding poverty in the world must, logically, lead to an unceasing conversion which calls in two directions: an exodus – we have to leave situations where we have settled down comfortably for others where we find less abundance, and where we are closer to the poor...make a greater effort to detect situations of penury in the circle in which we live” (p.23). “That is, I think, a good way of beginning our conversion to a renewed sense of justice” (p.42).

In other passages, the Letter alludes to the concern Brothers have for the poor in Poland, Porto Rico, San Domingo, Haiti, France (p.4-10).

<sup>67</sup> Which come from almost the whole Institute : ten Districts or Delegations did not send it in (p.6).

ecclesial pastoral scheme, working jointly with other promotional bodies.

The third part, which is shorter, speaks about the promotion of justice. To the rare facts contained in the reports are added some reflections on what still seems to be an “unknown continent” for too many Brothers, and the call for some basic changes.

This is followed by 35 very rewarding pages which explain how to achieve sensitisation, the need for which is stressed by many reports. There are two main sections: “learning about the Founder” and “Acquiring a social conscience”. With appropriate subdivisions, these pages point the way and stimulate participation in the process.

The fifth part brings together the main orientations mentioned on the preceding pages. There are ten of them, divided up into four sections: basic convictions (1 and 2); lines of action (3 to 7); some specific programmes (8 and 9); conclusion: spirituality to sustain this effort.

The sixth and last part gives six examples without any commentary of Districts or institutions which try to do something for the poor or for the promotion of justice.

This is the last major official document of the Institute to treat this subject at length, and it does so in depth and breadth. Read years later, these pages remain bright and stimulating, perhaps even more now than when they were written, thanks to the possibility of standing back made possible by time.

### \* Intercapitular meeting for Visitors

Among the events with which the Institute celebrated the tercentenary of its foundation there was the meeting of the General Council with the heads of Districts and other bodies. It was held in Rome from May 4th to June 6th 1981, half-way between two General Chapters <sup>68</sup>.

Among the “old topics with new emphases” which occupied the assembly, certain of its propositions urged the Brothers to “be more seriously and honestly attentive to all that the liberation of the poor and the promotion of better justice calls for”. The Superior suggested 4 ways of doing this:

“\* Cultivate a clearer and more exact consciousness of the causes leading to, or maintaining unjust situations in the world;

“\* Overcome every inertia and every inconsistency in the priority we give to the service of the poor;

“\* Seek, therefore, to be more truly bound up with the needs and difficulties of the poor, in expressing just claims and defending their rights;

“\* Fulfill this programme in the light and under the inspiration of the Gospel, the requests of the Pope and of the whole Church, while trying to create more realistic brotherhood among all men” <sup>69</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> On May 13th, the assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II's life took place. His visit to the Generalate had been planned for the 15th.

<sup>69</sup> Circular 415 dated October 1st 1981 (p.9,10,11).

This was a kind of summary of the response the Institute wished to continue to give with greater intensity, to the cry of the poor.

“The participants of the intercapitular meeting wish to maintain the effort of returning to the original charism of the Institute, stressing service to the poor and the promotion of justice”. They proposed to “make further advances” by developing programmes and implementing schemes to help the poor; by reflecting about situations which paralyse this service of the poor; by evaluating works and undertaking the necessary changes; by accepting the limitations of certain structures, and the resulting need to find alternatives.

In order that this would not remain a pious wish, the intercapitular meeting indicated the contents and main lines of action of pastoral care for the poor. This pastoral programme included the initial and continuing formation of the Brothers and of their lay associates, certain forms of activity, and the organisation of some operating structures on the District or Regional level <sup>70</sup>.

All this was clearly consistent with the enthusiasm that could be seen in the Institute. The celebration of the tercentenary gave an opportunity to refer to various aspects of the origin of the Institute, which were progressively becoming better known. The idea of conversion was very much in mind: “a return to the original charism” was needed.

### \* Other Letters of the Superior

In the less formal context of his letters, Brother José Pablo returned to the subject a number of times.

Sometimes, in those already quoted, he developed a number of doctrinal points. And so, in the letter of December 1979, defending the validity of the Brothers’ commitment to schools, he stated: “a school conceived and organised for the poor”, that is, “a place of advancement for those who have most need of it... a place of collective advancement... a place where justice reigns... in which integral human liberation is proclaimed and expressed... a place of education and justice” <sup>71</sup>.

In others, allusions were shorter, almost by the way. Conversion had to give birth to “fraternal and apostolic” communities, in which can always be found, together with other aspects “a community commitment to the service of youth, especially to the most poor”. The community programme could be considered to be Christian only if it led the Brothers “to be more as poor people among the poor, in order to serve them better, understand them better and be better understood by them; to proclaim and bring about in Christ the liberation of the whole man and of all men ; to fight to make the world more just” <sup>72</sup>.

<sup>70</sup> Circular 415 (p.20-22).

<sup>71</sup> Letter dated December 31st 1979 (p.24-28).

<sup>72</sup> Letter dated December 8th 1976 (p.7-9).

Sometimes brief news items were given about what was being done in a whole variety of places in the Institute, noted by the Superior and the Councillors on their long journeys: the apostolate of the Canadian Brothers among the poor of their own country and in Haiti; awareness campaigns and schemes in various parts of Latin America, in different areas of France, and in the huge patchwork territory of Africa; the work of the Brothers in the USA to keep schools within the financial reach of modest-income families, and their concern for immigrants and social justice; the dedication of the Belgian and Dutch Brothers in their respective countries, and their continued missionary commitment in Africa and Aruba; institutions for very poor children in India and Sri Lanka; the move in Spain to create schools for the working classes<sup>73</sup>. The emphasis was particularly strong when the Superior spoke of the missions<sup>74</sup>.

There were numerous warnings about the Brothers adopting a comfortable middle-class life-style, or about the need to transform existing institutions which, born perhaps as a result of good intentions, had attracted criticism for having served sometimes to create or maintain privileged minorities, for having encouraged the brain-drain, for not having helped to correct unjust situations or structures, for not having adapted the school system to real needs or local concerns. Such criticisms were particularly noticeable in Third World countries, and had to be taken into account to the extent they were exact.

Most of the references sought to stimulate the Brothers, by the examples they gave, to stay attentive, by noting what was done badly, and all the good that still remained to be done.

## 6. THE 1986 GENERAL CHAPTER

As soon as the second half of their 10-year mandate began, the Superior and his Council set in motion preparations for the next General Chapter. One of their aims was to give a "definitive" form – as far as it was humanly possible – to the Rules and Constitutions and the Book of Government which, since 1967, had been experimental. Circular 416, dated July 25th 1982, began officially the process of studying the texts, announced a probable timetable for the vari-

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<sup>73</sup> Letters dated May 15th 1978 (p.7); May 15th 1979 (p.5-10); December 31st 1979 (p.5-7); December 8th 1980 (p.8, 26); December 8th 1981 (p.8-12, 15,17); December 8th 1982 (p.5-6); May 15th 1983 (p.7); December 8th 1983 (p.7,8,12).

The Letters reveal also close attention to world and Church events (International Year of the Child, Synods, various meetings...), and a serious concern for the vocations ministry.

<sup>74</sup> For example, Letters dated May 15th 1980 (p.15-21) and December 8th 1982 (19-60).

ous stages, and called upon the Brothers to participate actively in the drawing up of the new legislation.

The letters dated December 8th 1982 and May 5th 1983 dealt with the Rules, the first indicating their meaning and value, the second asking for the rapid despatch of propositions to the Generalate.

At the end of the year, the Superior was able to give a preliminary assessment: 65 Districts and Delegations had sent in contributions. Their value varied greatly. A small group of Brothers in Rome classified them and offered some tentative conclusions. All the material was made available to a Commission responsible for preparing a draft.

The composition of the International Commission for writing the Rule, and of the Chapter Preparatory Commission was announced in Circular 419, dated April 30th 1984, and they met in the September of the same year<sup>75</sup>. In the middle of the following year, the draft was sent to the whole Institute: each Brother, community, District and Region was invited to send in ideas on this question<sup>76</sup>.

### \* Notes from the Brothers

Circular 419 communicated the results of a preliminary enquiry, and suggested that reflection continue on certain subjects the Brothers considered important. Regarding the third of these subjects ("the poor and justice"), it proposed that an assessment be made on the community, District and Re-

gional level, and indications be given regarding what should be done as a result. The Brothers were asked also to reflect about including the poor and justice in their catechetical programmes, and about bringing educational establishments into line with the guidelines regarding the poor and justice (p.34).

The capitulants had at their disposal 34 notes dealing with this topic, which varied greatly in quality. Most came from America, from the RELAL and USA/Toronto Regions (Brazil, Venezuela, Paraguay, Colombia, Bolivia, Mexico, USA, Canada, Ecuador and Central America), and from Europe (Spain, Belgium, Holland, France, Ireland, Italy). There were very few from Africa (Ethiopia, Camerouns) and Asia (India, Pakistan). A third of the notes were individual. The collective letters came from communities, Districts as a whole, or the result of a meeting for hundreds of Brothers. The situ-

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. Luke SALM: *A religious Institute...* (p.219) Note 14 mentions Brother Jean Pierre Lauby, a graduate of Jesus Magister, Rome; I [Bruno Alpagò] haven't done any theological studies. A few other points need rectifying: 1) at the 1966 General Chapter, only one of the Assistants for Latin American was Spanish (Brother Fabriciano Luis). The other (Brother Antonio Maria) was a Mexican (p.16).

2) Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, the Argentinian, was not a pupil of the Brothers (p.21).

<sup>76</sup> The new Code of Canon Law, promulgated in 1983, concentrated the essential legislation of the congregation into a single text, which contained the most important items of the Rules and Constitutions, and of the Book of Government.

ations in the various sectors, their resources and their tensions served as a backcloth, which explained the different emphases and striking differences.

No one was opposed to the preferential option for the poor. Half a dozen notes, however, had some reservations: we should not fall into forms of exclusivity; over-insistence causes problems for some; those who speak most about the poor are those who work least for them, and live least like them; the old formula of the vows was clearer than the present one. And there are those who regret that the lack of money prevents them from doing more.

Others spoke clearly – one almost violently – in favour of maintaining and intensifying the path traced out by and for the Institute. The aspects considered and the tone used varied considerably. Evaluations of what has been done expressed calm satisfaction or, more frequently, the awareness that there remained much to be done; or, in some instances, disappointment. Some went so far as to condemn the inconsistency between the declared preference for the poor and the actual areas in which money is invested (journeys, buildings). On the one hand, some good results were noted from a closer association with the poor: more was known about them, there was greater recognition of their abilities, their acceptance had been obtained. On the other, it was said that the awareness level had not been raised, the Brothers were incapable of analysing reality, and they objected if they were asked to give up individual or collective comforts

in order to make a fuller commitment to the poor more effective <sup>77</sup>.

Suggestions regarding what action should be taken covered many aspects: adapted initial and continuing formation; location of communities and educational establishments in very poor areas; transformation of establishments frequented by the rich, or their abandonment; devising and implementing other forms of presence among the poor, especially when schools could not help them; or inventing a school offering non-traditional services which were needed in specific localities.

