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INSTITUTE  
OF THE  
BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

INSTRUCTIVE  
AND  
ADMINISTRATIVE CIRCULARS

No 216  
JANUARY 6th, 1919

Second Centenary of the Rules and of the  
Death of St. John Baptist de la Salle.



PARIS  
78, RUE DE SEVRES

1919  
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J. M. J.  
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Paris, January 6, 1919.

*Feast of the Epiphany  
of Our Lord Jesus Christ.*

INSTRUCTIVE  
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CIRCULARS  
No. 216

Second Centenary  
of the Rules and of the Death  
of St. John Baptist de la Salle.



VERY DEAR BROTHERS,

MAY THE GRACE AND PEACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST  
BE ALWAYS WITH US!

The traditional custom of offering and receiving good wishes for a happy New Year, is of inefficacious import when these cordial effusions are not accompanied by prayers. Man, to whom the future is hidden, can achieve nothing without having recourse to the Supreme Master of our destinies. Hence it is that incredulous worldlings are under no illusion respecting the good wishes for terrestrial happiness which they lavish with such prodigality. "They are," they consider, "amiable words which help to maintain friendly relations; but are powerless to effect any change in the future which awaits us." Thanks be to God, we are "not of the world" that is excluded from the prayers of Jesus Christ (1); and the supernatural charity which inspires our good wishes, invokes heavenly blessings upon their realization. During the Christmas festivities you sent to the members of the Régime the assurances of your respectful and grateful affection; but at

(1) John, XV, 19; XVII, 9.

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the same time you besought the most meek Infant Jesus to protect our Institute and those who direct it.

We and our dear Brothers Assistants were deeply touched by the delicacy of your sentiments, your filial attachment to our Congregation and your firm will to promote its works. Let us add that the unexpected suddenness and gravity of actual events, have preserved your letters from the monotony that usually accompanies such correspondence. Our mutual sufferings, our common courage and our invincible hope in a better future, are a natural and inexhaustible topic. The discretion with which you have examined the subject, and the breadth and loftiness of view with which you treated it, are manifestations of your spirit of faith, charity and abandonment to the Will of God.

It is by no means our intention, very dear Brothers, to review here any of the events of this mundane war. The allusions you have made to it, in writing to us, bespeak their profound re-echo in your souls. You have heard the voice of God, the Arbiter of the world, in the midst of the whirlwind (1). Like Moses, the nations of the world have seen the shadow of the Eternal passing in the hurricane (2), and the impious alone did not exclaim: "It is God!" Yet how can they not recognize Him? His powerful and majestic voice shaketh the desert: the consciences of men to whom prayer is unknown and in which spiritual aridity reigns supreme; and in docile souls it produces fertility and fecundity in the form of pious and holy resolutions (3).

For you and for all combatants the year 1918 has been one of fruit and merit. The spirit of prayer was augmented in your souls, because "the sorrows of death had compassed you, and you had met trouble and sorrow" (4). The spirit of sacrifice attained a new and definite expansion among the belligerents. And the accounts of the nations of the world became liquidated before the Divine Justice by lives offered up in a Christian manner,

(1) Job, XXXVIII, 1. — (2) Exodus, XXXIII, 23. — (3) Ps., XXVIII, 4-9. (4) Ps., CXIV, 3-4.

by trials supported with resignation, and by prayers and innumerable acts of charity.

The Lord, speaking to Jeremias, asked him: "What seest thou?" and the Prophet said: "I see an almond rod watching." The identical question being repeated, provoked this reply: "I see a boiling cauldron" (1). Does not this boiling cauldron appear to you, very dear Brothers, a symbol of the cataclysm let loose upon the world since 1914? With the same ardour for combat and suffering, people have become restless and awry. The conflict continued month after month, beyond all expectation and prevision. And suddenly to our eyes, weakened with straining into the future, there is presented the almond branch in flower, harbinger of a pacific spring succeeding the asperity and violence of the combat.

Peace! This necessary peace that was so long expected and that our hearts desired; this peace that the Sovereign Pontiff, the common Father of the faithful, appealed for so many times for an agonizing world, God finally bestows on us. And what a price Europe has had to pay for it! On the immense and changing fronts of battle we have had harassing fatigues, terrific bombardments, pestiferous wounds, torrents of blood, shrieks of sorrow and pain, continuous death-rattles and millions of deaths; in the ambulances and hospitals we have had cruel operations, painful and reiterated dressings, days of suffering and nights of agony, definitive mutilations that diminish the means of existence; in the families of the combatants we have had galling and exasperating anxieties, freezing previsions, desolating ruins, and gloomy forebodings for the future; in the clergy and Religious Congregations we have had their ranks thinned, friendships and affections sundered, an apostleship attenuated by the disappearance of its workers; everywhere we have had restrictive legislation and the obligations of privations imposed upon us, making us heroes for the common cause; finally, we have had united to these patriotic

(1) Jerem. I, 11-13.

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sacrifices, fervent prayers, unbounded charity, heroic and voluntary immolations and harvests of terrestrial hopes reaped by the sickle of death : this was the price with which peace had to be purchased ! . . . . How dear it shall then be to us ! How it shall deserve to be respected by all and not to be troubled by ambitious rivalries or by class hatred and irreligious persecutions ! May the Sacred Heart establish, perfect and maintain it, and make it bring forth fruit in abundance !

We shall also ask it for you all, very dear Brothers, so that, strengthened and consoled by interior peace, you may labour with renewed ardour at your own salvation and your works of zeal. Our most earnest prayers are for our dearly beloved Brothers Soldiers. How much have they not suffered ! May Our Lord recompense their fidelity to duty, and grant them an early return to the life of community which constituted their happiness !

Our thoughts, grateful and sad, go out to those of our members from whom God demanded the supreme sacrifice since the month of August, 1914. It is for the safety and salvation of all that they have died : in virtue of their sacrifice we are their debtors. Hence we shall continue to offer our fervent suffrages for them.

\* \* \*

The end of the year 1918 and the first month of 1919 recall a double anniversary for our Institute : the second Centenary of the publication of our Rules draughted by St. John Baptist de la Salle, and also the second Centenary of his holy death. These glorious souvenirs prescribe the subject of the present circular. We shall endeavour to deduce from these events some practical and profitable rules of conduct for the new year. Written for the purpose of being useful to you, these pages will be the intermediary of transmitting to you the religious good wishes of our dear Brothers Assistants and ourselves.

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I.

Second Centenary of the Publication  
of our Common Rules.

(October, 1718.)

In 1718, St. John Baptist de la Salle was sixty-seven years of age. His strong constitution was gradually bending under excessive work and continual penances. For forty years—his first foundation, in Rheims, dates from 1678—he organizes Christian schools. The hope of the good done to souls and the glory procured to God, sustain his will. Bandied about, it would appear, at the mercy of unforeseen events, but ever orientated by Providence towards a unique end, the establishment of the Institute, the activity of the Founder is first displayed in Champagne (1678-1688). In Paris, it develops and expands under the intermittent benevolence of the protectors who second his efforts, and in spite of the vexatious bickerings of the adversaries who oppose them. Rue Princess (1688-1691), Vaugirand (1691-1698), the Grand' Maison (1698-1703), Rue de Charbonne and Rue Saint Honoré (1703-1705), offer him peaceful shelters or precarious asylums. In Rouen, new hopes are soon followed by new deceptions. Saint Yon is for the Saint, particularly from 1715 onwards, a beloved retreat where he passes his days in recollection and work, and finally dies.

How, very dear Brothers, shall we summarize in a few lines the active life of our Founder and Father ? It consists of a succession of journeys from Rheims to Paris and Rouen, from Chartres to Calais, from Mende to Vans, from Grenoble to Avignon and Marseilles ; it is a manifestation of the progressive comprehension of the divine plan which he acquires, and the gentle but tenacious resolution to pursue it to realization ; it is the patient formation of the Brothers to the interior life and to the apostleship ; it is the indomitable courage which builds up anew after many demolitions ; it is the illnesses that annoy him and the sufferings that faithfully accompany him, the mortifications which further add to the pains and afflictions that Providence sends him ; finally, it consists in

constant assiduity to prayer which unites his soul to God and puts to a certain extent, the power of the Master at the service of His docile servant.

