

Hermans, Maurice-Auguste. "John Baptist de La Salle and the First Brothers: Christian Educators for the Society of Their Time." *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 4, no. 2 (Institute for Lasallian Studies at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota: 2013).

© Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Readers of this article have the copyright owner's permission to reproduce it for educational, not-for-profit purposes, if the author and publisher are acknowledged in the copy.

---

## **John Baptist de La Salle and the First Brothers: Christian Educators for the Society of Their Time**

Maurice-Auguste Hermans, FSC, J.C.D.

### **1. The Life of the Lower Classes in the France of 1680-1715**

The splendor and grandeur of France of the seventeenth century must be seen against the background of the life of the lower classes, a life of extreme poverty endured by a very large section of the population; a period of disturbances and revolts; a society where the police force was tyrannical and the system of justice was biased; a population that was both ignorant and superstitious.

The administration was meddlesome and uncertain. In corporations, favoritism and legalism prevailed, the victims being always the apprentices and the unskilled workers (known as casual workers). In each guild or corporation, it was difficult to receive recognition as an apprentice. Apprenticeship, which was unpaid and even burdensome, was long and uncertain. The master was only too ready to take advantage of the apprentice who had no redress and who was often treated as an odd-job servant, rather than as a workman doing his apprenticeship.

Wars and bad harvests reduced or completely destroyed food supplies. Areas more or less extensive – and, more than once, the whole country – experienced scarcity, high cost of food, and even famine. On this point, De La Salle's early biographers<sup>2</sup> fall short of the reality such as we have been able to discover it from recently published studies.

Concerning the poor, the intervention of the state in the large cities took the particular form of "containment," or we might call it "isolation." The poor were forced to live in a ghetto, the general hospital<sup>3</sup> for the healthy poor. There they were forced to work; and if they were still too young to work, they began to learn a trade. Everybody was taught Christian doctrine.

Private intervention on behalf of the poor took the form of distribution of food and various alms by charitable groups or fraternities; but during the seventeenth century, charity led naturally to the creation of schools reserved for the children of poor families ("charity schools").

It can be said that there are two kinds of alms. One is a corporal work of mercy, which serves to withdraw the poor person from his indigence and from the misery from which he suffers in his body. The other is a spiritual work of mercy, which consists in relieving the spiritual misery and needs of one's neighbor. Not all men are in a position to give goods to the poor; but everybody can help them spiritually, either by their good example

---

These are the extensive outline notes distributed by Brother Maurice-Auguste Hermans in 1983 during his presentations at the Centro Internazionale Lasalliano (Generalate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Rome, Italy). The notes were prepared and edited for publication by Brother William Mann. The quotes are as provided by Brother Maurice-Auguste; they were translated prior to publication of the English-language texts referenced.

or by procuring for them or giving them instruction. This is the principal duty of the priest and of all those who have the duty of teaching others and working for their salvation.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. How De La Salle Presents His Work in the Common Rules

The purpose of this Institute, according to the *Common Rules*, is to give a Christian education to children.

The purpose of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children. It is for this reason that the schools are conducted, in order that the children, being under the guidance of teachers from morning until evening, these teachers may be able to teach them how to lead good lives by instructing them in the truths of our holy religion and by inspiring them with Christian maxims, thus giving them a suitable education.<sup>5</sup>

*The “purpose” or “end”*: There is only one finality given in the above passage. Several decades later, and again in the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century before the Second Vatican Council, it was thought necessary to speak of two ends: the first, the sanctification of the Brothers; the second, the education of children.

*“The children”*: We are not speaking of any particular category of children. Here, as often elsewhere in his writings, De La Salle uses an all-embracing term. In the whole of the *Common Rules*, the word “scholar” (pupil or school-boy) occurs 61 times and the word “children” eight times. In the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*,<sup>6</sup> “children” is found 80 times, “disciple” 26 times, and the “poor” six times altogether, of which two occur in the phrase “working-men and the poor.” More often, the word “children” is accompanied by expressions such as: the children who are entrusted to your care, the children who are confided to you, the children whom God has confided to your care, the children whom you teach.

In the *Meditations for the Principal Feasts*,<sup>7</sup> the word “children” occurs 60 times, “disciples” 20 times, and “pupils” seven times. In the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*,<sup>8</sup> the word “scholars” occurs 590 times as against about 50 references to “children.”

*“A suitable education”*: A Christian education is certainly implied here, but one that takes into consideration the real situation of the child. It is not an education which is calculated to lift him out of the social context to which he belongs, but rather an education which will prepare him to live properly in the social milieu to which he belongs.

***The necessity of this Institute***: If the Lasallian School is meant to be open to all children, it nevertheless is especially necessary for a particular category of children.

This Institute is of very great necessity, because working class and the poor, being usually little instructed, and being occupied all day in gaining their own livelihood and that of their children, cannot themselves give them the necessary information and a suitable and Christian education. It was for the purpose of procuring this advantage for the children of the working class and the poor that the Christian Schools were instituted.<sup>9</sup>

“*The working class and the poor*”: This linking of the working class and the poor is to be found seven times explicitly in the writings of the Founder, including twice in *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* concerning certain entertainments<sup>10</sup> and twice in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*.<sup>11</sup>

It is a practice by no means uncommon for the working class and the poor to allow their children to live like vagrants, wandering aimlessly during those times when the parents cannot find anything for them to do. They have no concern to send them to school because of their poverty which prevents their paying the teacher, or because, being obliged to seek work away from their homes, they are compelled to leave their children without supervision.<sup>12</sup>

In the seventeenth century, a poor person was one who owned nothing. He lived on his wits and from begging. Each parish had its own poor, listed as such in the parish registers. They had escaped from the “containment” in general hospitals mentioned above.

Usually the workingman was not classified with the poor. Having completed his apprenticeship, he became a journeyman. Therefore, he had to find an employer as he was not able to work on his own account. He, therefore, risked periods of unemployment of longer or shorter duration; and as he had only his work to gain a livelihood for himself and his family, he often enough found himself destitute. He really was poor, even if not officially declared so.