The English-speaking Region of North America presented an important text concerning its own situation and that of numerous other places in the Institute. It highlighted the following points:

1. That the option of the Institute was to care for the poor, but in reality the Brothers worked with children from quite different socio-economic groups;
2. That all the work of the Institute ought to be based on a promotion of justice which leads to the freedom proclaimed by the Gospel.
3. That the promotion of peace and justice was the common objective which could

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<sup>77</sup> Somebody asked: "Does the fact that ten thousand Brothers pronounced and constantly renewed the vow of gratuity, or the vow of educational service of the poor, and did not want to or could not observe them, imply that the Institute was in a state of sin?"



build and strengthen bridges between Brothers working with different socio-economic categories.

Given this, the text made the following requests:

1. That the General Chapter constrain the General Council and the relevant Central Services to plan and implement projects that will turn these presuppositions into reality.

2. A few practical measures:

a) in the next six years, two CIL sessions on the promotion of justice through education;

b) the diffusion of material, through SECOLI and the Central Education Office, which would illustrate all the types of education in justice, the evangelising effect of such education on the educators themselves, and the possibility of working, either directly with the poor, or by awaken the social conscience of people elsewhere;

c) The Secretariat for Formation would take steps that initial and ongoing formation contributed to this process.

3. That Regions and Districts draw up initial and ongoing formation programmes which included both the study of the theory, and practical experience, of the promotion of justice and of the educational service of the poor.

4. That Regions and Districts assess and determine the means of proposing financial support for apostolic undertakings for the direct service of the poor.

From Latin America there came a study entitled "Popular Education, the new road

for the service of the poor". This study was based on research in which all the Brothers of the Region had been asked to participate. After a presentation explaining its significance for the service of the poor and the promotion of justice, and the reasons which were leading the Institute towards popular education, the study made some very incisive suggestions:

"If popular education is an alternative for the service of the poor, the Brothers must prefer an education which follows Jesus Christ:

"\* in his incarnation by which he identified himself with the oppressed;

"\* in his attention to causes, instead of being satisfied with overcoming the symptoms of problems;

"\* in the confidence he places in the simple and the poor to renew the world; by his familiar and dialogue form of communicating; by his hope in the transformation of the world, despite contradictions and persecutions;

"\* in his preferential attention to those in charge at the various levels, without forgetting the service of the multitude;

"\* in his determined and non-violent opposition to the powerful of the world;

"\* in the respectful use he makes of the means and values of others;

"\* in his courage to act in public and in his prudence to move aside or go away in order to offer better service;

“\* in his confidence in the power of truth, instead of imposing himself by his psychological or material powers;

“\* in so many other ways as a simple teacher, in the service of his people, for reasons of supreme and transcendental historical importance”.

All this was envisaged in a new inspiring utopia, faithful to its commitment to working class people and to the Lasallian charism, where the vocations ministry presented popular education and the promotion of justice as the central motivation of consecration; where initial and continuing formation were in close contact with the world of the poor, and were the moving force behind action and theoretical research; where community life was simple and participative, a prophetic presence in working class movements; in a context in which the works and policies of the Institute were revised and redefined at all levels <sup>78</sup>.

### \* The Chapter Assembly

The Chapter was opened on April 7th 1986.

Father Peter H. Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Company of Jesus, was one of the persons invited to speak to the assembly in the first week. His third talk took as its starting point a well-known Lasallian text: “And since the majority of your pupils are born poor, you must encourage them to despise riches and love poverty, because Our Lord was born poor...and the Kingdom of God belongs to them” (MR 202,2). His com-

mentary was summed up essentially in the following words: “The preferential option for the poor is not a philanthropy with a religious background, but the expression of a new commandment. This commandment, which reflects the way God – who is Love – loves, will always be new, constantly making us see new needs. The new commandment signifies first of all that there is no authentic conversion to God’s love without a constant conversion to the love of men, of all men”.

On Saturday morning, the 12th, Brother Michel Sauvage delivered to the assembly a truly spiritual interpretation of the foundation of the institute, seen as a creation (“I make all things new”), through the work of the Holy Spirit. Through the action of the Spirit, the Word became flesh in order to save the world; through the action of the same Spirit, De La Salle and the Brothers were called and underwent a saving incarnation in the world of abandoned children, by following Christ. The Institute which wishes to renew (refound) itself today, must itself have the same spiritual experience, in which God draws it out of its comfortable servitude, and sends it, filled with his Spirit, to bring freedom and hope to young people who are far from salvation” <sup>79</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> The notes are kept in GA, 288/1 and 288/2.

<sup>79</sup> The conferences of the first week are in GA ED 292. The complete text of Brother Michel Sauvage’s talk is in Lasalliana N°11, February 1987, files 11.O.12 to 11.O.16.

Other information, from other points of view, is provided by reports from the various general services of the Institute. SECOLI suggests an exhibition, not exhaustive, of its activities: projects and mini-projects for the Third World, funding agencies, finances.

In the long report of the Superior and his Council, six pages were devoted to the poor and the missions. The central government recognised that it had insisted on the service of the poor. Without a total exclusivity, it showed clearly for whom the Christian Schools were founded. Its evaluation showed an increased awareness of the implications of the preferential option for the poor. Things had been done, although not with the speed and radicality some would have preferred. There were also some negative points: only a minority had drawn closer to the poor and had settled down in their midst: it was difficult for the Brothers to overcome the obstacle posed by certain large institutions. In summary, what had been done was not negligible, but much more still remained to be done. It was less clear what had been done with regard to education to justice: some timid progress had been made, but this area remained unknown territory. Proportionally speaking, that was true of the mission countries also. But regarding these, the report had some more specific things to say about culture, the taking root of the Institute, formation, collaboration with regard to human and economic resources.<sup>80</sup>

The competent planning of the Preparatory Commission ensured that the Chapter

organisation phase was rapidly completed, and work could begin in Commissions and plenary assemblies. A series of tasks culminated in the approval of the new Rule, but the Chapter had to concern itself also with other matters, as can be seen from Circular 416.

### The Rule<sup>81</sup>

Quantitatively speaking, the poor were clearly present in the definitive draft, as a glance at the analytical index will show. In the first part, they were mentioned in all the chapters except the fifth, and they reappeared in the tenth. It is precisely these chapters which spoke of the nature, spirit and fundamental values of the Institute, the formation of its members and its vitality.

This is not the place for an exhaustive study, so we shall pick out just a few characteristic points:

\* There is frequent reference to the Founder and his devotedness to the poor (art.

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<sup>80</sup> "From the General Council for the 41st General Chapter" (p.18-23) (GA ED 294). On page 27 there are some statistics: "these figures make you think... they invite us to plan... and to pray, accompanied by intelligent and resolute action"... The figures can be found in an appendix to this chapter.

<sup>81</sup> The Chapter entrusted the new Superior and his Council with the task of publishing the definitive text of the Rule, and taking the necessary steps to obtain the approval of the official text by the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (Circular 422, p.3). The process was rapid. The approval was dated January 26th 1987, The process is described in Circular 424.

1, 11, 40b, 47, 141) and this devotedness is not presented as preferential, but as total.

\* The Institute also is consecrated to the poor, and it is not necessary to pick out the references, but it is precisely in our own times that we are beginning to hear adverbs or equivalent expressions which make allowances for a multiform world: "especially", "principally", "above all"<sup>82</sup>. Some see this as a weakness, but if we take them seriously, they indicate a way forward that is clear, and avoids exclusivity.

\* The name of the vow, which now comes fourth, is "association for the educational service of the poor". The scope of this vow, which happily recalls the founding process of the institute<sup>83</sup>, is not always perceived. This gives more force to "especially" and its homonyms.

\* In accordance with the practice of the Institute, at least since the Council, the service of the poor is part of a process which involves everybody in the promotion of justice, so that the evil of poverty may be fought at its roots and not only in its manifestations.

\* It is clear that, while "the Brothers make themselves poor in order to follow the poor Christ and offer a better service", their lifestyle is not described as being poor: "The Brothers live simply as persons of modest means", "The house of the Brothers must be simple"; the lack of something useful or necessary is rather exceptional<sup>84</sup>. On the other hand, the definition of what is useful or necessary varies greatly from place to

place, and from age to age. In any case, "accepting to share the condition of the poor", "feeling the joy and peace of the first Beatitude growing in one's heart" are there to remove any excuse for forgetting.

\* In the service of the poor and the promotion of justice, the creative spirit of the Institute is set to work: "It is by faith that the Brothers learn to see... especially in the poor, a sign and a call of the Spirit" (art.5); "Their preferential option in favour of the poor, continually enlightened by a view of faith, helps the Brothers to recognise the inequalities to which society gives rise. It is their desire to make it possible for poor people to live with dignity, and to be open to the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Brothers show genuine creativity in responding to these new needs" (art.41). This is a commitment to bring up to date the saving incarnation of the Son of God.

To bring this about, despite our limitations, the Rule as a whole invites us to undergo a genuine conversion. The word ap-

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<sup>82</sup> Antecedents can be found in the Bull of Approbation ("præsertim pauperes") or in the 1718 Rule: (7.14: The Brothers are more responsible for the poor than for the rich).

<sup>83</sup> This is what is said in the 1694 formula of vows: "I promise and vow to unite myself and live in society with...to conduct together and by association gratuitous schools wherever this may be". This extract from the formula is not a sleight of hand: it highlights the fundamental purpose of the creation of the Institute.

<sup>84</sup> More exceptional in the Spanish text: "if sometimes" (art.32a).

pears several times in the text, sometimes without direct allusion to the poor (art. 58 and 74), but several references to the gospel journey of the Founder mention them: “(The Brothers) find in the gospel journey of the Founder a call to conversion” (art. 144); “The spiritual journey of John Baptist de La Salle, their Father, (as well as other calls), motivate the Brothers to cultivate within themselves the disposition of a poor person. By such a conversion they witness to the fact that God is their only wealth” (art. 32); and finally: “Following the example of their Founder, the Brothers, as persons and in community, look upon their intellectual and spiritual development in terms of a progressive conversion to the poor” (art. 40b).

### **Message of the 41st General Chapter to all the Brothers of the Institute**

Wishing to summarise the significance of the whole Chapter, the Message is “an urgent call to conversion – a conversion which will come about through both personal renewal and through a revitalisation of our mission”. This sentence announces the two parts of the text. In the second, are to be found explicit references to the educational service of the poor.

The Institute continued to be needed now as it was in the time of the Founder, and even more: “Political, economic and social forces continue to deny the poor, in addition to the Message of Salvation, access to education and the respect for their dignity to which they are entitled. Education is the

necessary means by which the underprivileged, and those who suffer rejection of whatever kind, have access to the justice and freedom which Christ brings”.