A life spent at such a pace early encounters the symptoms and inconveniences of old age. It prematurely aggravated the infirmities of the Founder, and in 1715, forced him to seek permanent asylum in Saint Yon. Discharged from the Superiorship since the 18th May, 1717, the Saint enjoyed an interior peace in the voluntary subjection of the most humble obedience. Did he not write in his Rules that "the Brothers shall not do anything without permission, however small or insignificant it appears, so as to be sure of doing the will of God in all things" (1)? He effaced himself before Brother Bartholomew. As far as possible he lived in retreat, entirely devoted to the embellishment of his soul, and to God who holds him captive. During his active life, prayer caused a ray of heavenly light to illumine his most sombre paths; this celestial light, the dawn of the eternal day, shone with special effulgence towards the end of his career.

During the course of his illness, which, on two occasions, brought him to the brink of the grave, our Founder undoubtedly repeated to his Brothers in tears the words of the Apostle to his disciples: "I am straightened between two: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better; but to abide still in the flesh is needful for you" (2). God deferred the call. The Saint profited by this last respite to exercise his ministry among the different groups re-united at Saint Yon. He employed it particularly to finish the manuscript of the works which Brother Timothy, his second successor, should afterwards publish.

Let us contemplate, very dear Brothers, our Father in the midst of the children who have captivated and exhausted his life. In the Boarding School he perceives and utilizes with infinite tact and sagacity the traits and features of these delicate and sensitive natures, buoyant and inconstant. In the Reformatory School

(1) Com. Rules, p. 48. — (2) Philipp., I, 23-24.

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his charity joyfully discovers the good points of souls stained with vice, the precious ores amidst the mire and slough that hide them. The Novices continue to retain his predilections. With them he prays. He places within their reach the secrets of the science of mental prayer, of which he was a consummate master. With them, meekly at first, and then firmly, he proceeds by insinuations, counsels, remonstrances and especially by encouragements. Souls are gradually raised above themselves and carried forward towards what is better by their charitable guide.

Perhaps the most intimate joy that the Founder tasted, was to see some of his first companions, grown old in the service of their Divine Master, make fervent progress towards the eternal recompense. They suffered with him; thanks to him, their confidence in the future of the Institute never wavered; by him they are now fixed in the ways of holiness. What tributes of gratitude they manifest towards him! With what veneration they surround him!

The free time left him from his charitable occupations, the Founder consecrates to the revision of his manuscripts. Overburdened till then with work and absorbed by cares, he had only published the *Rules of Politeness and Christian Civility* (about 1695), the *Duties of a Christian* (1703), the *Collection of Different Short Treatises* (1711), the opusculum on the holy Mass and the prayers to be recited in class. In 1718, he finished the *Meditations for Sundays and the Principal Feasts of the year*, the *Meditations for the time of Retreat*, the *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer*, the *Conduct of Schools* and the *Common Rules*. A fruitful year, which bequeathed to our Institute the directions which have guided it and the doctrines which have fashioned and enlightened it for two centuries!

Let us represent to ourselves, in thought, very dear Brothers, St. John Baptist de la Salle in his humble cell at Saint Yon, where he puts the finishing touches to the edition of our Rules. Profound recollection and assiduous prayer prepare him to hear interiorly the voice of God. The assistance which our legislator receives from Heaven, is not the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost which preserved the sacred writers from every error; it is an expansion

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of the gifts of Wisdom and Counsel, an abundance of divine lights which make him adapt, with prudent perspicacity, the prescriptions of the Rules to the end of the Institute.

When the manuscript was finished it passed into the hands of copyists. In the 31st October, 1718, after a minute and detailed revision, the copies, initialed on each page by Brother Bartholomew, were sent to the twenty-two communities then composing our Congregation. In the dispatch of these documents, the Saint effaced himself behind his deferential successor, our first Superior General. Two centuries have then passed since our Society received the code by which it is ruled. On several occasions, certain modifications and additions were inserted in the text of 1718. Made with consummate prudence and often at the behest of the Church, they do not alter the main features of the ensemble (1). The hand of the first architect is still visible throughout the entire construction.

\* \* \*

The benefits which our Institute has received from the observance of its Rules, since its origin, are immense. That observance has maintained it in its initial and providential course, its primitive spirit and the traditional forms of its apostleship. In the Rules, those who direct have found inspiration, the extent and limits of their authority; those who obey, the motives of their submission. Since 1717, the principal duty of our fifteen Superiors General was to preserve with constancy and vigour, fidelity to our obligations. And in that they have not been found wanting. If they had acted otherwise, very dear Brothers, they would have strayed along devious paths that would inevitably end in decadence. May the Sacred Heart in His merciful goodness ever preserve our Institute from such a misfortune! May He, through the intercession

(1) The last edition of the *Common Rules* (1901) groups together in an appendix the *Capitulary Decisions relative to some articles of the Common Rules*. A further edition will contain the modifications imposed by the new Canonical Code.

of St. John Baptist de la Salle, develop in each one of us the knowledge, esteem, respect and practical love that our holy Rules merit!

In a previous circular, we showed how the faithful observance of our Rules constituted, for our Congregation, an essential condition of unity, stability and fecundity. We demonstrated that these prescriptions are the code of our mortification, the Gospel applied to our state, and the source of our happiness (1). To complete this practically inexhaustible subject, and to sustain you in fervent exactitude, we invite you to reflect on the following ideas: the Rules when observed with fidelity, conduct the religious to a most meritorious practice of the virtue of religion; they preserve him from a multitude of faults; they guide him, without the possibility of error, along the obligatory road that leads to perfection.

\* \* \*

The virtue of religion, first in dignity after the theological virtues, is an interior disposition which inclines us to render to the most high and most merciful God, the worship which is due to Him, by prayer, sacrifice and vows.

In giving the name "Religious" to those who embrace the practice of the evangelical counsels, and that of "Religions" (*Religiones*) to the various Societies constituted under the authority of Superiors, canonical language indicates clearly, very dear Brothers, that this virtue, practised to a superior degree, should be the characteristic of those called to a life of perfection, and that it should constitute, in its development, their proper ornament. Man being created by God, belongs to God and owes Him the homage of his being. By a signal honour, we are consecrated

(1) Instructive and Administrative Circulars, No. 199, January 6th, 1916: *Rules and Regular Observance*.

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to His worship and to His service. We can reckon ourselves as being of His "household" in the full and elevated sense of the word.

The Rules dispose us to practise the virtue of religion by two kinds of prescriptions: those which relate to the spiritual exercises, the virtues and the apostleship, and those which refer to the vows. The vows, particularly perpetual vows, are, for the religious, the means of offering to God, not a fleeting tribute of his voluntary submission and servitude, and as it were a temporary loan of his activity, but a definite holocaust, sacrificed according to the tenour and extent of the Rules.

The Rules raise the barrier which separates us from the world; they trace out the path which leads us towards this superior degree of the virtue of religion called perfection. Our life then becomes estranged, as far as possible, from terrestrial interests and pre-occupations. It becomes so fixed in the special service of our eternal Master that we are regarded as "men of God" as opposed to "men of the world." What a beautiful title! And what obligations it recalls! Holy love should consume our life, just as incense cast on glowing embers exhales its perfume till it is entirely destroyed. We are the "continual holocaust which was offered on Mount Sinai for a most sweet odour of a sacrifice by fire to the Lord" (1). Is there any employment more noble?