The line of demarcation between the condition of workingmen and that of the poor shifted continuously. This explains how easy it was for De La Salle to put both into the category of those for whom it was necessary to establish the Christian Schools. This explains how, more than once in the *Meditations*, the word “poor” is used to designate both, which does not mean to say that he lost sight of the workingman.

***The clientele of the schools:*** There is no completely accurate answer to the question of who, in fact, attended the Christian schools of De La Salle and the first Brothers between 1680-1715. However, we can get an approximate idea.

In a sworn petition of the Writing Masters,<sup>13</sup> presented in Paris by their legal advisor in 1704<sup>14</sup> a list is given of the names of heads of families who sent their sons to the schools of the first Brothers: “M. de la Roche, living on his private means; Chevillot, qualified master surgeon; Piquet, master wheelwright; Dorian, master locksmith; Arnault, wine merchant; Levasseur, wholesale grocer; Lequin, goldsmith; all of them well-to-do.”<sup>15</sup>

*The Conduct of the Christian Schools* can also supply us with some information. In the manuscript text,<sup>16</sup> five admissions forms are presented as models. Two of them do not mention the occupation of the parents. The three others show as the occupation of the father: carder, for the first one; serge-maker, for the second; supervisor, for the third. And for the last mentioned, it further points out that the mother is a second-hand dealer and the uncle is a registrar.<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere, the *Conduct* lays it down that a scholar whose parents are rich shall not be allowed to come for more than the first day of classes without having all the books he needs.<sup>18</sup> To the poor, but not to those who can pay, a book may be given as a reward.<sup>19</sup> Parents have to supply paper of

good quality as soon as their sons commence to learn to write. The pupils are given ink and handwriting models at the school.<sup>20</sup>

A rather mixed clientele, therefore, attended the first Lasallian schools. If certain passages from the *Rules* and the *Meditations* remind the Brothers that they must neither neglect poor pupils nor prefer the children of the rich to them, it is because, without any doubt, every day in their classes they saw in front of them and around about them both rich and poor pupils.

They shall manifest equal affection for all the pupils, more even for the poor than for the rich, because they are entrusted by their Institute more with the former than with the latter.<sup>21</sup>

You shall give an account to God as to whether you have taught you pupils the things that it is fitting they should know, according to their age and ability; whether you have not neglected some who are even the most ignorant, perhaps also the poorest; whether you have not shown favoritism toward some because they were rich or pleasant or because they possessed a more likeable disposition than others.<sup>22</sup>

The character of the clientele of the first Lasallian schools might be summed up in these few words: firstly, but not exclusively, the poor. For forty years, De La Salle was to keep to this policy: schools open to all-comers, gratuitous schools for all. The Lasallian schools refused to practice the segregation which was imposed or tolerated by all other schools: the Little Schools which were fee-paying; the Parish School which distinguished the pupils who paid from those who did not; the Charity Schools which were open to the poor to the exclusion of all others.

To these options of the Founder, we might relate the texts of the *Rules and Constitutions*<sup>23</sup> and the *Declaration*<sup>24</sup> that underline heavily the preference to be given to the educational service of the poor, without ever making it an occasion for refusing other young people for whom our ministry may be useful.

### **3. How De La Salle Presents His Work Outside the Institute**

De La Salle presents his work to those outside of the Institute in the *Memoir on the Habit*.<sup>25</sup>

To assure the Christian education of children, De La Salle and the first Brothers formed themselves into a community. This community was of the evangelical type, where everything was held in common and where all service to the neighbor was entirely gratuitous. To assure this education, the community of the Brothers offered a specific service. In their schools, they taught and catechized, both functions being complementary.

The community is indispensable in order to guarantee the stability and continuity of the work, even if the community is established and founded solely on Providence. The Brothers adopted a habit<sup>26</sup> that distinguishes them from all others; and it is, in fact, a sort of “religious profession” that gives even greater assurance of the stability of the community.

This work of education demands the entire dedication of the Brother. He is, therefore, unable to perform any of the functions which are normally entrusted to the “cleric-as-teacher.”

In order to be able to live in community, the Brothers limit the scope of their activity to city parishes, since the situation in the country can justify and support only one teacher, who, moreover, is called upon to perform many functions in addition to those required of a teacher.

In order to provide the rural parishes with clerical teachers who were better prepared for their work, De La Salle established a training college for country school-masters. He made several attempts to do this, succeeding first in Rheims, then in Paris, then in Saint-Denis.

The *Memoir* reminds us more than once of the situation of the Brothers who taught “outside the house” and even in distant wards of the city for “the convenience of the children.” Wherever a request was made for Brothers, it was necessary to guarantee lodging in community and financial support. Where a request was made for Brothers, they were not to be required to perform services or do work other than to teach and catechize pupils in their schools or accompany these same pupils to Mass and to other parish services.

#### **4. A School Program Open to Adaptation**

It is, above all, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* that gives the information in the matter of how school programs adapted. The following few features may be noted.

***The priority given to the French language:*** The idea of teaching in the vernacular was “in the air” at the time but was not accepted everywhere for boys’ schools, which were too readily considered by the clergy as an early preparation for ecclesiastical studies. For De La Salle, it would have been an injustice to devote a large portion of the school time to teaching Latin to children almost all of whom would never need it.

De La Salle was to explain this matter at length to the Bishop of Chartres. We know his argument only through the early biographer Blain, who goes so far as to reproduce it at length and within quotation marks; but with Blain this is not always a proof of its authenticity.<sup>27</sup> To devote too much time to the reading of Latin would have meant leaving insufficient time for teaching how to read French well. The pupil would thus start life without acquiring a skill that would be indispensable to him.

***A preparation that was both practical and useful:*** The pupils received a thorough grounding in the reading of French, not only printed matter but also manuscripts, printed matter in different kinds of graphic symbols, and manuscripts of increasing difficulty.