This was a need which could not leave us indifferent. That is why: “The Chapter asks each Brother, whatever his age, to choose one of the following commitments in order to further the conversion of the Institute in his own local situation. Such a choice will be made in agreement with the District and with those who have charge of the District”. The choices were mostly for the benefit of the poor:

“\* to assist in bringing our schools and other educational commitments more into line with this Message;

“\* to take part in the foundation of new educational works, especially of new types of school for the most deprived;

“\* to make oneself available for a Region of the Institute that needs help, in particular, within the Young Churches;

“\* to make oneself available for educational tasks of the Church for the promotion of justice and the educational service of the poor”

So that there should not be any doubt as to what was really intended, the Chapter stressed that “our conversion will be genuine only if it brings us to a further commitment to the poor”. It is not enough to do more: something new must be done: “the Institute has the primary duty to invent a new type of school for those young people, increasingly numerous, who are wounded

and disregarded. This need will lead us to make choices as to the institutions we shall direct, to adapt our pedagogy, and to retain the necessary economy with regard to certain official educational systems which could be restrictive. Those of us who exercise their ministry in more favourable social conditions, must also preserve within themselves a zeal and prophetic awareness as regards the promotion of justice: our service to the poor consists in building a world where the promises of the Gospel take on real form”<sup>85</sup>.

At the close of the Chapter, Brother John Johnston, the new Superior General, mentioned among the other topics treated by the

assembly, the call for greater solidarity with the poor on the part of the Institute. This solidarity implied seeing poverty and its consequences; becoming aware of our own attitudes and being prepared to change them; living as persons of modest condition. It implied also educating for justice: helping young people to see poverty and injustice, taking into account the social teaching of the Church, creating structures for the service of the needy. And finally, it implied “that the Institute moves more decisively towards the direct service of the poor, both in our own countries and in other countries with urgent needs”<sup>86</sup>.

## 7. BROTHER JOHN JOHNSTON

### \* Priority options

Solidarity with the poor became the leitmotiv of the new government. At the outset, the General Council adopted eight priorities which were to be promoted throughout its mandate, and constitute the principal objectives for the Institute to pursue.

The fifth priority was phrased as follows: “To live in greater solidarity with the poor, live simply and dependently, like persons ‘of modest condition’; be aware of the situation of the poor and oppressed, and be sensitive to it; create serious and effective programmes for educating for justice; support the efforts of the Institute, the Region, the

District and the community to make the direct service of the poor the effective priority; volunteer for the service of the poor in our own countries and abroad”, – a priority

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<sup>85</sup> Circular 422, dated July 1st 1986, p.20-27. It looks as if the production of the message was hard work, that there was not enough time or tranquillity. Its authors would be very surprised to hear that the text was open to the accusation of dualism. In fact, the first part concerns the sanctity of the Brother, and there is talk of prayer, faith, hope, forgiveness, intimacy with Christ, with no mention of the poor. All that concerns the mission is the second part, in which nothing is said about sanctity. It’s a pity.

<sup>86</sup> Circular 422, p. 40-41.

which clearly recalls the Chapter and the Rule.

### \* Letters and Circulars

This is a subject the Superior returned to in each of his New Year Pastoral Letters (the name he adopted for them). Solidarity with the poor appeared, and not as an aside, in three of them.

The 1988 Letter assessed what had been done in this connection over the previous 20 years, without disguising a certain dissatisfaction: "It is crystal clear that the Institute of tomorrow must be an Institute more oriented towards the poor", says a paragraph quoting article 40a of the Rule. In the pages, there are references to articles 14, 32 and 40b, which govern apostolic work as well as the personal and community life of the Brothers <sup>87</sup>.

The Letter for the following year, on "Solidarity", devoted more time to the subject: it returned to themes already present in the closing address of the General Chapter: the Lasallian mission, concern for the poor, education for justice, and their implications for the lives of the Brothers (references to articles 14, 19a, 32, 40, 40a, 40c of the Rule). There were, however, two specific themes that were stressed: illiteracy and slavery. The first, a little prematurely, spoke of the International Year of Literacy, planned by the United Nations for 1990. The second mentioned Brother Scubilion, whom the Pope would beatify on the following May 2nd in La Réunion <sup>88</sup>.

Because of the proximity of the Chapter, the 1993 Letter also devoted a few pages to solidarity with the poor. One cannot expect anything new from the texts quoted from the Rule. Commenting on the World Day of Peace ("If you want peace, reach out to the poor"), the Superior returned to the close link between the service of the poor and the poverty expressed in the lives of the Brothers. Another paragraph, entitled with the name of the fourth vow, and including its explanation in the Rule, answered those who would like to separate school and the service of the poor <sup>89</sup>.

Without using the word "solidarity", the 1991 Letter expressed the same idea, in words taken from the Rule, referring to the Founder and the Institute: "moved" by the situation of the poor, "aware" of these situations, expressions which were amply justified by the present-day world <sup>90</sup>.

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<sup>87</sup> Pastoral Letter, dated January 1st 1988, p.29-31. On pages 24 and 25, the quotation from and paraphrase of article 3 of the Rule are used to state a clear position: "the privileged instrument of our apostolic ministry is the Christian school. But even that statement is not complete. The privileged instrument is the Christian school which is accessible to the poor".

<sup>88</sup> Pastoral Letter, dated January 1st 1989, p.27-34. On pages 7 and 8, he explains the origin of the expression "solidarity with the poor"; on page 22, he links solidarity with "association for the educational service of the poor".

<sup>89</sup> Pastoral Letter dated January 1st 1993, p.26-35.

<sup>90</sup> Pastoral Letter dated January 1st 1991, p.33-36. He quotes, among others, article 40a. Before,

From time to time, the Letters encouraged the efforts and the progress of the Institute, but just as frequently, or even more so, they pointed out that it was not enough, and that much more remained to be done<sup>91</sup>.

The Circulars of the same period, almost exclusively administrative or obituaries, added nothing to the debate<sup>92</sup>.

The "Letter to the Lasallian Family" occupies a place of its own. The Brothers are certainly part of this Family, but attention here is focused more on other groups of Lasallians. References to the holy Founder do not fail to highlight his historical response to the needs of the poor<sup>93</sup>. To share in his spirit today, to take part in the Lasallian mission, implies being sensitive and meeting the present needs of the poor and outcast; in being involved in the building of a just and fraternal world<sup>94</sup>; and all this, without misunderstanding the great diversity of situations in which different people live and are involved in mostly educational activities.

### \* The NOMA Prize

In 1990, UNESCO awarded the Institute the NOMA Prize for Literacy. This award was particularly significant because it coincided with the International Year of Literacy. The following issue of the Bulletin of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (N°234, January 1991), contained a summarised description of 64 literacy schemes undertaken by the Brothers, and of some other forms of aid for young people and

adults who were particularly needy. These activities took place in 20 different countries and 4 continents.

Not everything that the Institute did to promote literacy was mentioned, and this was not the intention. For example, hardly anything was said about the ordinary literacy teaching that was given in schools to children beginning school. Many of these were certainly poor. Nor were all the educational works for the poor listed.

But what was included was sufficient to stimulate reflection. The great amount that was done was impressive. The Institute may be urged to do more, but it was nonetheless true that it was doing a great deal of creative work with the underprivileged. Literacy did not consist simply in learning a few elementary techniques: the aim was always to teach something through it: social integration, self-confidence, the overcoming of psychological barriers, evangelisation. A

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on page 14, he quoted article 141: There is still a great need for the Institute today.

<sup>91</sup> See, for example, the commentary on the awarding of the UNESCO NOMA Prize: Letter dated January 1st 1991 (p.36-37).

<sup>92</sup> Circular 424 (p.8,9); Circular 432, dated April 7th 1991 (p.10); in the list of the probable topics of the next General Chapter. We have already seen the contents of Circular 422.

<sup>93</sup> Letter to the Lasallian Family, dated February 2nd 1989 (p.13,15,16,18,19).

<sup>94</sup> Letter...p.9,15,81,19,20,22,23,24. On page 27, the quotation from article 141 of the Rule on the present need of the Institute is unacknowledged: "The young, the poor, the world and the Church still need the ministry of the Brothers".



great number of these activities were intended for marginalised individuals or groups: immigrants, failed pupils, itinerants, illiterate adults. Very often, literacy was accompanied by the acquisition of a professional qualification.

Certain Brothers were faithful to this mission till “the autumn of their life”. They had not simply “survived” being teachers: they had made it their life’s work. And they continued teaching to the very end, in whatever way they could, those who found it difficult to adjust to the pace of life, or who had been abandoned by the roadside of life.

In addition, it was clear that, when we spoke of the educational and evangelising work of the Institute today, we needed to acknowledge the presence of many fellow-workers who were not Brothers: other teachers, friends, former students...who constituted a vast number of volunteers. This did not reduce the work of the Brothers in any way, but it did give it a new meaning.

### \* **The Guide for Formation**

In 1991, the General Council published the *Guide for Formation*. Based on the new

Rule, this directory tried to bring together and present all the doctrinal wealth and experience that existed and was being developed in the Institute regarding formation<sup>95</sup>.

Out of the 307 articles that compose it, more than 30 contain the word “poor” or some synonym (marginalised, abandoned, underprivileged). This frequent reference contributes to recall the fundamental setting for the Lasallian apostolate and, as a consequence, the direction in which formation should be steered. The references occur in all five chapters, and in the sections corresponding to each stage of initial and continuing formation. This is a way of saying that the commitment to the poor is intrinsic to the life of all the Brothers.

It is true also, that at least 25 times, the mention of the poor is accompanied by a qualifier we have met before: “special”, “especially”, “preferentially”, “above all” and other similar words<sup>96</sup>. In addition to the wish to add a little emphasis, there is the less evident one of avoiding the accusation of exclusivity.

## 8. THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1993

Around the 90’s, most marxist-inspired dictatorships disappeared. Those that survived felt the need to negotiate with their

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Guide for Formation (p.5): introductory letter from the Superior General.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Guide: articles 21, 28, 37, 38, 43, 45, 60, 86, 103, 107, 130, 131, 153, 167, 189, 197, 203, 206, 210, 222, 227, 248, 250, 280. The poor or a simple life are mentioned also in articles 50, 171, 172, 182, 183, 215, 231, 249, 282, 287. But the promotion of justice is mentioned much more rarely.

erstwhile enemies. The process was faster than most people imagined. Many people believe that John Paul II played an essential role in the evolution of these events.

At the same time, there grew in Islamic countries a tide of rapturous frenzy, often strongly characterised by fundamentalism.

A quarter of a century after the end of the Vatican II Council, the interventions of the central authority of the Church became more and more frequent, in an attempt to preserve doctrinal purity and discipline, interventions considered by some to be too late, and by others a step backwards.

### \* Preparatory stages

In the year in which the Guide for Formation was published, the Institute began its direct preparation for the General Chapter.

On November 21st, the third centenary of the Heroic Vow of 1691, a questionnaire was sent out to all the Brothers: it was divided into six sections and proposed 44 possible topics for the Chapter. The Brothers were asked to indicate the degree of importance they attached to each topic, and they could add others if they wanted.