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To diminish in our spiritual lives the ravages of sin, constitutes, according to St. John Baptist de la Salle, the greatest happiness that can be enjoyed in this world (2). Now regular observance, by the vows and the other means of perfection which it prescribes, tends to dry up or at least restrain this pestilential source in our existence. Undoubtedly sin is possible in Communities, but by

(1) Numbers XXVIII, 6. — (2) 4th Med.

fidelity to the Rules, faults of frailty become practically the only ones possible.

It appears pertinent to us, very dear Brothers, to recall here some points of doctrine that have been established particularly by St. Thomas.

After having explained that sins against the vows add a sacrilege to the inherent malice of an act forbidden by the natural or positive law, theologians remark that the faults of a professed religious (1) are very far from being all sacrileges. However complete our consecration to God may be, the diverse manifestations of our activity are not affected by it in the same degree; all the duties of our state are not transformed thereby into votive obligations. Certain monastic writers have, it is true, treated as "blasphemies," as "sacrileges," infractions of Rules which do not touch the vows. These expressions, in such studied and forcible language, should be regarded merely as a desire to underline the thought so as to fix the attention more firmly. These sacrileges "in name," do not constitute sacrileges "in fact" (2). Hence our Founder, ever exact in his doctrine and language, says with regard to useless words: "If we believe St. Bernard, useless words, when spoken by religious, are blasphemies" (3).

The Angelic Doctor recognizes that certain sins in religious may be graver than the same committed by seculars, on account of their greater knowledge of God and their duty, or by reason of the greater ingratitude of privileged souls, or the scandal which conduct but little in conformity with their profession may easily give. But he also recognizes that our faults may be less disastrous in their consequences, because they can rarely become engrained into habits perilous to salvation, since the Rules and the common life offer to the fallen a great number of means for a speedy rise. This is also the opinion of St. Bernard expressed in these words: "Man in holy religion falls more rarely and rises more promptly."

(1) Professed with temporary or perpetual vows. — (2) Didiot, *Religious State*. — (3) Collection, p. 110.

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As to venial sins arising from weakness of character and for which a religious entertains no special affection, and which are merely accidental, the same holy Doctor declares that they are as it were "absorbed" as to the fault, by the multitude of good works accomplished in the religious life. Such doctrine can not astonish us when we reflect how the observance of the Rules, in the letter and in the spirit, fills our days with acts of charity, humility, penance and the use of sacramentals.

The spiritual situation of a religious habitually and voluntarily irregular, would be quite different. "Because he shows little regard for perfection by the observance of his Rules and vows, he exposes himself to receive only just enough grace that he be unable to reproach God with his eternal damnation" (1). To live in this manner would be to incur the malediction of which the Psalmist speaks: "Embrace discipline, lest at any time the Lord be angry, and you perish from the just way" (2).

Side by side with these blind and culpable religious, others may be met with who are much more eager to multiply supererogatory practices of devotion than to avoid, by an exact and cordial observance of their Rules, the least thing displeasing to God. They have, perhaps, a laudable desire to gain many indulgences, but they seem to forget that the abundance or penury of their gains, in this matter, depends on their degree of love for God, manifested by the generous accomplishment of His will.

Let us not be deceived, very dear Brothers; "cleaving to that which is good" is only one of the two simultaneous conditions of our spiritual progress. We must also "hate that which is evil" (3), and, as far as possible, everything evil. To the delicate purity of the soul may be applied what is said of Wisdom: "All good things came to me together with her" (4). Do you desire a particular intimacy with Jesus? He grants it to souls which avoid the least voluntary imperfections. Do you desire the gift

(1) P. Monsabre. — (2) Ps., II, 12. — (3) Romans XII, 9. — (4) Wisdom, VII, 11.

of prayer and the interior life? This is the special privilege of pure hearts, on which the Divine light shines without obstacle. Do you wish to exercise power over God in prayer? This is promised only to those who by their fidelity refuse nothing to Jesus (1). Are you anxious to have a fruitful apostleship? It depends on the intimate union of the members with their Head of the branches with the Vine (2).

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Finally, the Rules when faithfully observed direct and sustain us in the ways of perfection. Because we have answered the call of God and embraced the religious life, the evangelical counsels have become, for our will, the yoke of the Lord, which it is good to have borne from youth (3). We must first preserve the common holiness which is obligatory and constituted by the state of grace. On this basis the edifice of not-common holiness should be erected, consisting of the virtues of our state, that is to say, the temple of our perfection.

The Rules are a marvellous help in the execution of this design. They expound, for our use, the fundamental evangelical counsels, and determine the practice of one of the spiritual works of mercy (4); then, they make a prudent selection, one that is exclusive and adapted to our state, from among the very varied exercises of the ascetic life; and finally, by their votive and other prescriptions, they excite the vitality of the infused virtues and determine their acts. Hence our Founder wrote in one of his letters: "The love that one has for the Rules is a mark of vocation" (5). It is one of the best means of obtaining perseverance in the service of God.

Perhaps, very dear Brothers, you heard some day this strange affirmation formulated: "If St. John Baptist de la Salle had written

(1) John, XIV, XV. — (2) John, XV, 12. — (3) Lamentations, III, 27. — (4) To instruct the Ignorant. — (5) Letters.

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his Rules in the twentieth century, he would have attached more importance to study and less to the exercises of piety." To affirm that the Founder, living in our time, might have prescribed a different employment for the time for class and the time for study, is simply saying that he would thus evince the practical good sense of which he gave so many proofs; but to maintain that he might diminish "God's part" in our time, is to misunderstand the spirit which animated him. He often warns us that our own sanctification is the first thing that we have come to seek for in religion (1), and, that we cannot efficaciously influence our pupils without the love of prayer and flight from the world (2).

The world, against which our Saint warned his disciples so vigorously (3), has found nowadays new means of infiltrating its maxims into Communities. And would our Legislator lessen in his Rules the means by which we should be rendered immune from their perverse action? He would certainly have done so by giving preference to study over mental prayer, spiritual reading and our prescribed vocal prayers. "Woe to the knowledge which is not turned into love," said Bossuet. Woe to the knowledge which is its own end and which is attained at the expense of the service of God, and which dries up the religious unction of the Holy Spirit in the soul. It comes under the condemnation of St. Paul when he says: "Knowledge puffeth up" with pride him who covets it, "but charity edifieth" those it assists, and at the same time perfects our virtues (4).

\* \* \*

What resolution should we take, very dear Brothers, on the anniversary of the second Centenary of our Rules? The circumstances themselves indicate what it should be. For the past two

(1) 77th and 91st Meds. — (2) 7th, 79th, 161st, 171st Meds. — (3) 6th, 69th, 96th, 111th, 114th 181st Meds. — (4) Cor., VIII, 1.

hundred years, our predecessors have found in the observance of the Rules the most sure road to holiness: let us follow their footsteps and we shall attain the same happy end. For the past two hundred years, it was never more necessary for our Institute to be attached to its Rules so that it may recover in peace the perfect equilibrium that political commotions have disturbed. For the past two hundred years, such grave, urgent and extensive problems of restoration and reconstruction never presented themselves for solution to the zeal of the members of our Congregation: it is by a revival of its primitive spirit that such work can be achieved.

Perfect regularity will assure you, very dear Brothers, the graces which will render your apostleship active and brilliant. Knowledge united to piety, intellectual ability to humility, initiative to obedience, and zeal to prudence, will form in you the just temperament which avoids excess and guards against pusillanimity. The Rules will also give you light and help to unite new ideas, dearly acquired during the Great War, to respect for our pedagogical traditions that have met with the approval of time; to attract and retain the esteem and affection of our pupils, so as to prepare them for the Christian and social duties that await them; to disdain more than ever vain-glorious success ordinarily purchased by disastrous compromises, and to appear in your classes as men of duty, that is, as men of God; to know how to abandon cheerfully and obediently a post wherein a fruitful apostleship rejoices the heart of the operator, and to accept the rôle of a sower in unprofitable and unprofitable furrows. We can then say of regular observance as of piety, that "it is profitable to all." It governs the spiritual life of the Brothers to orientate it and their actions to sanctify them. It regulates even their death, to make it precious like that of our Founder and Father.