Following the teaching of reading French came a thorough training in penmanship, leading eventually to training pupils to express themselves in original composition. Preference was given to matters of obvious utility to the future craftsman or workman. They copied or drew up themselves promissory notes, receipts, work contracts, deeds, bonds, documents giving power of attorney, hiring leases and farming leases, everything that they would subsequently need.<sup>28</sup>

**Concern about constant attendance:** All absences must be explained. Parents must be told of the harm that is done to the children when they do not attend school regularly.

The means of correcting the negligence of the parents, especially the parents of the poor, will be, firstly, to speak to them and make them realize their obligations to have their children taught, and the wrong that they do them by not having them learn to read and write, pointing out how much damage this can do them and how they will never be capable of any employment if they do not know how to read and write ... When parents withdraw their children from school at too young an age in order to put them to work, without being sufficiently instructed, it is necessary to point out to them that they are doing them great harm and that for the sake of earning very little, they are exposing them to the danger of foregoing a very considerable advantage. Therefore, it is necessary to explain to them how important it is for a workingman to know how to read and write, since, however slow he may be, if he can read and write he is capable of everything.<sup>29</sup>

**Concern for the particular situation:** Great importance was placed on concern for the pupil who is in a particular situation.

It is necessary that the pupils know how to read perfectly in French as well as in Latin, before teaching them to write. If, however, it happens that there are some who have reached the age of twelve and who have not yet begun to learn to write, they could be set to learning to write using Latin, provided it is considered that they will not be staying at school long enough to be able to learn to write. The Brother Director and the Inspector will give their attention to this matter.<sup>30</sup>

Should it happen that any student will be coming to school for only a short time and needs to give more times to writing than do the others in order to gain sufficient skill, he could be allowed to write during school time apart from the time for reading manuscripts, prayers and catechism, provided he can read French, Latin, and the book on politeness so well that he would not lose anything by using such reading time for writing.<sup>31</sup>

**Concern for the progress of the individual:** Whether it is a question of reading or writing, the teacher should be careful to ensure that each pupil understands the lesson, makes progress, and reaches a standard for promotion to a higher grade. He will also note whether he needs more help. Promotions and rewards encourage effort or act as a sanction.

Corrections have the same goal. *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* requires that penances and corrections be rare, prudent, appropriate, and instructive.

If a school is to be well run and to have good order, punishments should be rare.<sup>32</sup>

One must examine oneself so as to act with judgment and work hard to maintain order among the pupils, scarcely ever having recourse to punishments.<sup>33</sup>

You should refrain from punishing the children when they first come to the school. You must first get to know their spirit, their disposition, and their inclinations ... But if it is

important to act in this way with regard to new pupils, it is of no less consequence for a teacher who is new in a class to refrain from any punishment until he has gotten to know the pupils.<sup>34</sup>

***A wide range of educational ventures undertaken:*** A wide range of educational ventures were undertaken by De La Salle and the first Brothers at the beginning of the Institute. Some of those have continued, and some new ventures have been undertaken.

*The Christian schools:* It was because of their competence and the success of their schools that De La Salle and the first Brothers were called upon to take charge of works already in existence or planned for the future. The towns of Rethel and Château-Porcien asked for teachers as early as 1682. For the benefit of the children of sailors in Calais and Marseille and for the children of Protestants in Ales and Vans, the Brothers devoted themselves to pupils of a more special kind.

*The Sunday schools:* These were already popular elsewhere, but not, it seems, in Paris. Their success was due to the choice of the program drawn up with a view to the needs of the clientele of apprentices and young workmen. Some Brothers objected because of the difficulties and dangers of the work. It even reached the point where the Founder had to oppose their views in order to try to continue this work.

*The boarding school for the young Irish boys:* This was only an episode, but it was very significant. King Louis XIV intervened on behalf of a certain number of refugee Irish families, who were living in strained circumstances. The parish priest of Saint-Sulpice, La Chétardie, was approached since the majority of these families were living in his parish. The girls were placed in convents; a group of young boys was entrusted to De La Salle. He gave them, or had them given, a sufficient knowledge of French and of the customs of the society in which they were now to live. The majority of these young people would eventually enter the French army. Emphasis has sometimes been placed on the “nobility” of these young refugees. We would rather stress the fact that they were emigrants without any resources.

*The training college for country schoolmasters:* There were several projects for the training of country schoolmasters in 1683 and 1685.<sup>35</sup> This finally became a reality, at the latest, in Rheims in 1687. A second opening was made in Paris (1699-1705). A third opened at Saint-Denis (1708). One finds a reference to these in the *Common Rules*, where it is written: “It shall also be permitted that a teacher who wishes to learn the method of teaching school shall be allowed to enter (the schools), provided he has the written permission of the Brother Director.”<sup>36</sup>

*The boarding schools of Saint-Yon:* A boarding school, a reformatory, and a prison were opened at Saint-Yon. No document of the period can establish precisely the type of inmate, the program followed, or the discipline employed; but the existence of a course of studies answering the needs of sons of tradespeople is without doubt.<sup>37</sup>

## **5. Things to Remember to Properly Evaluate the Project**

If they do not exclude anyone *a priori* from their apostolic project, De La Salle and the Brothers turned, above all, to young people whom others did not want. In addition, they refused to be

scattered in country areas; and they kept away from the general hospital,<sup>38</sup> which was full of poor people. Their schools were not Charity Schools,<sup>39</sup> from which those who were not poor were excluded.

There was, therefore, a refusal to practice discrimination such as was practiced at the time. In the Lasallian schools, rich and poor had to sit side-by-side. This supposed and this facilitated a better education for the poor. It also obliged the child of the wealthy family to mix with a lower social class, and it encouraged both rich and poor to live as better Christians.