Topic 1.4 was formulated as follows: "District and Regional plans for a better educational service of the poor"; topic 6.6 read: "Missionary commitment of the Institute: options and policies".

In the course of the following months, 3,534 answers reached Rome and were carefully processed<sup>97</sup>. For topic 1.4, the follow-

ing results were registered: 46.7% (very important); 38.6% (important); 8.4% (of little importance); 1.6% (without importance); and 4.7% gave no answer. Regarding topic 6.6, the results show respectively 40.1%, 45.2%, 7.2%, 1.2% and 6.3%.<sup>98</sup> By adding "very important" and "important", the two topics score 85.3% points in support, which places them in 11th position.

### Notes from the Brothers

The invitation to send written notes to the Chapter resulted, as far as the service of the poor was concerned, in 50 individual or group notes being sent in, representing more than 300 Brothers (one note in French was signed by 160 Brothers).

The three points raised most often were:

- \* the Institute should make a greater effort in this area which is the reason for its existence;

- \* attention should be given to the greatest existing and growing needs;

- \* in this area, the conversion asked for by the 1986 Chapter had not come about to a sufficient degree.

<sup>97</sup> If we add 40 answers from Venezuela (which went missing in Rome and consequently were not counted) we have a total of 3,574 answers, equivalent to 45.3% of all the Brothers. The greatest number in absolute terms and percentage came from the Region of Spain and Portugal (825 answers from 1,304 Brothers: 63%) and Latin America (816 answers from 1,156 Brothers: 70.6%).

<sup>98</sup> Topic 1.4 is one of the 5 with a low rate of abstention.

As for suggestions regarding what ought to be done, the longest list came from the French note mentioned earlier. In order to implement in a concrete way the measures mentioned in Institute texts published between 1966 and 1986, it asked the Chapter: to list all the appeals heard since 1966; plan some significant undertakings; urge Districts to organise retreats on this subject; offer Brothers short sessions on poverty and injustice; organise opportunities to obtain firsthand experience of the Third and Fourth Worlds<sup>99</sup>; take part in organisations fighting poverty and injustice; suggest original schemes; urge a revision of the location of existing works; look for capital investments to help the Third World; take part in Church organisations dealing with the poorer classes<sup>100</sup>.

Certain notes, even without referring to the service of the poor, asked for a conversion in the lifestyle of the Brothers: it should be more austere, more similar to that of "persons of modest condition", and Brothers should even live in poor areas. There is also a request for certain practices, such as fasting, with the money saved going to the poor.

### **Regional representatives**

In June 1992, representatives from the different Regions of the Institute met the General Council for a week in view of the General Chapter. Their overall<sup>101</sup> survey of the Institute included the educational service of the poor. The opening address by the Brother Vicar General and based on reports from the Regions, reported "significant

progress" in this area, "inside as well as outside the school".

However, "difficulties persisted": lack of means, mental blocks, enormity of the task to be accomplished. In the midst of all this, despite everything, "the poor evangelise us".

In the discussions that followed, it seems that the service of the poor was not explicitly mentioned when speaking of schools, but only in connection with non-scholastic establishments. If that gave a true picture of what happened in reality (but it did not), the service of the poor would necessarily be a minor activity in an Institute which considered schools as the preferred field of its apostolate.

### **Report of the General Council**

In accordance with a prescription of the Rule, the Superior and his Council drew up a report in which they gave the General Chapter an account of their administration. The eight priorities they had set themselves for their mandate provided the structure for the report.

The report on the second priority ("Conversion") includes some judgments about

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<sup>99</sup> "Fourth World": areas of poverty and marginalisation existing and increasing in number in the "First World".

<sup>100</sup> Taken from the "Summary of Notes" given previously to all delegates.

<sup>101</sup> But not for long, judging by the report (p.14-17). This true also for what follows: if the report covers accurately what was said in the discussion, the poor are mentioned only in connection with non-school works.

the service of the poor. According to certain Visitors, "in general, the Brothers are not much aware of our specific vows. We believe, however, that in practice they are more conscious of their association for the educational service of the poor" (2.14.4). "The questions of justice and peace (theory and practice) occupy a larger place in the programmes of many of our schools. There is a much greater awareness of the poor: numerous and remarkable educational and apostolic initiatives have been undertaken in order to help them directly. Even sectors which have to face financial problems try to make their schools more accessible to the poor" (2.31). "The response of the Brothers to the missionary appeal...has made it possible to strengthen our missionary commitment in various parts of the Institute" (2.32).

Regarding the fourth priority ("Mission"), the report noted that "certain Districts are making a real effort to make their schools accessible to the poorer classes<sup>102</sup>", which they do, "either by setting up schools in areas where the population has a great need of human and Christian promotion, or by changing the purpose, the organisation, the type of teaching and the content of the curriculum of the schools they run. In this way, the school is accessible to all and becomes an effective means of inculturation, of promoting literacy, culture, evangelisation, catechesis, and of the creation of faith communities" (4.12.3).

Numerous Districts which had reorganised their schools to make them accessible to the poor, had come to realise that the serv-

ice of the poor, undertaken by association, encouraged unity among the Brothers. When this service was not undertaken by association, there arose disagreements and even divisions (4.12.4).

Most observations and recommendations were in connection with the 5th priority, which contained the expression "religious poverty and service of the poor". "It is certain that these two aspects...are related even if, for the sake of convenience, we treat them separately". The mutual relationship was highlighted in the first two paragraphs (5.0). In practice, there was a great diversity of lifestyle among the Brothers: there were Brothers who lived in poor areas to which they adapted their lifestyle; there were Brothers with the lifestyle of people of modest condition; and then there were Brothers who led a comfortable life<sup>103</sup>. The report went on to give its opinion, which was not new, about this, saying: "that concern had been shown and efforts made to live the evangelical poverty we profess and to witness to it, but we think that there is still a long way to go" (5.12).

<sup>102</sup> It identifies them with popular education, understood as "schools which are rooted in a poor area and which are organised with the help of all active groups there (social, cultural, religious), to offer an effective human and Christian education". It is not certain that all supporters of popular education would agree with this description.

<sup>103</sup> In addition, there existed clear cases of transgression: the accumulation of money, personal accounts administered independently...things that, to a certain extent, exist almost everywhere, but for all that are not justifiable.

Regarding the service of the poor itself, the report indicated first the areas in which the General Council <sup>104</sup> had given precise guidelines: direct service of the poor as an effective priority (Rule 40a), education for justice, literacy (5.3).

Assessing the situation, the report stated that “what the Institute has accomplished and continues to accomplish for the educational service of the poor is truly significant”: an increasing awareness and a concern for this question, new works and new initiatives responding to new situations of poverty, special attention to pupils in difficulty, greater attention to rural areas, efforts to lower the price of services or to make them free, the service of the Lasallian volunteers, solidarity with the most needy sectors, the service of the poor during initial formation and by retired Brothers, an increased concern for education for justice and for solidarity. The final summing up noted that initiatives were very numerous and that, at the same time, the fundamental fact had to be re-affirmed, that the Brothers were founded especially for the poor, a challenge which was still valid today (5.4).

Speaking of the future, the report indicated aspects that ought to continue to be promoted and improved: increase the percentage of Brothers working directly with the poor; respond to new needs with new responses; make access to our schools easier for the poor; seek out and respond to the diverse forms of present-day poverty; do much more for education for justice (5.5).

The recommendations to the General Chapter drew conclusions from this assessment (5.6).

In a “Personal commentary on the Report of the Brother Superior to the General Chapter”, Brother John Johnston emphasised the importance of articles 19a, 40 and 40a of the Rule and mentioned some difficulties encountered in their application. He thought it was opportune to repeat something that had been said in general: “Despite the fact that religious institutes declare their strong commitment to the poor, individual religious demonstrate a limited personal availability for the service of the poor”. As had also been said: “a high priority is given to the education of the poor in the FSC Rules, but there is little evidence of personal availability for such a service in the lives of a good number of its members”. And, by way of a personal observation, he added: “The efforts made by the Superior and his Council to encourage the implementation of articles 19a and 40a have not always been appreciated”.

But the overall tone was not at all bitter: “We have witnessed an impressive number of initiatives in favour of the economically poor...”. “In addition, many Regions, Districts, and individual Brothers, have enabled the Institute to establish or re-establish communities in new countries, and to reinforce

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<sup>104</sup> The facts mentioned in margin notes 18, 19 and 20, refer only to the Pastoral Letters of the Superior General for 1988, 1989 and 1991.

Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations in the developing sectors of the Institute. Brothers of all ages have volunteered for these projects. The number of retired Brothers who have volunteered for the education of the poor is truly remarkable. In the name of the Institute, I thank them for their generosity and for the quality of their presence and of their service”<sup>105</sup>.

It is noticeable that these different reports are generally more qualitative than quantitative. Both negative and positive facts are mentioned, but a precise idea of their proportion is never given. Instead, cases are “numerous”, “many”, “some”, “certain”, without it being possible to know whether they are universal, in a majority, or few but striking.

Perhaps this says something about the situation of the Institute: the statistics refer only to the Brothers, because it is impossible to classify the great diversity of their educational activities, of their collaborators and of their clientele. There was a risk that the Chapter would be given a false idea of the Institute, and take decisions for a situation which, in reality, did not exist.

### \* The Chapter Assembly

The Chapter opened officially on April 5th and ended on May 15th. A glance at the documents of the plenary assemblies shows that concern for the poor was constantly present<sup>106</sup>. This Chapter, however, did not wish to produce new doctrinal texts: the doctrine that had been expressed ever since

1967 was still valid, but of itself, it transformed nothing. That is why the Chapter preferred to give priority to action. Two measures it took were particularly important for the future of the Institute.

The first measure was the presence of non-Brother consultants. For two weeks, 20 men and women, almost all lay persons, joined capitulants in studying the mission of the Institute, envisaged as a shared mission. Some of these consultants had been involved, in Lasallian schools, in Christian education either in poor or working class districts. The fact they were taking part in a General Chapter was a historic “first” in the world of religious congregations. It was felt that a new path had been opened up for the Institute to follow.

In its Message to the worldwide Lasallian Family on the Shared Mission, the General Chapter defined the main characteristics of this mission in the light of past experience: “In the light of the experience of the last 20 years, the Chapter re-affirms the irreplaceable role of those men and women (lay persons, priests and religious) who carry out this mission. The Institute brings them

<sup>105</sup> “Personal commentary” (p.13-14).

<sup>106</sup> Long paragraphs or short allusions, at least in records: 3, 3A, 8, 9, 10, 10A, 11, 15, 20, 24, 34. Neither in the records nor in the preparatory documents is there any sign of an attempt to evaluate the accomplishment of the five commitments from which the Brothers had to choose, in agreement with those in charge of their District, to further the conversion of the Institute (Message of the 1986 Chapter).

together to work in association “to procure a human and Christian education for young people and especially the poor”.