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## II.

## Second Centenary of the Blessed Death

of St. John Baptist de la Salle

(April 7th, 1719).

The year 1719 was to be the last for our Founder here below. As a pilgrim hastens his steps when approaching an asylum which he desires to reach, our Saint endeavours to unite himself more intimately to the God whom he is soon to possess. His increasing sufferings and his persistent weakness, make him joyfully accept "the answer of death" which excited St. Paul to trust in God (1). At first his Brothers were not alarmed at his state. They had seen him triumph several times over crises which they believed fatal; and his self-control dissimulated the greater part of his sufferings. But towards the month of March they were obliged to yield to evidence: the sick man was going to take the road of all flesh (2).

No statement of the last moments and death of St. John Baptist de la Salle is as complete as that of Canon Blain. The following is a reproduction of the narrative, abridged in some respects (3):—

"Years augmented the pains and extended the sufferings to all the limbs of the holy Founder, so that his desire for sufferings should have been fully satisfied. These afflictions were made worse by the continuity of his austerities and by his ordinary exercises of piety, because he relaxed nothing and treated his body as if it had been without feeling; this gave one the idea that he was not very bad. One was tempted to believe that a man who never complained, and who never manifested by any sign the violent

(1) II Cor., I, 9. — (2) Ps., LXIV, 3. — (3) *Life of the Blessed Servant of God, John Baptist de la Salle, Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*, by the Abbé John Baptist Blain, Canon of the Metropolitan Church of Rouen, Superior of the Sisters of Ernemont (1733). — Re-edited conformably to the wishes of the General Chapter of 1884, by Abbé Augustus Carion (3rd Edition, Paris, 1889), p. 712 and succeeding pages.

pains that he endured, did not suffer very much. His whole attention was to have God alone as witness of his patience, to suffer in silence and to hide from his Brothers the knowledge of his illness. In that he succeeded, because his countenance, ever calm and serene, ever joyful and tranquil, bespoke freedom from pains although he felt them most intensely . . . . Asthma, from which he had suffered for some time, was superadded to his other ailments, and aggravated by fasting. These complicated infirmities did not prevent him from commencing the Lent of the year 1719 with his customary austerity; and although he breathed with great difficulty, so violent was the oppression caused by the asthma, yet the Brothers could not persuade him to take a remedy or to interrupt the fast of Lent. To their remonstrances he simply answered: 'The victim is about to be immolated, the work of purification must therefore continue.' Brother Bartholomew, having returned from a journey that he had been obliged to make to Paris, not having succeeded better than the others, had recourse to his confessor, and asked him to forbid the humble priest to continue an abstinence that endangered his life. He submitted and substituted the spirit of obedience to that of penance.

"Shortly afterwards, a violent headache, caused by the falling of a door, combined with an intense pain in the side, complicated his malady. The doctor considered it fatal, and did not dissimulate his opinion. The virtuous patient gaily and contentedly received the decision, as if it were happy news daily expected. His one desire was to leave this land of exile and to be reunited to Jesus Christ.

"However, the doctor although despairing of his cure, tried in vain to alleviate his sufferings by every remedy imaginable. The holy man, although he considered them useless, did not refuse them, because they were very distasteful and gave him the occasion of offering to God the sacrifice of his repugnances. Everything that could be done for his alleviation was without success. The disease continued in its course and augmented considerably. He then begged the Brothers not to put themselves to further expense, but to save the cost of the remedies, adding that his hour was

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approaching and that he wished to have recourse only to the Sovereign Doctor, who alone could mitigate and cure the sickness.

“ St. John Baptist de la Salle was in such a state that everybody else, similarly circumstanced, would have remained in bed. According to appearances he would try in vain to get out of it, and the impossibility of moving would constrain him to remain there. He belied appearances and astonished all who saw him on his feet, moving about and forcing his body to obey him so as to satisfy his devotion. But everything which is too violent is of short duration. Towards the end of Lent, the sickness became so intense that the servant of God was obliged to return to bed. According as he felt his body grow weaker, joy increased in his soul and radiated in his countenance. ‘ I hope,’ he said, ‘ that I will soon be delivered from Egypt to be introduced into the true Land of Promise.’ The feast of St. Joseph was approaching. His special devotion to this great Saint, whom he had chosen patron and protector of the Institute, inspired him with an ardent desire of being able to say Mass on that day in his honour. This favour which the servant of God could scarcely dare to expect, much less demand, was granted him. On the eve of the feast, about ten o’clock at night, he felt a diminution of his pains and a renewal of his strength. He was himself so surprised that he did not mention it to anyone. On the following morning he was convinced that this sudden improvement in his health was neither a dream nor a hallucination, because he felt so strong that he knew he was in a fit state to get up and celebrate the holy Mysteries. Great was his joy at being able to satisfy his devotion ; that of his children, who believed him cured by a miracle of the Most High, was still greater. The holy man profited by this favour, and ascended the altar with the recollection and fervour that the last Mass of his life demanded. After having satisfied his devotion and that of his Brothers, he relapsed into his former state ; his strength failed him and his end appeared near.

“ The parish priest of Saint Sever, warned of the danger in which the Founder of the Brothers was, came to visit him, and after having testified to him the interest he took in his state, exhorted

him to patience. The pastor, accustomed to see trouble and inquietude everywhere he went among the sick, at the approach of death, was much surprised and almost disconcerted at seeing him so tranquil and in a state of indifference to every eventuality. And as if he were shocked or but little edified at the serenity in which the Servant of God appeared to be, he believed it his duty to effect a change in him, by bluntly announcing to him his approaching death and the judgment which should follow it. ‘ Remember,’ said he, ‘ that you are going to die and that you must afterwards appear before God. ‘ I am aware of that ’ he replied, ‘ and I am most submissive to His orders. My lot is in His hands : may His holy will be done.’ The pastor knew, by these few words, the source of the confidence and tranquillity of the patient and judged that long remonstrances were unnecessary with this man wholly occupied with God. From this moment the Founder abandoned himself entirely to his desire for the Sovereign Good, and fixed all his thoughts on the heavenly Jerusalem. He earnestly requested that the holy Viaticum, which he called his *passport*, should be brought to him. It was with difficulty that his request was acceded to, because it was thought that his end was not yet near ; he was promised, however, that it would be brought to him on the following day (Spy Wednesday, April 5th). He profited by this delay to satisfy his great desire of preparing himself well for this great act. The entire night was employed in this preparation. And when day began to appear, he gave orders that all things should be prepared to receive His Divine Master with becoming decency. To content him, this was done with all the pomp and magnificence that the poverty of the house at Saint Yon permitted.

“ Whilst the house was being diligently prepared to receive Jesus Christ, the Saint was totally absorbed in himself to prepare his heart for his Divine Guest. He momentarily forgot that he was sick *in extremis*, and endeavoured, in his fervour, his profound respect and ardent devotion towards the most Blessed Sacrament, to rehabilitate his languishing vital forces sufficiently to get up. Ashamed to receive the Prince of Eternity in bed, he made so many requests to be taken out of it and to be clothed with his surplice

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and stole that he could not be refused. Seated in an armchair, he awaited the visit of his Lord and God ; but when the sound of the bell announced His approach, the Saint was no longer master of himself. In a transport of fervour, he prostrated himself before his Creator and his Judge and annihilated himself in His presence. Then with a countenance radiant with holy joy and ardent charity, he received the Holy Viaticum with the fervour of a Seraphim, as had been his wont in celebrating the Holy Mass.

" His consolation was not complete till he received the Last Sacrament, which he eagerly demanded because he felt his strength waning considerably and that his body was as it were a prison in ruins. Extreme Unction was administered on the following day, Holy Thursday, and he received it with the greatest presence of mind, answering at the same time to all the liturgical prayers. When they were completed, he remained in a profound silence for a space of seven hours, occupied with the graces that God had just granted him.