When necessary, De La Salle defended the child against his parents who would neglect his education. De La Salle enabled such a child to assert his rights as an apprentice, then as a craftsman or a workman. In doing this, he does not seek to remove him from his social class. Indeed, more than once on this subject, he uses language that surprises us today: “Love those whom God has made poor”<sup>40</sup> and “as the majority are born poor, you must encourage them to despise riches and love poverty.”<sup>41</sup>

## **6. Formation of the Community of the Brothers<sup>42</sup>**

*From the small group of “recruits” of Adrien Nyel to the first Brothers of the Christian Schools:* It is important to recall a few facts:

- Adrien Nyel, the intendant of the Rouen schools incorporated into the general hospital.
- De La Salle and his recent experience with the Community of “secular Daughters” of Nicolas Roland.
- The “Maillefer foundation” (one teacher and his aide) for a charity school in Rheims; the difficulties foreseen by De La Salle; the advice of several prudent persons; the curé of the parish of Saint Maurice as a “figurehead.”
- A second “Des Croyères foundation” (two masters) for the school in the parish of Saint Jacques, which forced Nyel to hastily recruit some teaching masters.

*A group of teaching masters “without any idea of community”:* This was the experience in the presbytery of the parish of Saint Maurice for all of the first masters, as well as the experience of those who lived in the house nearby Hotel De La Salle when the number of masters exceeded the capacity of the presbytery. If they lodged under the same roof and even if they ate at the same table, Nyel and his companions kept their independence.<sup>43</sup>

*The interventions of De La Salle:* He used his wealth in order to make up for the insufficiency of the stipend of those masters who resided with the the curé of the parish of Saint Maurice and to provide the house needed in the parish of Saint Symphorien and the stipend of the two masters “who taught school in the house.” He gave his advice to assist the masters in performing their work, in the drawing up of their first “rule” and time schedule, to initiate them into the spiritual life (a first retreat), and to the requirements of their position as Christian educators. By the offer of his hospitality, he, at first, welcomed them to his house during the time of meals and, later on, during their free time each day. Finally, on 24 June 1681, he shared with them his family dwelling.



*The exodus to rue Neuve:* While he moves out of his family house into a house with them on the rue Neuve<sup>44</sup> in order to reclaim his liberty as regards his own family, he does it, above all, not to be among the masters as a proprietor who had all the rights. De La Salle rented a building in order to live there with the group (then very reduced in numbers) of the masters, not including Nyel. If he saw himself abandoned by most of the first masters, De La Salle saw coming to him some young men “who were not married and who felt an attraction for school work and for a secluded life.” It was with these young men that he could begin life in community: by introducing among them certain “exercises,” a certain cloister, and various regular practices. De La Salle perceived this style of life as necessary in order to assure the good Christian and professional formation of the masters and to maintain the schools (in terms of their survival and also their smooth functioning as places of Christian education).

***From the first house to a “small congregation”:*** This same year, 1682, De La Salle “offered to provide the necessary funds to be used to purchase a house (in Rethel) which could serve to lodge the school masters who would instruct without any recompense the poor children of the city.” The same year still (June 20), he wrote to the Mayor and Aldermen of Chateau-Porcien, promising to send them “two school masters of our community.”

In the meantime, Adrien Nyel took the initiative in regard to two other schools, one in Guise and the other in Laon. Desirous, maybe even obliged to return to Rouen, he asked De La Salle to take charge of these two schools; for a long time, De La Salle refused. But in 1685, Nyel left Laon; and at the request of the local curés and to avoid the ruin of the schools, De La Salle sent “some of his masters” to Guise and Laon.

After this, as his biographers emphasize, De La Salle found himself at the head of a small congregation established in five cities and in two dioceses: Rheims and Laon.

***From the first vows to the first “Rules”:*** Desiring to establish or to maintain a certain uniformity in the different houses, De La Salle held a first “assembly”<sup>45</sup> in Rheims. Representatives of the houses outside of Rheims joined with the Brothers (perhaps all the Brothers) at the rue Neuve.

The agenda of this first assembly is not completely known. Certainly it dealt with the question of their diet and that of the vows, as well as the choice of a name and of a common style of dress. It is suggested that the first *Rule* was composed at this time, but it might have been done at this time or at a later time.

*The name:* Earlier, probably at the rue Neuve, the masters began, among themselves, calling each other “Brother.” The complete and definitive title of “Brothers of the Christian Schools” was undoubtedly adopted and assumed only at a later date.

*The habit:* Several years later (1690), the *Memoire on the Habit*<sup>46</sup> recalled that, at first, the Brothers wore “tight fitting coats without pockets, of a very simple style,” then they adopted the cloak or “capote,” and finally the short soutane. Based on this same text, the habit was definitely finalized during the winter of 1684-1685. After this, the Brothers were conscious of forming a Christian community unlike any other Regular or Secular community then existing in the Church in France.

*The first vows or the first vow:* It was at the end of the first assembly (very probably Trinity Sunday 1686) that some Brothers professed a first temporary vow of obedience to the superior of the community, a vow for three years, but renewable each year for a new period of three years.

A practice was introduced which became practically definitive. Some Brothers made vows, and others did not make vows. These vows were not received in the name of the Church, and the superior himself was present more in the role of a witness than in that of one actively involved.

It can be noted that annual vows were introduced only after the General Chapter<sup>47</sup> of 1858 and that a rescript<sup>48</sup> was obtained for this the following year. The first annual vows in the Institute, then, date from the year 1860.

*The first Rule:* Pressed to write the *Rules*, De La Salle preferred to wait and to live with the Brothers before legislating with and for them. The *Practice of the Daily Regulation*,<sup>49</sup> a 1713 manuscript, probably contains in most of its sections what was decided much earlier, things probably dating back to the first years of the community.

It was during the period at Vaugirard (1692-1698),<sup>50</sup> and most likely in 1693-1694, that the *Common Rules* were drawn up for the first time. It was already practically a complete text, at once doctrinal and practical, which clearly stated the finality and the spirit of the Institute, and set down the obligations special to the Brothers but common to all of them.

***The decisive step of the vow of association and election of the Superior (6 and 7 June 1694):*** Some Brothers had insisted for a long time on binding themselves by perpetual vows, and De La Salle responded favorably to the request of twelve of them. To these (and perhaps even to all the Brothers), he communicated the project of the *Common Rules* and received from them evaluations and suggestions.