As members of this family, the Brothers must make visible the call to live the Gospel in depth: “We should be readily available for priority projects for the educational service of the poor, where others either cannot or will not go. Our vow of association for the educational service of the poor is an indispensable sign of fidelity for all those engaged in the distinctive mission of the Institute”<sup>107</sup>. These ideas were studied at greater length by the Chapter Commission<sup>108</sup>.

### The 100 Plus

The second measure - an appeal - reflected the re-affirmation that the Institute was a “community of Brothers associated for the educational service of the poor in a changing world and Church”, and is expressed in Proposition 1:

“To promote more effectively interdependence and solidarity in the Institute, and to take another step forward in the educational service of the poor, the General Chapter asks Brother Superior General and his Council, between 1993 and 1997, to pursue, in dialogue with the Regions and Districts, reflection on the missionary policy of the Institute, and to make that policy known to the Brothers and their Lasallian partners, and :

\* to make an appeal to the Regions and the Districts to make available 100 Brothers and a certain number of Lasallian part-

ners, who will receive special training and will be sent in mission in view of responding to the following needs;

\* to create new apostolates for the poor in places where the Institute is already present or in new places;

\* to renew or strengthen existing educational apostolates for the poor;

\* to train (initial or continuing formation programmes) Brothers and Lasallian partners, especially in the small and developing sectors of the Institute”<sup>109</sup>.

According to various accounts – which agree – the debate, if it could be called that, which preceded the vote on the proposition<sup>110</sup>, was one of the most emotional moments of the Chapter. It was felt that a particularly important decision was being made, which would bring about a significant change for the future of the congregation, precisely as demanded by article 40a of the Rule: a planned re-organisation of our works in order to give effective priority to the direct service of the poor.

<sup>107</sup> Circular 435, dated June 24th 1993 (p.13, 14, 15).

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Circular 435 : 1.1 (p.29), 1.3 (p.31), 1.4 (p.32-33), 3.3 and 3.4 (p.41), 3.6.2 (p.44), 5.1 (p.46), 5.5 (p.47), Proposition 5 (p.49).

<sup>109</sup> Circular 435 (p.26-27); Proposition 1 contains other paragraphs connected with its implementation.

<sup>110</sup> Record of session N°34. Proposition 1 obtained 122 votes in favour, 4 against and 4 abstentions.

The “Message of the 42nd General Chapter to the Brothers” described the proposition as a desire to do something effective for those most in need of it by implementing the Founder’s charism <sup>111</sup>.

Closing the Chapter, Brother John Johnston, re-elected as Superior for another mandate, had the following to say: “Several days ago, the proposition to make available one hundred additional Brothers and a certain number of Lasallian partners for missionary service stimulated a magnificent exchange of views. The quantity and quality of the interventions revealed a strong desire, together with a sense of commitment, to take more seriously the orientations of past Chapters and of our Rule that call for a significant reordering of our apostolic priorities, a reordering that will make progressively the educational service of the poor – at home and abroad – the effective priority of the District. That proposition is truly a prophetic gesture, one that, at the local level, must be explained, justified, defended and, above all, implemented” <sup>112</sup>.

### Some orientations

Before formulating them, the Chapter turned its attention to some serious and urgent questions challenging the Brothers today. Among these there were the rights of the child, illiteracy, values education and specific accompaniment of the young.

Faced with these needs, the Chapter reminded the Brothers what they were already (heirs of the founding charism, consecrated

by vow in an association for the educational service of the poor), what they were doing already for the service of the poor (education, attention to new needs, commitment even abroad, apostolate even at an advanced age), and sent them, with renewed energy, “to follow collectively the path taken by our Founder”, as described in article 11 of the Rule.

The following recommendations and propositions “aim at reducing the gap which exists between our texts and our ways of doing things, between the declared priority of the service of the poor through education and the maintenance of those situations which are in contradiction with this priority” (p.25). That is why the Chapter encouraged community projects of insertion in the world of the poor, and experiences of this sort as an aspect of the ongoing formation programmes of the Brothers. Regarding the promotion of justice, especially in the four areas especially mentioned, Districts needed to evaluate their programmes and the areas of action of communities and schools. La-

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<sup>111</sup> Circular 435 (p.7-10). The rather theatrical setting with which one of the first paragraphs begins: (“If John Baptist de La Salle, canon of Rheims, stood on the steps of the cathedral today and gazed upon our society, he would be as deeply moved today as he was over 300 years ago”) is not beyond criticism: in practice, the historical De La Salle discovered the world of the poor when he became involved with them, rather than when he looked at them (if he ever did!) from the steps of the cathedral.

<sup>112</sup> Circular 435 (p.106).



sallian institutions of higher learning were asked to include in their programmes scientific research into the causes of poverty and social injustice, and to seek solutions.<sup>113</sup>

The Chapter was aware of the repercussions that the re-affirmation of this priority would have on the lifestyle of the Brothers<sup>114</sup>. Commitment to the poor was considered also to be an integral part of a vocations ministry and of an initial formation which Brothers could contribute to the Institute shared mission, which had need of them.<sup>115</sup>

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As we end this chapter, we should like to glance at the last years of the century with the help of two sets of documents produced by the central government of the Institute. These documents express with great clarity how the Institute understands the road it has followed and the road that it ought to follow.

### \* **The Pastoral Letters of Brother Superior General**

This first set of documents includes the Letters Brother John Johnston continues to address to all the Brothers every New Year<sup>116</sup>. Dealing with topics which are partially different, or in connection with various events (synods, Lasallian celebrations), the Letters always return to the same final objective: greater awareness and greater fulfilment of the Brother's vocation.

From this point of view, the service of the Institute to the poor through Christian education is present in all the Letters. Sometimes, it is referred to casually, as one of the principal components of the Lasallian vocation; or passages are quoted from the Rule or the writings of the Founder, whose application to daily life could always be improved. Sometimes, questions are treated at greater length. In many cases, practical guidelines and exhortations are accompanied by observations regarding the progress

<sup>113</sup> Report in Circular 435 (p.17-28). Although it does not exclude lay collaborators explicitly, most of the report refers only to the Brothers: they are the "consecrated lay people in religious life" (1.3), alone able to affirm that "we are associated by vow for the educational service of the poor" (1.4).

<sup>114</sup> Circular 435, p.5 (living more simply) 53 (2.9, 2.10), 55 (3.4c).

<sup>115</sup> Circular 435: "The community...offers a challenge in vocational terms, to the extent that it gives witness...to dedication to evangelisation and the educational service of the poor" (p.58); "Experience has shown that involvement of youth in ministry among the poor with similarly interested young people is a good environment for vocational discernment" (p.60); "There is a risk of gearing their formation along the lines of maintaining existing educational works, rather than of searching for new or adapted educational services which answer the real needs of the poor" (p.60).

<sup>116</sup> It is worth recalling also speeches made by Brother Superior to a variety of public audiences on important occasions, such as at Piraeus, Strasbourg, Paris (Association La Salle) or, before 1993, at Paderno del Grappa (to the Brothers of Italy). Apart from their local impact, these speeches represented positions which had a much wider significance.

made in the Institute, but at no time do we find facile complacency.

Without seeking to be particularly original from a doctrinal point of view, the Superior never tires of recalling the original purpose of the Institute, renewed in the General Chapters following the Second Vatican Council. Some of his observations are particularly incisive: not to dissociate "school" from "service of the poor"; "the Lasallian school is a means of salvation if...it is accessible to the poor"; naturally, to be of use to the poor, the school must be a true proclamation of Jesus Christ. That is why, in order to serve the poor, the Brothers need "to fill themselves with God". The whole life of the Institute has its focal point in the service of the poor. As the formula of vows says explicitly, it is in order to serve the poor through education that the Brothers consecrate themselves to God and associate with one another <sup>117</sup>.

Practical guidelines are based on the doctrine of the Institute, Chapter decisions, the needs of the world, papal pronouncements and synod documents. The sad reality of street children and the rights of children in general, so little observed, are so many calls to action. In addition to undertakings which involve the whole Institute (100 PLUS project, District plans to restructure works according to article 40a of the Rule), the Superior renews the recommendation, so modest in appearance, but very demanding in reality, that every District Chapter creates a work for the poor. The decision to go

to the poor is also a criterion of the ministry of vocations <sup>118</sup>.

Some sentences reflect Lasallian sensitivity to the challenge of poverty and recall positive responses: "In the twenty African countries in which we serve, we are responding creatively and effectively to the educational needs of youth, poor youth particularly". After the 1966-67 General chapter, "it is true that there have been many new initiatives in favour of the poor, and that an impressive number of Brothers are involved today in the direct service of the poor, either in their own country, or in countries which need them". The Lasallian Volunteer service to help poor sectors is very active and spreading. The Superior says he is deeply moved by the conviction with which the young Brothers and Sisters of Asia and the Pacific ensure that the Lasallian charism continues to be a precious gift for the world, the Church, young people and the poor <sup>119</sup>.

Without dwelling excessively on the point, he recalls what is still missing in our

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<sup>117</sup> The 1994 Letter (p. 24, 34, 37, 40, 41, 44); 1995 Letter (p. 54, 58, 60, 61); 1997 Letter (p. 14, 18, 26, 43); 1998 Letter (p.7-11, 22, 33, 34, 75). Page numbering for Spanish version.

<sup>118</sup> For example, 1994 Letter (p.7-8, 42-43, 45); 1995 Letter (p. 54, 60-61); 1997 Letter (p.71-83 passim); 1998 Letter (76, 77, 86).

<sup>119</sup> 1994 Letter (p. 8); 1997 (p.69, 70, 74, 76); 1998 Letter (p.15). The 1997 Letter refers several times to the lack of up-to-date information in the Centre of the Institute (p.64, 65, 78).

concern for the poor. Young people “almost invariably ask why the Brothers who say that their mission is «especially» to the poor, are not in greater evidence among the poor and do not manifest more active concern for social justice”. The progress the Institute has made cannot be an invitation for us to rest: “But who among us will express satisfaction that during the past thirty years we have done as well as we should have done?”<sup>120</sup>.

### \* Circular on the Shared Mission

The second set of documents is composed only of this one, which the last General Chapter asked the Brother Superior and his Council to draw up. It was published on April 30th 1997, under the title: “The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian education: A Shared Mission”. It was intended for “all the members of the Lasallian Family who, throughout the world, share in the Lasallian mission of human and Christian education”

The survey of three centuries of Lasallian heritage (part 1) highlights the founding purpose, the different ways the Institute implemented it in different places and in different times, and the new points of emphasis since 1966<sup>121</sup>.

The description of the essential components of an overall educational plan (part 2) devotes ten very explicit pages to “the human and Christian education of the poor”.

If the Chapter of 1966-67 marked the beginning of a return to the poor by the Institute, the process continues today along the lines proposed by the Declaration and the Rule: the integral development of the individual, research into the root-causes of poverty, promotion of justice. For the individual, sharing in the Lasallian mission implies accepting this priority<sup>122</sup>.