" The holy priest broke silence only to please those who, surrounding his bed, wished to be witnesses of his happy end, or to receive some advice, or to hear some words of edification. He satisfied them all, and made known to several the inmost secrets of their souls ; a fact which astonished them very much.

" The Brothers, affected by the loss they were about to suffer, pressed around him to receive his last sentiments. However, as he spoke with great pain and as his voice was gradually weakening, they believed that his agony was about to begin. All his children then cast themselves on their knees to ask his blessing, and Brother Bartholomew, raising his voice, begged him to give it to all present and to extend it to all the members of the Institute. His humility manifested a certain repugnance to the request, but finally, yielding to the requests made, he lifted his hand, and with his eyes raised towards heaven, said : ' May the Lord bless you all ! ' This blessing caused his disciples to shed many tears and made a new and most painful wound in their hearts. The feeling of the loss they were about to sustain increased in their minds according as it approached ; and as affectionate children who are about to be made

orphans by the callous hand of death, they found consolation only in their piety, in their submission to the will of God, and in the hope that their Founder, snatched from their eyes, would continue in heaven the services that he rendered them on earth.

" Towards the end of the day, he began to lose consciousness, as was evident from the incoherency of his language. The prayers for the agonizing were said. They were no sooner terminated than the Saint returned to himself. He profited by this momentary lucidity that God gave him to briefly inspire his disciples with the horror he had for the world : ' If you wish to persevere and die in your vocation, never have any intercourse with people of the world ; for, little by little, you will acquire a taste for their habits and be drawn into conversation with them to such an extent, that you will no longer be able, through policy, to refrain from applauding their language, however pernicious it may be ; this will lead you into unfaithfulness ; and being no longer faithful in observing your Rules, you will grow disgusted with your vocation, and finally you will abandon it.' He could not say any more because a cold sweat, which seized him, caused him to lose the power of speech. Just then, he entered into a painful agony which lasted from midnight till two o'clock in the morning of Good Friday. He then momentarily regained consciousness, and the Brothers inspired him with the thought of imploring the assistance of the Most Blessed Virgin by this prayer of the Church which he was accustomed to address to her every day at the beginning of the evening prayers : *Maria, Mater gratia* . . . . .

" The Brother Superior, who never left his bedside, then asked him if he accepted patiently and joyfully the pains that he was suffering : ' Yes,' he said. ' I adore in all things the guidance of God in my regard.' These were the last words he pronounced. At three o'clock in the morning, the agony recommenced and lasted till four o'clock. Notwithstanding the agitations caused by the agony, a tranquil and assured air radiated from his countenance. Finally, about four o'clock, he made an apparent effort to get up and to go to meet somebody. He joined his hands, raised his eyes to heaven and expired. He died on Good Friday, April 7th, aged sixty-eight years.

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“Immediately, the cry of popular canonisation: ‘The Saint is dead!’ resounded through the town of Rouen. During his life, he was detached from the world and passed about as one unknown; at his death it became immediately apparent that his disappearance would cause a great void. The humble priest, in the admiration of the public, appeared in full splendour, and was regarded by all as their model and intercessor. Even his adversaries had nothing but praise for his memory: ‘Him whom they scorned before . . . they admired in the end’” (1).

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What an admirable death, very dear Brothers, and how it must have recalled to the first disciples of the Founder these words of the Inspired Books: “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints” (2). Admirable indeed it was in its calmness, confidence and ardent piety. The holiness of our Father is especially revealed in this last saying: “I adore in all things the guidance of God in my regard.” This is his *consummatum est*! It would merit long and profound meditation.

“All is consummated” which the saint had to accomplish here below: his personal perfection and the foundation of a new religious family. “The guidance of God” enabled him to bring all things to a happy consummation. This holy will recompensed him by giving him a place in heavenly glory near Benedict, Dominic, Francis of Assisi and Ignatius of Loyola.

“All is consummated!” Progressively and courageously, St. John Baptist de la Salle attained such a close union with God

(1) Wisdom, XI, 15. — (2) Ps. CXV, 15.

that, before his death, he formed but “one spirit with Him” (1). Penance and assiduity in prayer have ranked him amongst “the undefiled in the way” (2), who progress towards heaven almost without blemish, because being “born of God” to a new life, “they sinneth not.” (3). By a generous love and faithful imitation, Christ was his life (4); by a constant dependence on the will of his Master, he became identified with Him. Our saint accepted all the sufferings offered to him without hesitation; he undertook without delay all the labours proposed to him. This perfect conformity, this total abandonment have conducted him to the consummation of holiness. In effect, “sanctity is only a plenary and perpetual *affirmation* that a creature makes to God; a lively *affirmation* into which he voluntarily puts his entire being; a fervent, active, practical and efficacious *affirmation*; an *affirmation* which envelops one’s whole being and draws it away from earthly ties to be devoted, consecrated, and offered up as a holocaust to the Most High, to Christ the Son of God, of whom the Church sings: “Thou only art holy, Thou only art Lord, Thou only art Most High” (5).

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“All is consummated!” The “guidance of God” led our Founder into unexpected ways. Docile to its indications and impulses, he established an Institute having a new form, and an apostleship adapted to the needs of his time.

The creations of all the great Founders and Patriarchs of the religious life bear also, like his, the characters of novelty and opportunity. According to the extent of her advance in her earthly

(1) I Cor., VI, 17. — (2) Ps., CXVIII, 1. — (3) I John, V, 18. — (4) Philip I, 21. (5) Mgr. Gay.

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mission, the Church increases the number and variety of her religious armies without, however, producing trouble or antagonism by the augmentation of rivals tending to the same perfection. Some make solitary comtemplation their speciality; others devote themselves more to exterior and charitable works; all seek union with God by holy love, and His glory by the purity of their zeal. "If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and will make Our abode with him" (1). "If we love one another, God abideth in us, and His charity is perfected in us: because He hath given us of His spirit" (2).

The development and the diverse forms of the religious life down to the time of St. John Baptist de la Salle would make a beautiful and interesting study. We cannot do more here, very dear Brothers, than sketch the principal lines.

On the slopes of Mount Carmel, in the solitudes of Egypt and Palestine, the religious life assumed, at first, the hermitical form. The hermit is an ideal monk, one "isolated" in God. Psalmody, the singing of the sacred chants, meditation, manual work, long vigils and rigorous fasts, are the principal exercises of his asceticism. Side by side with the hermitical, the cenobitical life is organized. The cenobite pursues the same end as the hermit; union with God by charity and a constant struggle against the enemies of salvation. But he seeks the protection of the common life; he assures himself of the safeguard and merit of continual obedience to a Rule and to an Abbot. The author of the *Imitation of Jesus Christ* admires the exalted virtues of the hermits and cenobites; he affirms that "what we do is nothing or almost nothing," compared to their examples (3). Personal perfection is the unique anxiety and the chief characteristic of the lives of these great solitaries. An exterior apostleship gives them but little trouble; and when crowds come to them, attracted by the renown of their holiness and the gift of miracles, they often take flight. Undoubtedly,

(1) John XV, 2. — (2) I John, IV, 12-13. — (3) *Imit. of Jesus Christ*, Book I, Chap. 18.

these heroes of sanctity, by the revertibility of their merits and by their prayers, were supports for the Church, which was then combating great heresies; but their conception of the perfect life is entirely orientated towards themselves.