During this assembly of 1694, the *Rules* were read again and adopted by the assembled Brothers.

At the end of the assembly (Trinity Sunday, 6 June), De La Salle and twelve Brothers made perpetual vows of obedience to the Superior of the Society, of stability, and of association to keep together gratuitous schools. These were vows with a social finality, for the Brothers vowed themselves to God, but also obliged themselves, one with regard to the other.

On the day after this making of the first perpetual vows, the twelve professed Brothers proceeded to the election of the Superior of the Society. De La Salle was elected in spite of his protestations. The act of the election brought out the exceptional character of the election. Henceforth, no priest would be admitted into the Society; and no one could be chosen as Superior who had not made the vows which the Brothers make.

***The structure of the society:*** Prior already to the vows of 1694, on 21 November 1691, De La Salle, Nicolas Vuyart, and Gabriel Drolin had vowed to devote themselves, until death, to the establishment of the “society” of the Christian Schools.

In 1694, in the formula of vows, as in that of the election of the Superior, there is insistence on the word “society,” though generally De La Salle had written and would still very often use the word “community.”

The appearance of the word “society” indicates the importance which the vow of association took in the eyes of De La Salle, for it gave the community a greater cohesion and stability. After this, it was a matter of defining a “state” and not only a “way” of life.

*The novitiate:* The Vaugirard period was also that of the establishment of an essential structure, the novitiate. In Rheims, all during the first years, there was not a novitiate, wrote Bernard,<sup>51</sup> who added: “fifteen days were sufficient!” Perhaps, but we should not forget that De La Salle lived among the Brothers at rue Neuve, and that they had a “continuing formation” through contact with him.

At rue Neuve, again, and later in 1687, there was a real novitiate. Young men were formed there to the exercises of the community and of the school. At Vaugirard, from 8 October 1691 to the end of the year, there was a period of renewal for some Brothers who had not had the benefit of the novitiate in Rheims. At Vaugirard, again, beginning on 1 November 1692, there was a novitiate for school Brothers and for serving Brothers.<sup>52</sup>

According to the old texts, the novitiate was a period of formation. One was a novice for two years, and these two years were not spent entirely in the house of formation. The novice was obliged to initiate himself into his work.<sup>53</sup> The reception of the habit took place after a first period of initiation, and in all instances prior to the period in community. Taking of first vows presupposed, then, at least the presence of two years of living in community; but the initiate was a member of the community since his entrance and his admission as a postulant.

*Admissions to vows:* The authentic Lasallian texts are very discreet as to what concerns the vows. There are hardly any allusions<sup>54</sup> in the spiritual writings destined for the Brothers. As regards the “formalities of admission,” we have only some words of De La Salle.<sup>55</sup>

***The Common Rules of 1718:*** The *Common Rules* were presented to the General Chapter of 1717, discussed during the absence of De La Salle, and returned to De La Salle for the final revision.<sup>56</sup> It was during these revisions that De La Salle made several significant additions or changes: article 1 of chapter 2; all of chapter 16; the development of the only chapter regarding the schools, which became chapters 7 to 11 of the new text; the new development of the chapters on “the sick,” “letters,” and “the Latin language.”

De La Salle opted for a “single book.” The coutumier<sup>57</sup> was introduced into the *Rules*, which also contained the directives given the Brothers for community living as well as for the classroom. Whatever was the part taken by the Brothers in the deliberations, the composition of the *Common Rules* was very much the personal work of De La Salle.

After the death of De La Salle, and as early as the General Chapter of 1720, the Brothers modified several points of the *Rules*. They would make a new general revision in 1725, after

obtaining the *Bull of Approbation*,<sup>58</sup> introducing among others things two chapters dealing with the vows and making several more minor additions.

The General Chapter of 1734 would decide that, henceforth, the decrees modifying the *Rules* would not be introduced into the body of the text. In this way began the long history of periodic hesitation: to preserve without change some prescriptions that were difficult to observe, or to change the text, which as a result became substantially less faithful to the *Common Rules* of 1718?

***The first Brothers:***<sup>59</sup> Beginning in 1682, De La Salle saw come to him some young men, several of whom were from families that were well off, one or another, even coming from rich families. More than one had abandoned his (classical) studies. During the Vaugirard period, above all during the famine of 1693-1694, the number of postulants and novices was considerable; and of those who persevered, Blain<sup>60</sup> tells us that only two of them were poor.

The oldest register of admissions dates from 1714, and it does not mention those Brothers who died in the Institute or withdrew from the Institute before 1714. Of the 154 Brothers listed for the period of the Founder's lifetime, 14 were under the age of 17 when they were admitted and 112 were between 17 and 29 years of age.

Of these 154 Brothers, 33 came from localities in which the Brothers taught school: Paris (11), Rouen (7), Rheims (4), others (11). And 119 of the 154 Brothers came from less significant centers, or from small villages.

For 8 among them, we know the father's profession: 3 "artisans," 1 "sergeant royal," 1 "inn keeper," 1 "working man," and 2 "professional men."

According to Blain, 6 Brothers who were not 30 years old died before De La Salle left for Paris in February 1688. After that, and prior to the death of the Founder, 45 Brothers died in the Institute.<sup>61</sup> Basing himself on the letters of the Founder, Brother Félix-Paul gives a brief survey of the "beginnings of the Institute."<sup>62</sup>

## **7. Juridical status of the community of the Brothers**

***In 1690, the community was neither established, nor founded ... except on providence:***<sup>63</sup> By the expression "to found," we mean to gather capital, create revenue, or obtain real estate for the purpose of assuring the future of a work. In order to finalize such a foundation, the act was certified by a notary; and in seventeenth-century France, the act was valid in the civil forum and in the ecclesiastical forum.

By the expression "to establish," we mean to recognize the existence of an entity and to assure it of the protection of the civil laws. The establishment of a community supposed the obtaining of royal letters or *letters patent*.