The Lasallian mission is shared (part 3) by lay persons, priests, religious, school staff, parents of pupils, former pupils...who profess the Catholic faith, or other forms of Christian faith, or other religions. All are invited to make their contribution, and in a certain measure, they all really do, to the accomplishment of the founding and permanent purpose of the Institute : to offer a quality human and Christian education to the poor.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> 1994 Letter (p.50); 1997 Letter (p.75). The 1994 Letter contains this difficult call to attention: “It is my impression that the apostolate of education is not perceived or at least experienced by all of us as a constitutive dimension of the charism of John Baptist de La Salle” (p.34)

<sup>121</sup> See, for example, pages 3, 7, 8-10, 14-16, 20, 32, 40-42, 53, 58-60. The edition quoted is the one prepared by the Latin American region (RELAL).

<sup>122</sup> Especially, pages 95-105 and also 76, 80, 82, 111, 117.

<sup>123</sup> For example pages 137, 138, 139, 149, 151, 155, 161, 162, 178.

The awareness of taking part in the Lallian mission implies formation, and a spiritual formation, which links the end of the 20th century directly to the thinking and efforts of St John Baptist de La Salle: the mission that God, the Church and families entrust to “all persons engaged in the edu-

cation of youth, and particularly...(to) Brothers of the Christian Schools”<sup>124</sup> is not only an employment.

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<sup>124</sup> Inspired by the sub-title of the *Meditations for the Time of retreat.*

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## APPENDICES

1. Extracts from the "Book of Records" of the 1966-67 Chapter, on the educational service of the poor (GA ED 250/4).

*Session held on November 8th 1967 on chapter VI of the Declaration.*

"Two capitulants asked to speak. The first declared that he saw this chapter as the centre of the Declaration. It's intention was to stimulate a living renewal in the Congregation, and to provoke acts and undertakings. The Founder, originally, wished to respond to needs, to serve the poor. The Brothers, the schools were seen by him in the light of this purpose. The calls of the Church at the present time were along these same lines (*Populorum Progressio*)

The second, while approving the generosity of this Chapter, feared that it had not faced up sufficiently to the reality of the situations in our Institute. In fact, we have turned to the middle classes. We are attached also to the big boarding schools. How can we make the necessary changes? As individuals, our Brothers are powerless to do anything. Somebody should explain more clearly what practical means we should take.

Others affirmed successively that the definition of the word "poor" comes only in the second article; that to restrict poverty to material poverty is not enough; that it is rash to wish to operate outside the framework of education; that the poor seen by St

JB de La Salle were only poor as far as evangelisation was concerned; that regarding poverty, the Founder had first of all given the example, something which perhaps we forget.

Someone would have liked our discussion in the Chapter to be based on a more thorough calculation of the number of educational works conducted by the Institute at the present time. There are countries where poor children sit or mix with the others in our schools, but perhaps this is not true of everywhere. One could then make overall or regional plans regarding this matter.

One Brother Assistant pointed out that the expression "frustration poverty" could not be understood in French only as material poverty. It described rather a psychological attitude brought on by economic, social, and even religious or affective causes. The text of the Declaration respects these various aspects. The term, in the French text, is really well chosen.

It reflects also a spiritual attitude similar to what has recently been studied with reference to the poor of Yahweh in the Bible. In this text, we have offered a well-balanced analytical instrument which should not be called into question.

Another Brother Assistant expresses his fears once again. For us to want to fight against material poverty is to engage in phi-

losophy. The only poverty for the Founder, was not to know Christ. It is dangerous for us to concern ourselves with social classes. It is a difficult terrain. The text brings us close to the pink fringes of marxism. According to this Declaration, it would seem there was no room for the Institute in some countries.

*After a break, the debate resumed, beginning with article 29.*

A Reporter next answered the criticism that this section lacks an evangelical tone. He said that an evangelical tone required more than a quotation from the Gospel. The Gospel is the complete message of Christ. A so-called biblical language is not necessary. This message of salvation addresses all human evils: illness, poverty...It is evangelical to combat these evils. In the second place, the incarnate God embodied all that is human in order to sanctify it. All that is good on the human plane serves to promote the Kingdom of God. That is why the apostolate of the Brother can be evangelical in all that he does. In the third place, the Gospel is not something in the past: we have to read the Gospel in the light of the teaching of the Church. In that light, this section is evangelical.

A capitulant spoke in praise of N°29 to justify the "rather economic" tone that is found in it. He pointed out the efforts of the Commission to avoid taking up extreme positions. This chapter VI speaks of the apostolate of the poor, but also of the social education of the other classes. In this, it is in line with the tradition of the Founder.

Another capitulant expressed his astonishment at the difficulty of the Commission to define the poor. He approved article 29, however, especially its call for a change of attitude on the individual and community level. He wanted a clearer treatment of the expression "a radical conversion of attitude".

Regarding N°29,1, a capitulant congratulated the Commission on not having defined the poor in too precise a fashion: each country has different problems. Here, the essential thing is to make the Institute think. After quoting the case of a congress in Mexico, he suggested that Districts needed pilot-schemes given the rapid changes in modern structures.

Four other capitulants spoke briefly: Brothers from under-developed countries will be surprised by this article: they have no problem in defining the poor. Why not explain that "the poor" include all those who do not know Christ, who have no family, whose health is bad...? What does article N°29.4 actually mean? At this point, the Reporter gave some explanations, and added that if the article was thought ambiguous it could no doubt be improved.

### \* Article 28

One capitulant stated that, in whatever way you defined the poor, and even if all the Brothers cannot devote themselves to the apostolate of the poor, a greater fidelity to the poor will be of great spiritual benefit for the Brothers, and especially the young ones. He submitted the following proposi-

tion: "The Institute can hope that a greater fidelity to the poor will be of providential help for it in its renewal efforts to procure for the Brothers a better approach to the spirit of poverty...". The proposition was accepted with 1 vote against and 9 abstentions.

Four capitulants next spoke about N°28. One said he was not satisfied with § 3. Another pointed out the happy connection between the formulation of the vow of gratuity and this article. Another asked why this article had dropped the word "artisans", since there was a difference in meaning between this word and "poor", and the two words had been used by the Founder.

The Brother Reporter answered this last question by saying that the intentions of the Founder should not be sought only in texts, but also in his actions and in those of the first Brothers. The Founder did not want to make any separation, as we can see in Blain's accounts of the Founder's problems with the writing Masters.

*The debate continued during the afternoon.*

### \* Article 30

The discussion gave rise to certain number of comments, mostly favourable to the article under consideration. Perhaps it ought to be pointed out that the education service was a preferential means of fighting against the poverty of frustration, without forgetting the necessary basic education.

Two explanation were given to a capitulant: a) poverty of frustration can be an obstacle to salvation; b) there would be some hidden motives if we looked after the poor only to evangelise them: underdevelopment is an evil in its own right.

The fear of another capitulant was assuaged by one of the Reporters speaking in the name of the Commission, when he said that in the Declaration what was always meant was the educational service of the poor.

Several references were made to the life and activity of the Holy Founder: It was really the poor he looked after; it is perhaps easier for us today to understand the sufferings of humanity than it was for the Founder in his days: he would no doubt lose no time in responding to the appeals of the Pope.

Two other speakers stressed the urgent need for a response: the appeal of the Pope was addressed to all Christians, and therefore, to all Brothers. The tone and the vocabulary of the recent encyclicals invite us not to fear the power of words, but to adopt the same courage and language as the Church.

### \* Article 31

One speaker affirmed that this article did not seem to mention anything besides human promotion, and made no reference to evangelisation. Brothers working in technical education would like to be guided in

this work of evangelisation, which often requires them to convert their way of thinking.

Another speaker supported this idea, affirming that we are not called to work in the terrestrial city, and he quoted from a passage by Brother Michel Sauvage.

Several explanations were furnished by the members of the 2nd Commission: they said that the intention had been to give this article as universal an application as possible, requested in particular by missionary areas where explicit evangelisation was not possible. Paragraph 6 wished to emphasise one of the major services the Church hoped Christian schools would accomplish: to train militant workers, capable because of their training, to engage in serious and profitable dialogue with marxists.

The expression "for example" in this same paragraph leaves the door open to all other suggestions coming from the Assembly.

The Brother Superior expressed his astonishment at the removal of the word "prestige" in § 5. The expression needed to be explained by the Commission, because all fathers wanted a school with prestige for their sons!

**\* Article 32 : no comments**

**\* Article 33**

Two representatives from Latin America spoke. The first stated that the importance of the teacher training colleges in this region deserved a special mention: there was

only a vague allusion to them in article 49. The second recalled the enormous efforts of these countries to overcome their poverty, and the enormous problems their 600 million inhabitants – 90% of them baptised – will cause the Church in the year 2000. The Institute will find among these people the poorest of the poor.

Another capitulant wanted the Declaration to have more "bite", and for some of its articles included in the Rule. He also wished us to be more known as the Brothers who love the poor, and who suggest to their pupils to work with them.

**\* Article 34**

Paragraph 4 is judged excellent by two capitulants. One of them wanted an addition: Brothers should practise austerity too (p.205-209).

*Session held on November 24th 1967: the vow of gratuity.*

The Brother Reporter announced that this report had been approved by the 1st Commission, but that it had not been worked on as much as one would have wanted through lack of time. The specific name to give to the vow had not been fixed, but it would be during the debate on the Rules. In the meantime, capitulants could make their suggestions.

The vow of gratuity had an important place in the history of the Institute, but it had to be recognised that the industrial revolution had changed living conditions so much since the days of the Founder, that it



was difficult to see how this vow could be reconciled with the climate of the modern world. The Commission was nevertheless unanimous in its will to preserve it. There was now a less juridical attitude towards the vows, which were considered to be more a way of expressing explicitly the gift of oneself to the service of Our Lord, within the framework of a community. Recent Church documents revealed a great concern for the poor. As for presents, which have always been mentioned in this context, they had more to do with poverty or obedience than with the vow of gratuity.

One capitulant said he was troubled by certain aspects of this question: when drafts 1, 2 and 3 were written, there was no longer any question of vows specific to the Institute. Draft 4 re-instated them. He wondered why this change had been made. Was it a question of principle? If the majority of the notes asked for the suppression of these vows, should one not see in this a sign of the Holy Spirit at work?

Another capitulant declared his approval of the Report. The Commission had concluded not to maintain the vow of gratuity in its present form, but to revise it. In this way, there had been a return to the intentions of the Founder. This new vow would maintain the Institute in the preferential service of the poor. It needed to be revised, not suppressed. According to the Council, religious consecration is the same for all religious; but it has to be made specific to each Institute. To suppress our vow of gra-

tuity, it would be to accept the juridical value of vows. It cannot be said that this vow implies no obligation: there is the obligation of dedicating oneself to the educational service of the poor, by preference. The 1st Commission highlights the community dimension of religious consecration: each Brother commits himself to this community dimension.

One capitulant congratulated the Commission for pointing out the spiritual dimension of the vow of gratuity and for safeguarding the heritage of the Institute. The Rule ought to have a chapter specifying what was meant by apostolic gratuity. But was a vow necessary? In present-day conditions, it was difficult to make this vow realistic. What's the point of a vow regarding something so vague?