Early in the fifth century, perhaps sooner, and certainly in the sixth, the West has its hermits and monasteries. The Rule is the personal work of the Abbot; it regulates the life of only a small number of monks, and the prescriptions of St. Basil, and sometimes also those of St. Augustine, often form its basis. St. Benedict (480-543) adapts the customs of oriental monasticism to Latin civilization. The exclusive aim of the Benedictine monk is also his own progress in perfection, "the reform of one's manners" by fidelity to the Rule and submission to a Superior. His chief occupation is the divine office, day and night; then, between the long intervals in church, he applies himself to various works for the common good. All the monasteries of the Patriarch of Subiaco were autonomous, and were conceived on the plan of a Roman "Villa," each self-sufficing by the diversity of the trades and occupations exercised therein. Little attention was given to exterior apostleship, except by the religious raised to the episcopacy, and by those groups of monks sent as missionaries to infidel countries, such as St. Augustine and his companions in England, St. Boniface and his disciples in Germany. To the barbarians installed in Europe after having pillaged it, the Benedictines gave a taste for work and for a sedentary life. They saved from ruin the ancient classics and works of art. They grouped about their abbeys the serfs who were "happy under sway of the crosier"; then, when the time had come, they made them free workmen. By them the Gospel of Jesus Christ permeated and inspired European civilization.

The works of St. Dominic (1170-1221) and St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), with their innovations, also appear at an opportune moment. The great evils and misfortunes of their epoch are ignorance and error in the domain of religion; in the social order, inordinate attachment to perishable goods. Dominic opposes, to the first of these dangers, the apostleship of the Friars Preachers;

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against the second, Francis advances with the examples and teachings of the "poor" Friars Minor. The office in choir is preserved; but the public ministry obliges the Religious to leave their monasteries. The monk becomes an apostle. The independence of individual monasteries is abolished: they become grouped together under the authority of a Superior General.

Down to the sixteenth century, the Benedictines and Augustinians, the Dominicans, Franciscans and Norbertines constitute, with the Carmelites and some oriental monks who escaped the destructions of Islamism, the almost total number of Religious. The great shocks with which the "Religious Revolts" of the sixteenth century shake Christianity, the progress of the Protestant heresy, the need of safeguarding the Faith in the countries struggling against error, urgently necessitate the establishment of religious armies free to engage in every form of ministry. This will be the mission of the Regular Clerks: Theatines, Somaschi, Barnabites and Jesuits. Among these, attendance in choir is reduced and finally abandoned.

In the Company of Jesus, St. Ignatius (1481-1556) draws closer the bonds of strict obedience for his Religious and the dependence of particular houses in regard to the central authority. This reinforcement of authority and administrative centralization may have been suggested by the political state of Spain and the new tendencies of pontifical government; they more probably result from the character of St. Ignatius, a soldier who had become conqueror for Jesus Christ, and the anticipated needs of his Society; the Founder may have sought a supernatural safeguard for his religious, an element of success for their apostleship, a necessary reaction against the prevailing spirit of independence: all these explanations are quite tenable, all these motives have most likely combined to influence him. The vitality of the work shows the wisdom of the Founder.

These divers Congregations admit "Lay Brothers," Laymen, or "Brothers Coadjutors"; but in view of the apostleship, the active element had to be formed of Religious priests. Hence, down to the end of the seventeenth century, it was almost impossible

to find an Institute of men whose members were entirely debarred from the priesthood (1). Among many other innovations, this is to be the very opportune work of St. John Baptist de la Salle.

Our Founder, enlightened by divine light, clearly sees the needs of his time. His heart, animated with supernatural charity, makes him sensitive to the prevalent miseries and misfortunes. He is prepared to apply a remedy, to a special point, because he was ever docile to the movements of the Holy Ghost. This Divine Guide inspires him to organize a new Congregation responding to the needs of a special epoch and a given country, and also of such a flexibility as to be capable of being adapted to divers epochs and multiple countries.

The literary and artistic splendour of France in the seventeenth century, its military glories and institutions, offsprings of its religious faith, are not motives to disown its lacunæ and deficiencies. What epoch is exempt from them? The privileged classes, nobility and gentry, receive a virile classical culture, and a serious moral and Christian education; but, generally, the children of the people grow up in ignorance. Popular schools are not lacking. Yet notwithstanding the zeal of the clergy and the frequency of pious foundations, they are not sufficiently numerous, nor are they sufficiently staffed. There are serious obstacles to the proper functioning of the "little schools": little stability in the recruitment of the "regents," lack of proper formation, extreme moderateness and precariousness of their salaries, insecurity of tenure, especially when approaching old age. To these must be coupled

(1) It is sometimes said that the *Brothers of the Common Life* are, in the fourteenth century, an example of a purely lay Congregation. This statement is inexact. The *Brothers of the Common Life*, founded by Geert Groote (1340-1384) at Deventer, in Over-Yssel (Holland), and subsequently organized by one of his companions, Radwin, reckoned priests among them. Whilst the "Canons of the Common Life" instructed the sons of the nobility, the Brothers gave popular education. They had schools in Cologne, Munster, Erfurt and several other places. Their society disappeared during the Reformation.

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their attachment to the snail-pace method of individual teaching which permitted them to group only a small number of children about a master. Let us add that if the "paying schools," as they are called to-day, swarm in the towns, the "charity schools" are not in proportion to the number of the indigent.

The Ursuline Nuns, established in France by Madame de Sainte Beuve, the Religious Sisters of Father Barré and those of Canon Roland, with many others, work with success in the education of girls. At Lyons and in the neighbouring districts, Abbé Démia and his collaborators, priests or aspirants to the priesthood, organized schools for boys. There is wanting a Congregation of men who would specially devote themselves to the Christian and gratuitous education of "the sons of artisans and the poor." For this new and urgent work God had prepared St. John Baptist de la Salle.

The first element of our Founder's success, very dear Brothers, comes from the knowledge and conviction which he acquires of the necessity of his Institute and of the precise end to pursue. "The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools," he says at the commencement of his Rules, "is a Society in which profession is made of keeping schools gratuitously. . . . the end of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children . . . . This Institute is of very great necessity, because artisans 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 instruction and a suitable Christian education. It was for the purpose of procuring this advantage for the children of artisans and of the poor, that the Christian Schools were instituted" (1). Everything is summarized in these few words: The nature of the schools, Christian and gratuitous; their privileged clientele, the children of the poor; their position with regard to the parents, to aid them, leaving

(1) Common Rules, I, 1, 4-5.

them at the same time the necessary influence; their action, to form in the child the upright man and the virtuous Christian.

That the Brothers may be able to devote themselves entirely to the work of their vocation, the founder decides that they shall not be priests nor shall they aspire to the ecclesiastical state; that they shall not study Latin, and that none of them shall give private lessons outside the Community (1).

He also made another innovation: except in the Boarding Schools, the schools were to be gratuitous for all those who would attend them. The Schools were to be composed of several classes, the lessons were to be common to the pupils of the same division, that is, of the same intellectual development. The Simultaneous Method, till then, imperfectly employed in rough outline in a few schools, is fixed by St. John Baptist de la Salle, who ordains that no modification is to be made in it in our houses. Popular teaching had at last found its legislator.

How did God, very dear Brothers, choose and prepare the architect of this great work? He required a man according to His own Heart: one "separated from the world," a Saint (2) who wishes to be a real priest, entirely given to God and to souls; a humble man who is an enemy to flattery and ambition; a prudent man, who consults God in assiduous prayer, the wise in multiplied appeals, his own good sense in mature reflections; a patient man who does not anticipate the time of Providence; a lover of the Cross who does not tire of sowing in tears, leaving others the joy of reaping an opulent harvest (3).

Let us glory in having such a Saint for Father: his sanctity constitutes our honourable patrimony. Let us not forget our duty to imitate him: he presents himself to us as our model. To take the divine will for sovereign rule, the utility of the Brothers and the Christian formation of children as the continual objective;

(1) Com. Rules, I, 3; XXVIII; XI, 1. — (2) Etymologically, the idea of "sanctity" includes that of "separation from the world." — (3) Ps. CXXXV, 6.

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to employ all the means of attaining it, although nature may shudder ; to fear no labour and to shun no sacrifice sent by God ; to be faithful to the indications of prudence, and infatuated by the folly of the Cross ; to be audacious without temerity in his abandonment to the plans of Providence, although enveloped in obscurity :—such was the application of St. John Baptist de la Salle ; such also should be ours.