In 1690, De La Salle recognized and even declared that his community had no legal existence, either in the civil forum or in the ecclesiastical forum. It could not claim any protection for itself.

Always, though, it could have been said that several school masters of the community were endowed since benefactors had committed themselves to support one or several masters. In the seminary for country school masters, benefactors<sup>64</sup> took responsibility for the stipends of one or several candidates or clerics. It was possible to speak of students on scholarships and even of funded scholarships since Mazarin had committed himself to such by contract before a notary.<sup>65</sup>

But the community, as such, existed only in virtue of toleration. The bishops did not intervene to forbid it. Most often the civil authorities ignored it as a “community,” not distinguishing the “Christian schools” from the “charity schools” run by pastors, or in their name.<sup>66</sup>

*How to explain this choice made by De La Salle?:* De La Salle had worked to obtain the establishment of the Community of the Infant Jesus,<sup>67</sup> created by Nicolas Roland; and he was completely aware of the pertinent civil and ecclesiastical laws.

For his community, he refused to be the “acquisitive-accountant” that he had been for the Sisters, the one who solicited a “recognition” from the town councillors of Rheims; and he even refused to devote his own wealth in order “to found” his community. Having stated his position, he maintained it during his entire lifetime, making no effort to obtain *letters patent* just as he had initiated no request for approbation on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities, either in France or in Rome.

*The attitude of De La Salle regarding the letters patent:* A decree of the Court of the Parlement of Paris on 5 February 1706 forbade him, as well as the Brothers, to act as a community prior to having obtained *letters patent*. In spite of this judgment, De La Salle and the Brothers continued. Bishop Paul Godet des Marais, his friend and bishop of Chartres, well known to King Louis XIV, vainly offered his services to De La Salle to obtain these *letters patent*.

During the absence of De La Salle in the south of France, Brother Joseph, director of the house in Rheims, wrote to Archbishop De Mailly<sup>68</sup> asking him to intervene in order to obtain *letters patent* for the house in Rheims. He called attention to the wealth that the house possessed and the fact that it was in this house that the Institute had its beginning.

When De La Salle returned in 1714, the Brothers who had experienced some difficulties during his absence (1712-1714) urged him to request the *letters patent*. “You can request them after my death,” replied De La Salle.

*The attitude of De La Salle in regard to the ecclesiastical authorities:* He refused the offer of Archbishop Le Tellier,<sup>69</sup> who would have assured the future of De La Salle’s community if it had remained in the single diocese of Rheims. He would not allow bishops and pastors the right to interfere in matters internal to the community, the rules which some found too austere, the creation of a central novitiate, or the reassignment of the Brothers from one location to another.

If he sent Gabriel Drolin<sup>70</sup> to Rome, it was to give evidence of his fidelity and that of the Brothers to the Holy See, not to request approbation.<sup>71</sup> If he thought of going to Rome himself, it was to visit Gabriel and to satisfy his own devotional inclinations; but it was not to request

approbation, which would have supposed some advance work in France among several of the bishops and with those officials responsible for handling French affairs at the Court of Rome.

*The existence of the Community, then, remained precarious, and De La Salle was fully aware of this:* Already in the *Memoire on the Habit*, De La Salle showed that he understood that ecclesiastical authorities could intervene and disapprove of certain things, notably the wearing of a distinctive habit. When La Chétardie<sup>72</sup> stopped supporting him and sought to change the structures of the Community, De La Salle found himself deprived of the means to resist him.

***Steps to obtain the Bull of Approbation:*** When De La Salle was alive, the Brothers could feel themselves protected, even while lacking legal recognition. With the Founder absent, and above all when he was dead, they could fear some arbitrary interference. In 1721, the first steps were initiated; and they came to an end in September 1724<sup>73</sup> and in January 1725.<sup>74</sup>

*At the court of Rome, two difficulties were raised:* The abridgement of the *Rules*<sup>75</sup> submitted for the approbation of the Holy See had not received the approval of the French bishops. Rapidly, the Brothers obtained numerous approbations, even from certain bishops who had neither called the Brothers to nor received the Brothers in their dioceses. And the “chargé des affaires” of France opposed granting the *Bull* because the Brothers had not obtained *letters patent*, and the pontifical authorities must not try to force the hand of the civilian authorities of the Kingdom of France in the matter. This difficulty was overcome only in September 1724, and this explains the length of the delay in Rome.

*At the court of Rome, there was an unclear perception of the character of the Institute:* The 18 articles, which were submitted for approbation, insisted on the finality of the Institute and on the structures it had given itself.<sup>76</sup> These articles did not present the Institute as a society as similar as possible to the canonical religious state, for that would have been enough to stop the process. The chairman of the process, Cardinal Corsini, spoke of the Institute as being a Confraternity, similar to that of the Christian Doctrine<sup>77</sup> which was already approved by Pope Pius V, but a Confraternity whose members made vows. This was not a novelty since these were simple vows, hence without canonical effects of the vows of religion.

*In virtue of the approbation of Rome:* The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was authorized to exist in the Church and, henceforth, it was of Pontifical Right, though under the authority of the bishops as regards the conducting of its schools.

Neither the bishops, nor the Brothers themselves, could modify the statutes approved by the *Bull* without the consent of the apostolic authority. In addition, only the Holy See had the right to give an authentic interpretation of the texts which it had explicitly approved.<sup>78</sup>

Dispensation from the vows was reserved to the Holy See, and no one could transfer from it to any other Religious Order whatever, without the consent of the Superior of the Institute.

***During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:*** The *Bull* left the Institute outside of the canonical category of “Regulars.” But most of the Congregations approved at this time, and since then,<sup>79</sup> also remain outside of the “Regular State.”

During the eighteenth century, in several cities, the Brothers were recognized as belonging to the body of the “Regulars,” but evidently this changed nothing of the value of the *Bull*. More than once, the superiors of the Brothers consulted the Sorbonne to find out if the Institute had not been approved as “Religious,” but evidently the replies were negative.