Another capitulant registers his agreement with the Commission. The vow confirmed our disinterested consecration to youth everywhere. The Report was well thought out and adapted to our times.

Another speaker said that those who had worked on the production of drafts 2, 3 and 4 had found themselves face to face with a juridical fact which became progressively more rigid. Religious consecration could be expressed by an attitude as well as by an obligation. As soon as the Council had shown that it was possible to see it in these terms, the vow of gratuity was put back into the Rule. Despite the juridical language, our predecessors had a deep understanding of consecration; we were following the same

line, which was that of the Founder. The post-Conciliar period was a good time to say such things.

On the other hand, another capitulant thinks that there was still a lack of precision in the presentation of the vow. The Brothers would be surprised to see a vow maintained whose exact meaning they did not grasp. The idea of disinterested dedication was fundamental, but was there a need for a new vow to express it?

Another capitulant, with figures to hand, said that the Brothers in his Assistancy were against the juridical interpretation of the vow as in the past, but they were in favour of the service of the poor. This vow could give them a sense of identity, based on the Gospel and the spirit of the Founder.

Three other capitulants spoke in favour of the Report. One spoke of the unitive value of the vows, each of which offers a different aspect. This vow expressed our attitude: renunciation of temporal advantages in order to proclaim the Gospel. A second saw the possibility of expressing the mystical dimension of our commitment to the poor, an integral part of the purpose of the Institute. This is how the Founder acted, and if we did the same, we would encourage the Brothers and attract vocations. A third was keen to show that in the Institute most of the Districts were in favour of keeping his vow. He linked the spirit of gratuity with the reason for vocations and the purpose of the Institute.

*The debate continued on the afternoon of the same day.*

A first speaker said he agreed with the Report, but wanted the vow expressed in such a way that all the Brothers felt they were committed. The word "gratuity" laid itself open to confusion, because it referred too much to money. He preferred the "educational service of the poor". A second capitulant accepted the spirit of the Report, but was opposed to this new vow. The meaning of gratuity had evolved, in fact. Here, it was being given a new content, and new obligations were being created. The Institute had not been consulted on this matter. A third found this revised version in agreement with the Declaration and Vatican II thinking. The word "gratuity" needed to be changed, but the Brothers would certainly accept this new aspect. Another thought that the wish to consecrate oneself to the poor should be expressed in some other way than by a vow, which was likely to create problems of conscience. "What exactly are my obligations?", the Brothers will wonder. This was also the opinion of the next speaker who found the Declaration sufficiently explicit on this matter. On the contrary, some say, the two specific vows (gratuity and stability) are capable of redefining the Institute, which is what Brothers wanted. One capitulant supported the vow and its traditional name. He recalled the various interpretations given in the Institute of the vow of gratuity. He thought the 1st Commission had grasped the real meaning to be given to

this vow. Another speaker said it specified our consecration by linking it with the education of the poor. If we wished to give it a juridical formulation, we could say that we committed ourselves not to refuse educational service when it appeared, especially in favour of the poor, if Superiors required it. But someone else said that, if the old vow was difficult to explain, this one would be more so. Let's maintain it through fidelity to our Founder, but without trying too hard to work out its implications for the modern world. Finally, will the professed Brothers be asked to pronounce this new vow? One last speaker admitted that while he did not know how to violate this vow, he personally saw many opportunities for practising it.

Vote to accept the Report as a whole: 85 in favour, 23 opposed, 15 abstentions and 1 *juxta modum*. The Report was accepted.

*Session held on December 4th 1967*<sup>125</sup>.  
*Continuation of the debate on gratuity.*

Several Brothers spoke on article 3. Two Brother Assistants asked if the formulation of this article would not create problems of conscience for some scrupulous Brothers.

Were not all these prescriptions too sublime on the whole? The juridical aspect which had weighed down on the vow of gratuity had been alleviated, but perhaps interior anxiety had been increased by this formulation.

Someone asked if Brothers with perpetual vows would have to renew their vows according to the new formula. The Report

stated it was not a question of new vows, but of a revision of existing vows.

Someone else objected to the word "gratuitously" in § 3. In many languages and places, this word is associated with "not asking" for fees. The word should not appear in the text. If what was meant was "disinterestedness", it should be used. The Reporter pointed out that the word meant "without self-interest", but that the Commission had wanted to use "gratuitously" to reflect traditional usage.

*New names for the specific vows:*

The capitulants were polled and they came up with 107 answers:

\* 11: voted for "gratuity"

\* 39: for "apostolic gratuity"

\* 30: for "educational service of the poor"

\* 12: for "association for the educational service of the poor"

The 1st Commission asked the assembly to vote on the following motion: "the vote traditionally called "vow of gratuity" will be called "the vow of apostolic gratuity". The Commission stayed completely neutral: if the motion was not accepted, they would present another which would include the idea of "educational service of the poor". A long discussion followed.

One objected to the formula – for the reasons already mentioned – because of the in-

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<sup>125</sup> The book of records says November by mistake.

clusion of “gratuitously”. Several agreed with this point of view and suggested the use of the word “detachment”. A third wanted to merge the two specific vows: “fidelity to the education of youth, above all the poor”.

The Reporter proposed immediately the second motion: “the vow called up till now “vow of gratuity” will be called henceforward “vow in favour of the educational service of the poor”. There were several objections to this formulation. There were many Brothers who spent their lives in institutions which charged quite heavy fees. Someone said it was a new vow, and did not accept it. On the other hand, someone else said that “educational service of the poor” specified also our mission in the Church, and he agreed with the name.

*The debate continued on the afternoon of the same day.*

Two capitulants asked in a written note to speak to...? (part of sentence missing).

The first, a missionary Brother Assistant, recalled that during the report on this specific vow, the assembly had given its agreement to the revised content of this vow, acceptable to everyone. Two important aspects were to be safeguarded: the direct

apostolate of the poor, and the indirect apostolate where we had schools for the more affluent classes. The expression “educational service of the poor” covered both these aspects. One could be concerned for the poor in both types of school, although in different ways.

In any case, it is normal for us to have, like any living organisation, a vocabulary of our own, to a certain extent. Let us adopt a term as close as possible to the reality we wish to describe. Translations into our own languages, and the instruction given to our postulants will do the rest.

The second capitulant agreed that, apart from some differences regarding vocabulary, the assembly was very much in agreement.

Preferential service did not mean “exclusive”. This would not be realistic. This had nothing to do with the school clientele. It was a question of personal attitudes, of our interior concern for the poor whom we simply try to serve, as well as we can, wherever we are”.

*(The question remained unresolved: This name did not obtain the required majority.)*  
p. 306-309

## 2. THE NUMBER OF BROTHERS IN THE INSTITUTE: EVOLUTION BETWEEN 1965 AND 1975

Year	Brothers (1 /I)	New Entries	Deaths		Departures Temp. vows		Departures Perpet. vows		Brothers on 31/12	
1965	16,755	708	4,22 %	148	0,88 %	331	1,96 %	162	0,96 %	16,824
1966	16,824	614	3,53 %	150	0,88 %	400	2,37 %	258	1,53%	16,632
1967	16,632	319	1,91 %	166	0,99 %	522	3,14 %	285	1,71 %	15,978
1968	15,978	604	3,77 %	175	1,09 %	402	2,51 %	262	1,64 %	15,755
1969	15,755	212	1,34 %	185	1,17 %	43	2,71 %	369	2,34 %	14,975
1970	14,975	219	1,46 %	155	1,03 %	39	2,93 %	367	2,45 %	14,233
1971	14,233	229	1,60 %	170	1,19 %	332	2,34 %	387	2,71 %	13,573
1972	13,573	139	1,02 %	179	1,31 %	330	2,43 %	334	2,46 %	12,869
1973	12,869	175	1,36 %	179	1,39 %	240	1,86 %	258	2,00 %	12,367
1974	12,367	180	1,45 %	145	1,17 %	158	1,27 %	259	2,08 %	11,985
1975	11,985	160	1,33 %	181	1,51 %	156	1,30 %	214	1,78 %	11,568

## COMPARISON BETWEEN NUMBER OF BROTHERS IN 1976 AND 1986

	1976	1986
Total number of Brothers	11,230	9,037 (= -2,193)
Novices	179	178
Brothers with temp. vows/total of Brothers	10,03 %	7,60 %
Average age of Institute (years & months)	52 y. 3 m.	57 y. 4 m.

### *Brothers according to regions*

	December 1976	December 1985
AFRICA	263	269
ARLEP	1,777	1,483
ASIA (PARC)	841	603
CANADA	787	499
UNITED STATES	1,701	1,462
CENTRAL EUROPE	1,024	780
FRANCE	2,063	1,637
ENGLAND/IRELAND	596	466
ITALY	575	427
MEDITERRANEAN	205	133
RELAL	1,398	1,249

(General Council report to the 41st general Chapter, p. 27)

**BROTHERS IN THE INSTITUTE ON DECEMBER 31ST 1992****a. By continents**

	Comm.	Perpet. vows	Temp. vows	Tot. Bro.	Novices
AFRICA	92	302	110	412	44
AMERICA	427	2,520	222	2,742	46
ASIA-OCEANIA	131	543	69	612	5
EUROPE <sup>(*)</sup>	545	3,874	158	4,032	26
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,195</b>	<b>7,239</b>	<b>559</b>	<b>7,798</b>	<b>121</b>

<sup>(\*)</sup> Including Aruba and without Turkey.

**b. By regions of the Institute**

	Comm.	Perpet. vows	Temp. vows	Tot. Bro.	Novices
AFRICA/RELAF	79	245	109	354	44
RELAL	246	958	187	1,145	45
ENGLAND/IRELAND	58	350	7	357	1
CANADA	35	379	6	385	-
ARLEP	168	1,222	81	1,303	15
RELEC	99	608	55	663	7
FRANCE	187	1,364	10	1,374	2
ITALY	40	364	5	369	1
MEDITERRANEAN	21	84	5	89	-
PARC	116	482	65	547	5
USA/TORONTO	146	1,183	29	1,212	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,195</b>	<b>7,239</b>	<b>559</b>	<b>7,798</b>	<b>121</b>

## EPILOGUE

At the end of this work some kind of assessment is called for. While leaving the reader free to draw his own conclusions, the author feels he needs to say something about two aspects which, while not totally independent, are quite different. The first consists of characteristics it would be more correct to call limitations of this work. The other consists in certain conclusions the author has drawn in the course of his work and which he would like to share with his readers.

### 1. Some limitations which affect this work

1. Some, the more obvious ones, result directly from the documentary limitations it was felt essential to impose. The effect of this is that we hear very little of what the grass roots thought, and a great deal, and almost exclusively, the opinion of the government of the Institute, or more precisely, the voice of the Superior General of the Institute. Without wishing to suggest in any way that the Superiors did not represent the Body of the Institute, one notices immediately the incomplete nature of the point of view adopted. There seems no need to explain in detail the consequences – only too obvious – of their choice of view.