During the forty years of his active life, he founds and organizes humble schools. Twenty towns received his attention, not on account of the charm of their situation or the beauty of their monuments, but on account of the supernatural seduction that the children, the poorest and the most abandoned, had on his soul, and who were simply ignored by the greater part of his contemporaries. Several lent their support at first and then abandoned him. Others, through jealousy, sectarian hatred or incomprehension of his work, persecuted him. But the Brothers, whom hypocrisy could not deceive, were tenderly and irresistibly attached to him. At his death, it was easily perceived that he was of the race of Francis of Assisi, Dominic and Ignatius : of those intrepid souls who fight and win the battles of God.

He was of the same precious metal ; his soul was ornamented with the same virtues. Like them, he passionately loved suffering. Like them he loved souls to the point of exhaustion. Like them he sought the glory of God to the absolute abnegation of himself. But in the midst of these, he appeared with a most personal appearance. How shall we explain it ?

Souls the most holy,—the Immaculate Virgin Mary excepted,—are incapable of reproducing with equal perfection each of the virtues of Jesus Christ. That surpasses their capital of graces ; that also departs from the divine plan. Souls, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, ordinarily cleave to a particular virtue, which radiates with characteristic effulgence. And when these Saints found religious families, this trait becomes the racial sign which is to characterize their spiritual descendants ; this is “ the spirit of the Founder,” becoming for each order, each Institute, its proper spirit. Zeal for preaching has this importance in St. Dominic

and the Dominicans, love of strict poverty in St. Francis and the Franciscans, a conquering ardour for the glory of God in St. Ignatius and the Jesuits, humility and charity in St. Vincent of Paul and his two Congregations. In St. John Baptist de la Salle, this sign, which should characterize each one of us, very dear Brothers, is, first, the spirit of faith which looks upon everything in a supernatural light, weighs everything in the scales of the sanctuary, that is, judges them according to the Gospel maxims. It is also a spirit of zeal, a holy ardour to lead children, especially poor children, to God.

On the 7th April, 1719, our Saint had completed his mission “ by the guidance of God, through the movement of His Spirit, and with the intention of pleasing Him ” (1).

III

Historical Sketch of our Institute

from the Death of

St. John Baptist de la Salle.

(1719—1919).

The durable survival of men in their good reputation, the useful persistency of their work in time, and the radiancy of their influence in space, are rare privileges, seldom accorded to those who appear with *eclat* on the world's stage. Before God, they are what their actions have made them ; posterity often forgets even their names. To a great number of his saints, the Divine Remunerator dispenses, along with imperishable glory, a prodigious survival here below. Thus did He ordain in regard to St. John Baptist de la Salle.

(1) Collection, pp. 71-72.

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On the 7th April, 1719, the work of the Founder is still very weak. But because he drew his inspiration from the Heart of Jesus, who loves the little ones and the poor, it will continue to develop. Yet such were the designs of God that it had to pass through reiterated alternatives of peace and persecution. In peace, our Institute should assume an extension or should assert the power of its vital principle; during storms and persecutions, the divine protection, which casts down and raises up, should appear, according to the eternal decrees of His wisdom. Is not this also, very dear Brothers, the history of all great religious institutions and of the Church herself? Long prosperity may distend the bonds of regular discipline and lead even to regrettable decadence; whilst violent assaults and the ephemeral triumph of adverse forces recall what should never have been forgotten: the all-powerful goodness of Him who saves the barque in peril (1), in which His faithful servants suffer and pray.

Religious societies receive also another benefit from the alternatives of peaceful and critical times. Without sacrificing anything of their proper primitive spirit they get renewed by the prudent adaptation of their apostleship to the exigencies of the times they pass through and of the regions into which the gust of the storm conveys them. Thus is their "youth renewed like the eagle's" (2).

The death of St. John Baptist de la Salle did not cause any shock, nor did it produce any indecision in the functioning and administration of his Institute. The transmission of the supreme administrative control was effected in 1717. The prudence of the Founder, finally triumphing over the affectionate resistance of his disciples, had established for ever the government of the Brothers by one of themselves. The interference of outsiders was made henceforth impossible; vain efforts were made in that direction from 1712 to 1714, during the sojourn of the Saint in the Communities of the South of France. The conciliatory wisdom of Brother Bartholomew (1717-1720), the activity of the Visitors

(1) Matt., VIII, 25. — (2) Ps. CII, 5.

whom he deputed to visit our houses, everywhere maintained peace and charity in the observance of our Rules.

During thirty-one years (1720-1751) Brother Timothy governs with respect for our traditions, with firmness, and a full comprehension of the needs of the Congregation. It had, in 1720, neither civil personality in the state, nor canonical existence in the Church. The protection of the Founder from his throne in Heaven brought about a rapid realization of both projects. Letters patent were granted on 28th September, 1724, and the Bull *Apostolicæ dignitatis solio*,—the form then used for the Approbations of the Holy See,—was accorded on 26th January, 1725. Perpetual vows of religion began to be pronounced; the Rule, sanctioned by apostolic authority, received an increase of impulsive and directive force.

Brother Claude, our Third Superior General, finds the Institute, on his election, fervent and prosperous. The number of Brothers has tripled since 1719. During his generalship (1751-1767), he founds few houses: the strengthening of those already existing seems to him preferable to a risky extension that might weaken them. The Brothers have the honour of being hated by the Jansenistic sects and insulted by clans of "philosophers" (1). Their life is severe: in many places they have to struggle with a penury of resources which threatens to impede the successful functioning of their schools. But they valiantly support this poverty.

Under the administration of Brother Frumence (1767-1777), hostile tactics tend to reduce the Institute to the condition of a diocesan Congregation. St. John Baptist de la Salle had to submit to analogous manœuvres in Paris, and, to escape them, had to stealthily flee to Vaugirard. In 1771, to safeguard its liberty, the Régime leaves Saint Yon, which had sheltered it since 1705, and retires to Paris, which it will leave nine years later, to settle down in Melun (1780-1792).

(1) Especially by De Langourla, La Chalotais and Voltaire. See Instructive and Administrative Circulars, No. 137, December 25th, 1905; *Historical Essay on the Mother House of the Institute*, p. 73-74.

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The transfer was presided over by Brother Agathon, whose generalship (1777-1798) continues to be one of the most remarkable in our Institute. His lofty intelligence and his strong will leave a personal imprint on his administrative acts. His courage during the storms of the Revolution, merits and retains our respect. Our Institute has a membership of about two thousand Brothers when the storm becomes unloosed. It directs one hundred and twenty-five schools, in which thirty-six thousand children are instructed. But how would the services rendered by the Institute find favour against the secularizing influences and hatreds of that period?

The long-expected conflagration suddenly bursts forth; the French Revolution devastates the whole country. To "The Rights of Man and the Citizen," proclaimed in August, 1789, succeeds the "Civil Constitution of the Clergy," imposed, contrary to all law, in July, 1790, on the Clergy of France. On the 27th December of the same year, a decree extends the obligation of the oath "to all persons charged with any function in the department of instruction." It then becomes necessary to choose between prison or exile, and apostasy. Brother Agathon at first disputes the question on legal grounds; he then rejects and condemns it for his Brothers, even before the Brief of Pius VI had condemned it as heretical and schismatic. It is all over with the Christian Schools in France.

Dragged before commissions and tribunals, the immense majority of the sons of St. John Baptist de la Salle remain true to their faith. Brother Salomon, secretary to Brother Agathon, is the first of our victims to be immolated by demagogical fury: he was massacred in Paris on the 2nd September, 1792. Brother Moniteur ascended the scaffold in Rennes in 1794. Brothers Léon, Udalric, Christopher and Roger died on the convict-ships of Rochfort (May-September, 1794). To these, our most glorious heroes, may be applied the words of the Wise Man: "The souls of the just are in the hands of God. In the sight of the universe they seemed to die; and their departure was taken for misery; but they are in peace. Afflicted in few things, in many they shall be well-rewarded; because God found them worthy of Himself.