During the nineteenth century, the Congregations with simple vows, but also some Congregations and Societies without public vows, were progressively taken under control by the Holy See<sup>80</sup> which tried to unify “the Religious Life.” At the same time, in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, as in a large number of others, among those in charge at least, a certain uneasiness developed. Why remain, thus, on the fringe of the canonical categories?

At the beginning of the twentieth century, on the eve of the promulgation of the *Code of Canon Law* in 1917, those Congregations with simple and public vows were defined as belonging to the canonical religious state. It was the end of a long and slow evolution, or even of two converging evolutions: that of the common law of the Church and that of the thinking or consciousness of the members of those “quasi religious” Congregations and Institutes.

Very probably, then, our superiors had decided that we had no other choice and that, henceforth, we were too far from being a “Society living the common life without public vows,” as were and as have remained the Daughters of Charity, the Lazarists, and many others.

### Notes

1. It was, in part, as a result of the efforts of Brother Maurice-Auguste Hermans that the 38th General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in 1956 set up the office of Lasallian Studies in the FSC Generalate in Rome. He served as the international director of the office of Lasallian Studies from its inception until his death in 1987 and, as such, oversaw the Cahiers lasalliens (CL) publications project. For a presentation of his important role in the evolution of Lasallian studies, see “50 Years, and More, of Lasallian Studies: Chronicle and Perspectives” by Brother Alain Houry in *Digital Review of Lasallian Research* 1 (2010): 2-25.

2. Cf. *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies (Maillefer and Bernard)* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996) and *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle: A Biography in Three Books* by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000).

3. More in the nature of a modern “refuge” or “shelter.”

4. De La Salle, *Duties of a Christian to God* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), 82.

5. Cf. *Rule and Foundational Documents* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), 14.

6. Meditations Nos. 193-208 in *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994), 432 – 472.

7. Meditations Nos. 78-192 in *Meditations of John Baptist de La Salle* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994), 173 – 390.
8. De La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996).
9. *Rule and Foundational Documents* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), 14.
10. De La Salle, *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* (Romeoville, IL: Lasallian Publications, 1990), pp. 94, 96.
11. Meditations Nos. 194 and 207 in *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994), 434-6 and 467-9 respectively.
12. Meditation No. 194.1 in *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994), 434.
13. A powerful guild of professional scribes under the protection of the king and parliament. Cf. Luke Salm, *The Work Is Yours* (Romeoville, IL: Christian Brothers Publications, 1989), 49-50.
14. Cf. Luke Salm, *The Work Is Yours* (Romeoville, IL: Christian Brothers Publications, 1989), 113-115.
15. Cf. Georges Rigault, *History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: The Religious and Educational Achievement of Saint John Baptist de La Salle*, Vol. 1, p. 163. Translated by Edmund S. Dolan and edited by Gerard Rummery. Unpublished manuscript.
16. Cf. *Cahiers lasalliens* 24. The first printed edition of the *Conduct* was published in 1720. However, there is also a 1706 manuscript text.
17. De La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), 200.
18. De La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), 203.
19. De La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), 133-134.
20. De La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), 72-74.
21. *Rule and Foundational Documents* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), 39.
22. Meditation 206.1 in *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994), 464-5.



23. Cf. *Rules and Constitutions of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (Rome, 1968).
24. Cf. *The Brothers of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration* (Rome, 1967).
25. “Memorandum on the Habit” in *Rule and Foundational Documents* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), 181-191.
26. The habit is the religious garb that the Brothers wear. Cf. *The Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (2008), article 26.
27. Cf. Alfred Calcutt, *De La Salle: A City Saint and the Liberation of the Poor through Education* (Oxford: De La Salle Publications, 1993), 372-375.
28. De La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, 236-237.
29. De La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, 160-161.
30. De La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, 72.
31. De La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, 75.
32. De La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, 140.
33. De La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, 140.
34. De La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, 150.
35. Cf. Alfred Calcutt, *De La Salle: A City Saint and the Liberation of the Poor through Education* (Oxford: De La Salle Publications, 1993), pp. 162-165, 181-183.
36. *Rule and Foundational Documents* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), 49.
37. Cf. Othmar Würth, *John Baptist de La Salle and Special Education: A Story of Saint Yon* (Romeoville, IL: Lasallian Publications, 1988).
38. “Hospitals” in which beggars and marginals were confined, organized into work groups, and exposed to religious lessons designed to “rehabilitate” them. Cf. Daniel Hickey, *Local Hospitals in Ancien Régime France* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 54-57.
39. Cf. Alfred Calcutt, *De La Salle: A City Saint and the Liberation of the Poor through Education* (Oxford: De La Salle Publications, 1993), 226-228.
40. Meditation 166.2 in *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994), 308-9.
41. Meditation 202.2 in *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994), 455.

42. From this point forward, the text is the same as that of the conference that Brother Maurice-Auguste gave in CIL in 1982 and that was entitled, "Living in Community in Seventeenth-Century France." A copy of that conference may be found in *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 4, No. 1 (2013).

43. Cf. Alfred Calcutt, *De La Salle: A City Saint and the Liberation of the Poor through Education* (Oxford: De La Salle Publications, 1993), 133-134.

44. Since De La Salle moved into this house with the first Brothers in 1682, it is sometimes called "the cradle of the Institute" by the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

45. Very probably Trinity Sunday 1686.

46. Cf. "Memorandum on the Habit" in *Rule and Foundational Documents* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1995), 181-191.

47. The General Chapter here referred to is a general assembly of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. It is a regularly scheduled time of prayer and planning, with representatives of all of the sectors of the Institute. Cf. *The Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (2008), articles 103-114.

48. According to the *Code of Canon Law*, a rescript is an administrative act issued in writing granting a privilege or dispensation.

49. Cf. "Community, Society, Institute" by Toribio Gutierrez Alonso and Alain Houry in *Lasallian Themes III* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1998), 40.