2. Although they are included in the case just referred to, I feel I ought to say that a

number of specific points were mentioned to me by my fellow Brothers, who were kind enough to help me in my research, which I have not been able to develop.

As gratuity occupied much space in the history of the Institute, it would have been useful to see and compare it with the way it was practised in other Orders or Congregations, both when our Institute began and later.

The conflict which broke out and spread in connection with the famous “Latin Question”, especially in the United States, could have been envisaged from the point of view of the service of the poor. A serious study could have shown:

a) the connection there could have been between this subject and the educational concern for the poor, in the countries and the circumstances in which the problem arose;

b) and to what extent the conditions of the Institute in its country of origin were considered valid in other countries <sup>1</sup>.

The great missionary expansion of the Institute, which began in the middle of the

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<sup>1</sup> There exists a letter from Brother Miguel Febres Cordero (a photocopy in the Saint’s shrine in Quito, Ecuador) addressed to Brother Assistant Junien, explaining why and how Latin was being introduced into one of the Brothers’ schools in Quito.

19th century, needs more detailed study, if it has not yet been done. It would be useful to see to which sectors of the population the service of the Institute was directed initially and then later.

The lesser or greater flexibility regarding religious education, and the ecumenical factor involved, may have had an effect on the number of poor pupils attending our schools.

During the course of this work, there has been merely a mention of the extensive work undertaken by the Institute in faith-support groups or apostolic youth movements (Youth Catholic Action and Young Catholic Workers, etc). Many of these movements were frequented by the poor or dealt with the poor and offered the Brothers a field of action with other pastoral workers, which was more pluralistic than that proposed in ordinary schools.

Hardly anything was said about the new schemes started after the second world war, especially regarding Brothers who went to work in factories. Within the school context, the most obvious version of this was the strong impulse given to technical and arts and crafts schools. But there were other schemes which, abandoning formal school teaching, tried to draw closer to the world of the working class, which we thought we had lost.

3. The lack of references to current ways of thinking and acting in the political, economic, cultural or religious world, made it difficult to assess the full extent of the In-

stitute's response to the needs of the poor in specific areas and in the world.

Not being able to hear the voice of the poor, we really do not know what they think of the Lasallian service they received, nor what results it achieved.

## 2. Some conclusions

### *1. Public schools or private schools?*

Although the names appeared in the 18th century, it was in the 19th that the difference between the two became crucial. Public schools become identified with State schools, entirely dependent on the State or on its administrative regions.

It is clear that, at the beginning of the Institute, when the above conditions did not apply, the Founder and the Brothers saw their gratuitous schools as a public service. They constituted the educational service which towns, by the choice of their authorities and in a Christian age, offered their population. Up to the French Revolution this conviction never ceased growing.

In the 19th century, the Institute did not see, in theory at least, any other way it could serve the people. But the changes which occurred in educational policy, and the diversity of the conditions in the various countries where the Brothers were established, made it very difficult if not impossible for them to continue their apostolate of Christian education in this framework. Having decided to continue its educational work on a community basis, the Institute opted for



the private school as the only means at its disposal in the great majority of cases.

This choice, of course, meant that school clientele had to shoulder a steadily increasing share of the cost of the service it received. The Institute was not able to fight these rising costs effectively, despite its vigorous efforts at government or at local level. From the canonical point of view, this departure from traditional practice had to be legitimised by recourse to the Holy See. The 1879 indult was so wide-ranging and generous in its dispensation that it never became necessary to ask for any more<sup>2</sup>. But this juridical tranquillity regarding gratuity did not prevent the development of an ever-increasing gap between the poor and the Lasallian schools. The awareness of this gap was expressed in the slogan of the 39th General Chapter: "Let us return to the poor". Among the means suggested at the time and later, there was the attempt to increase the presence of the Institute in the State schools.

The decision to implement such a proposition could be made only at a local level, given the very complex diversity of pastoral and political conditions. In each case, it would be necessary to assess the possibility of direct access to the poor, of maintaining the Lasallian identity of the service offered, and of adopting a new approach involving the shared mission.

Public or private, schools face a great challenge if they wish to become places which promote justice and especially social

justice. As schools, they are part of a system (or of several), by which they are supported, but regarding which they have to develop a critical awareness in their pupils. If they are Christian schools, they have to share in the prophetic mission of the Church, assessing reality in the light of the values of the Kingdom of God. It is not easy to condemn those by whom one is supported. On more than one occasion, the Institute has been seen as the ally of the powers that be. Fortunately, it can also point to its martyrs.

Recalling that its purpose, more than conducting schools, consists in educating in a Christian manner<sup>3</sup>, the Institute is faithful to its history when it adopts different means to offer education to the poor. Today, the choice of possibilities is much wider than in the days of the Founder, and requires the same boldness and spiritual depth.

## *2. The service of the poor and Lasallian spirituality*

This last point is intended to recall, in case there is any need, that for the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, to serve the poor through education is not simply something to do: it is its very being.

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<sup>2</sup> The Superior General Imier de Jésus made enquiries at the Vatican to see if he ought to ask for another indult regarding school remuneration. He was told that the 1879 met all current needs perfectly.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. RC 1.3

To affirm this is to accept an indissoluble link between service and spirituality<sup>4</sup>. To put this more clearly: to live, and to live spiritually (according to “the spirit which is proper to it”, and according to the Spirit), the Institute needs to devote itself generously to the service of the poor through education, according to the conditions indicated by its Founder, and recalled today by the Rule, that is, conformity with the poor and with Jesus Christ, and recognition of Jesus Christ in the poor.

That John Baptist de La Salle sees the service of the poor as a spiritual fact, grafted directly onto the Mystery of Christ, is abundantly illustrated throughout *Announcing the Gospel to the Poor*. As the authors of this book said: “The interior participation in the Mystery of Christ guides and inspires the daily life of the Brother; and his life’s struggle to promote justice and the service of the Gospel for the benefit of poor and abandoned children, introduces more vitally into the unique Mystery of Jesus Christ” (p.179).

One can see from this that “gratuity” is much more than simply fidelity to a point of Rule. It concerns the whole life of the Brother. It should be seen as part of a total consecration to God, of one’s self-sacrifice in union with the sacrifice of Christ. It is this interior disposition which makes him accept joyfully the sufferings inherent in the ministry: “and to bear patiently the difficulties he encounters in it”, prepared “to give

his own life” for the children “of whom he has charge”, which is equivalent of “giving his life for Jesus in the exercise of the ministry” (p.267-268).

“What constitutes the spiritual identity of the Brother, is this tension by which he lives out in God, by the movement of the Spirit, his commitment in the world and his service of man, while the obedience of faith, zeal born of hope and the unassuaged impulse of love, send him constantly to the poor so that by their “salvation” the will of God may be done, his Kingdom may come, and his name may be sanctified” (p.303).

“Everything fits admirably in the unity of this mystical theology: God calls the Brother to send him to proclaim the Gospel to the poor. Introduced in this special manner into relationship with a love that encompasses all existence, the Brother is called day after day, to live poor and detached from everything, so that he can consecrate himself without reserve to the poor that God entrusts to him. Going to them with love and disinterestedness, he manifests to them in his person the saving love of God manifested in Jesus Christ. On their part, the poor with whom he has conformed invite him to a greater conformity with Christ”<sup>5</sup> (p.331).

<sup>4</sup> Supposing that was what he wanted to say, I admit that Brother Pedro M. Gil says it better and at greater length in *Three centuries of Lasallian identity* (p.11-29).

<sup>5</sup> AEP, pages 199, 267-268, 303, 331.

The paragraphs we have quoted develop the well-known affirmation-wish contained in the *Declaration*: “An authentic service of the poor through the apostolate of education will contribute greatly to an integration and a deepening of the personal life of a Brother, helping him to overcome more easily the difficulties sometimes encountered by those who have staked their whole lives on Jesus Christ” (34.3).

But in addition, and almost without forcing, what is said there of every Brother can

be validly applied to the life of the “Body of the Society”. To affirm that “an authentic service of the poor through the apostolate of education will contribute greatly to an integration and a deepening of the collective life of the Institute” seems perfectly legitimate. By committing itself resolutely to “this authentic service”, the Community which is the heir of St John Baptist de La Salle, is simply re-affirming its fidelity to the Holy Spirit which inspired its origins and breathed life into the best and the most numerous pages of its history.

## ABBREVIATIONS

### 1. Writings of John Baptist de La Salle

- CE *Conduct of the Christian Schools*. CL 24: the 1706 manuscript edition compared with the 1720 printed edition.
- DA *The Duties of a Christian to God and the means to acquit oneself well of them*. In continuous text. 1703 edition in CL 20. Page given.
- DB *id.* In question and answer form. CL 21.
- DC *Regarding external and public worship that Christians are obliged to give God, and the means to do so. Third part of Duties...* CL 22.
- GA\* *Long Summary of the Duties of a Christian to God*. 1727 edition. CL 23.
- LA Autograph letters
- LC Copied letters.
- LI Printed letters. Letters are classified according to the (French) critical edition of 1954.
- MD *Meditations for all the Sundays of the year*. Number and point indicated.
- MF *Meditations for the principal feasts of the year* (id.)
- MR *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* (id)
- RB *Rules of Propriety and Christian Politeness*. 1703 edition. CL 19.
- RC *Common Rules of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*. 1718 text. CL 25

(N.B. The abbreviations used here are those of the *Complete Works* of St La Salle, Rome 1993. Information in brackets refers to the above volume and to the computerised version.)

### 2. Other abbreviations

- GA Generalate archives
- AEP Michel SAUVAGE and Miguel CAMPOS, FSC: *Announcing the Gospel to the Poor*, Paris Beauchesne, 1977.

- BER            BERNARD, FSC: *The Admirable Conduct of Divine Providence in the Person of...John Baptist de La Salle*, 1721, CL 4.
- BLAIN Jean Baptiste BLAIN: *La Vie de Monsieur Jean Baptiste de La Salle*, Rouen, 1733, 2 vols. CL 7 & 8.
- CAMPOS      Miguel CAMPOS, FSC: *L'itinéraire évangélique de saint Jean Baptiste de La Salle et le recours à l'écriture*. 2 vols. CL 45 & 46, Rome 1974.
- CL            Cahiers Lasalliens. A series of occasional publications
- EL            Études Lasalliennes (as above).
- GALLEGO    Saturnino GALLEGRO, FSC: *Vida y Pensamiento de San Juan Bautista de La Salle*, 2 vols. Madrid BAC N°477 and 478, 1986.
- MAC           François Elie MAILLEFER: *La Vie de M. Jean Baptiste de La Salle*, Rheims, 1723. (Carbon copy), CL 6 with MS MAR.
- MAR           *id.* 1740 (MS Rheims) CL 6.
- POUTET      Yves POUTET: *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle et les origines lasalliennes*, Rennes, 1970, 2 vols.
- RIGAULT     Georges RIGAULT: *Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes*, 9 vols, Paris, Plon, 1937-1953.
- RL            Rivista Lasalliana, Turin.

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