50. De La Salle had realized for some time that the Brother teachers needed time and a place for retreat and renewal. Eventually, he found a house in Vaugirard, a suburb of Paris.

51. Cf. "John Baptist de La Salle" by Brother Bernard in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996).

52. The serving Brothers did manual work, helped the teachers at school, and wore a capuchin-brown habit.

53. He was the "novice-employed."

54. And at times suspect.

55. Cf. *Cahiers lasalliens* 2, pp. 92-93.

56. Cf. *Rule and Foundational Documents* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1995).

57. The habitual or customary schedule of the community.

58. The official ecclesiastical recognition by the Vatican of the establishment in the Church of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

59. Cf. *The First De La Salle Brothers (1681-1719)* by Augustine Loes (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1999).

60. Cf. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle: A Biography in Three Books* by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000).

61. Cf. *Cahiers lasalliens* 37, pp. 35-43, where Léon Aroz gives several death certificates.

62. Cf. *Circular* 335, page 226 and following.

63. Cf. the *Memoire on the Habit*.

64. The Duke of Mazarin, the curés of Champagne.

65. A commitment that was valid only due to the agreement of the ecclesiastical authority, as regards the projected seminary in Rethel.

66. Cf. “The Education of Teachers for Primary Schools in Seventeenth-Century France” by Dominic Everett in *So Favored by Grace: Education in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle* (Romeville, IL: Lasallian Publications, 1991), pp. 1-34.

67. Cf. *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France* by Elizabeth Rapley (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990).

68. François de Mailly was Archbishop of Rheims from 1710 to 1721.

69. Charles-Maurice Le Tellier was Archbishop of Rheims from 1671 to 1710.

70. Cf. *Gabriel Drolin: De La Salle Brother (1664-1733)* by Alfred Calcutt (Oxford: De La Salle Publications, 1993).

71. Cf. De La Salle’s letters to Gabriel Drolin and De La Salle’s final Testament.

72. The pastor of the parish of Saint-Sulpice.

73. *Letters patent* for the house of Saint-Yon.

74. *Bull of Approbation* of the Institute.

75. 18 articles.

76. Certain of which appear not to have been thought of until the time when the request was being drawn up.

77. The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, whose purpose was giving religious education, was an association established at Rome in 1562.

78. The 18 articles and some particular clauses.

79. Recall that these notes are from a conference given in 1982, that they concern events in the early eighteenth century, and that church law evolved with the promulgation of the 1917 *Code of Canon Law* and its revision in 1981.

80. The Vatican.

### Bibliography

Bernard, Brother. "John Baptist de La Salle." In *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies (Maillefer and Bernard)*. Edited by Paul Grass and translated from 1721 French manuscript by William J. Quinn and Donald Mouton), 255-353. Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996.

Blain, Jean-Baptiste. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle: A Biography in Three Books*. Translated from 1733 manuscript by Richard Arnandez and edited by Luke Salm. Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000.

*Cahiers lasalliens* (Volumes 1 –, since 1959). Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Calcutt, Alfred. *Gabriel Drolin: De La Salle Brother (1664-1733)*. Oxford: De La Salle Publications, 1993.

Calcutt, Alfred. *De La Salle : A City Saint and the Liberation of the Poor Through Education*. Oxford : De La Salle Publications, 1993.

Everett, Dominic. "The Education of Teachers for Primary Schools in Seventeenth-Century France: Influences on John Baptist de La Salle." In *So Favored by Grace: Education in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle*, edited by Lawrence Colhocker, 1-34. Romeville, IL: Lasallian Publications, 1991.

Gutierrez Alonso, Toribio, and Alain Houry. "Community, Society, Institute." In *Lasallian Themes : Volume 3*: 41-50. Edited by Alain Houry et al. Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1998.

Hermans, Maurice-Auguste. *Living in Community in Seventeenth-Century France*. *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 4, No. 1 (2013).

Houry, Alain. 2010. "50 Years, and More, of Lasallian Studies: Chronicle and Perspectives." *Digital Review of Lasallian Research* 1 (2010): 2-25.

- La Salle, John Baptist de. *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*. Translated by Richard Arnandez and Augustine Loes, and edited by Augustine Loes and Francis Huether. Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994. [*Meditations*, edited by William J. Battersby (London: Longmans Green, 1953) & *Meditations*, edited by William J. Battersby (London: Waldegrave Publishers, 1964).]
- La Salle, John Baptist de. "Memorandum on the Habit." In *Rule and Foundational Documents*, translated and edited by Augustine Loes and Ronald Isetti. Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1995.
- La Salle, John Baptist de. *Rule and Foundational Documents*. Translated and edited by Augustine Loes and Ronald Isetti. Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1995.
- La Salle, John Baptist de. *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*. Translated by F. de la Fontainerie and Richard Arnandez, and edited by William Mann. Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996. [*The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, translated by François de la Fontainerie (New York: McGraw Hill, 1935).]
- La Salle, John Baptist de. *The Duties of a Christian to God*. Translated by Richard Arnandez and edited by Alexis James Doval. Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002. [*A Christian's Duty toward God*, translated from French (New York: De La Salle Institute, 1884).]
- La Salle, John Baptist de. *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*. Translated by Richard Arnandez and edited by Gregory Wright. Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1990.
- Loes, Augustine. *The First De La Salle Brothers: 1681-1719*. Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1999.
- Rapley, Elizabeth. *The Dévotes: Women and the Church in Seventeenth-Century France*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990.
- Rigault, Georges. *History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: The Religious and Educational Achievements of Saint John Baptist de La Salle*. Vol. 1. Translated by Edmund S. Dolan; edited by Gerard Rummery. Unpublished manuscript.
- Rules and Constitutions of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*. Rome, 1968.
- Salm, Luke. *The Work Is Yours: The Life of Saint John Baptist de La Salle*. Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Publications, 1989.
- The Brothers of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration*. Rome, 1967.
- Wurth, Othmar. *John Baptist de La Salle and Special Education: A Story of Saint Yon*. Romeville, IL: Lasallian Publications, 1988.