As gold in the furnace He hath proved them, and as a victim of a holocaust He hath received them" (1).

On leaving the prisons of Paris, Brother Agathon, in the various residences in which he hides himself, continues in communication with some of his Brothers. But they are without news concerning him in Rome where several of our Brothers sought refuge; and by a brief of the 7th April, 1795, Pope Pius VI confers on Brother Frumence the title and powers of Vicar-General of our Institute. Brother Agathon was aware of this decision and wrote to Brother Frumence. He died in Tours in September, 1798.

What a catastrophe for the work of St. John Baptist de la Salle! Reduced to two houses in the Papal States, the revolutionary invasion menaces it with total ruin. But in France, a number of Brothers, of whose religious character the public are ignorant, continue to exercise their apostleship among children. Their humble classes serve to prepare for the restoration of our Society. When the cyclone which had accumulated so many ruins subsides, Communities are re-organized. In this work of reconstruction, a notable part is borne by Brothers Pigménion, Liberius, Constantine, Adelard, Bernardine, Francis de Sales, Evaristus and Gerbaude (2).

How can the fidelity of our Brothers during the hurricane be explained? In the first place, by the help of Heaven from which descends every perfect gift (3); and in the second, by their generous co-operation with the grace of their vocation. Following the reiterated counsels of our holy Founder, they carefully avoided the theological discussions in which, in the eighteenth century, the indocile wisdom of the learned frequently foundered (4). Simple and modest, they remained "infinitely attentive" and submissive to all the decisions of the Roman Church (5). By their separ-

(1) Wisdom, III, 1-6. — (2) Instructive and Administrative Circulars, No. 112, of 15th April, 1902, on the Centenary of the Restoration of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in France. — (3) James I, 17. — (4) 106th Med. — (5) Id.

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ation from the world, they preserved intact their will to serve our Lord, notwithstanding trials and sufferings. Finally, poverty served as a guarantee against the ravages of creature-comfort and superfluity, which are diametrically opposed to confidence in God and religious observance.

In your present difficulties, very dear Brothers, let your thoughts go back to our predecessors of one hundred and thirty years ago. Let the remembrance of their valour encourage you to support whatever God may be pleased to permit to exercise your virtues. Like them, lead regular lives for the love of Him who has chosen you and whose yoke you have accepted. May recollection and prudence protect your souls against the crafty or aggressive invasion of the spirit of the world, and may your cordial and devoted obedience facilitate the action of the Superiors. Happy you will then be! All your efforts, concentrated on your personal perfection and your apostleship, will tend towards a single end: to glorify God and to prepare youth for its Christian mission, its social rôle.

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In December 1803, our Institute, suppressed for eleven years, is re-established in France by a consular decree. The Brothers immediately gather around some former Directors. Brother Frumence arrives in Lyons and is installed in the Little College, where he is soon honoured by a visit of Pius VII, who deigns to bless its modest chapel (1). Thus, after a long winter, a new sap causes tiny buds to expand into flowers; the Christian Schools may be seen re-organized in large numbers in the country now restored to peace. The Municipalities ask for Brothers "of whom they preserved such happy memories." But they are far too few, and the new recruits have not yet had time to be formed.

Brother Gerbaud (1810-1822) succeeds Brother Frumence.

(1) The ceremony took place on 18th April, 1805.

His prudent administration may be resumed in this resolution of the General Chapter of 1810: "Hold to what is written," that is, to the Rules and to the Pedagogy of the Founder. His whole generalship was, in effect, a constant effort to maintain our traditions: fidelity to religious traditions, to the Rule, that the spirit which had ever been its strength, might be perpetuated in the Institute; fidelity to pedagogical traditions, which the Superior assured by ordering a reprint of the *Conduct of Schools*, almost all the copies of which had disappeared (1).

Such a clear comprehension of his duties led Brother Gerbaud to re-establish in all our schools the gratuitous teaching which is essential to our Institute (2). His attachment to our customs and to our Rules engaged him in many memorable conflicts with the clamorous preachers and official protectors of the Mutual System of teaching (1816-1821).

On the occasion of the first Centenary of the precious death of the Founder of the Christian Schools (1817), he protested his desire to see the primitive spirit of our Society perpetuated amongst us. "Our dear Father," said he, "employed close on forty years to form a Congregation of about three hundred Brothers and only twenty schools; but what religious and what Communities! Let us endeavour not to degenerate from the fervour of our predecessors. Let us honour the memory of our Father by the imitation of his virtues. During the past hundred years, he enjoys an infinite recompense, and he will enjoy it eternally. This recompense is reserved for us if, like him, we live in such a manner, according to our Rules and the Gospel maxims, that death, having nothing to take from us, may have everything to give us" (3).

The last important négociation of Brother Gerbaud, after the foundations in Belgium and the sending of the first contingent of Brothers to Reunion, is in reference to the transfer, from Lyons

(1) Instructive and Administrative Circulars, No. 137, of the 25th December, 1905: *Historical Essay on the Mother House of the Institute*. — (2) Com. Rules, VII, 1; Bull, 5, 9. — (3) Archives of the Institute.

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to Paris, of the Régime and the principal Novitiates of the Institute (1). On the 28th January, 1821, the Superior General and his Assistants settle in the "House of the Holy Infant Jesus," in the suburb of Saint Martin. In 1688, St. John Baptist de la Salle had transferred the seat of government of his Congregation from Rheims to Paris in order that, from thence, it might more easily spread throughout the kingdom. Analogous considerations guided his successor.

During the generalships of Brother William of Jesus (1822-1830) and of Brother Anaclet (1830-1838), the functioning of the Institute remains normal. The Revolution of 1830 did not disturb it. The action and influence of the Christian Schools are regarded as a support of public order. Two works to which Providence was subsequently to give a considerable development, were then founded. The first Junior Novitiate, the first since the essays of the Founder in that direction, was opened in Paris on October 1st, 1835, and the *Association for the foundation and maintenance of the Preparatory Novitiate*, which was afterwards to be known as the "Association of St. John Baptist de la Salle," began its function on the 27th December of the same year.

From 1803, four Superiors had presided over the restoration of the Institute. In 1838, God gave it Brother Philip, whose name and whose works, extending beyond the frontiers of France, prepared for the great and distant diffusion which was organized by his successors.

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You are not astonished, very dear Brothers, to see the name of the Superiors connected with the principal events which interest the Congregation during their generalship. These events were neither all conceived, nor all realized by them. How great soever

(1) Instructive and Administrative Circulars, No. 137: *Historical Essay on the Mother House of the Institute*, p. 171 and succeeding pages.

the activity of the Régime may be, it has to depend on the devotedness of the Brothers it directs. And this necessary collaboration has never been wanting to it. Like St. Paul, St. John Baptist de la Salle planted; like Apollo, the successive Superiors watered; like the companions of the Apostles, the Directors and all the Brothers worked in the common field; and God, blessing the most conspicuous actions and the most humble labours, gave His benediction without which nothing can grow or fructify (1). But in an Institute administratively centralized, the impulsive force is generated in a single station or centre. Towards this centre particular activities are orientated to receive support against individual weakness, and protection against attacks and obstacles.

How was St. John Baptist de la Salle led to organize, in his Society, the administrative centralization adopted by Religious Congregations since the sixteenth century? Amongst other motives, we may mention the following: the happy results that this idea had produced elsewhere, the dissemination of our Communities which isolation would have weakened, the nature of our functions which demand unity of method and general procedure in instruction and education, the conviction also that a more entire obedience to authority draws down a greater abundance of graces.

It is in accordance with the very logic of facts to refer to Brother Philip the marvellous development of the Institute during his generalship (1838-1874). It appears that perhaps none of our Superiors has been as "representative" as he of the qualities of the army composed of the sons of St. John Baptist de la Salle, whose different corps, scattered all over the world, give incessant battle against the evil which seduces souls, and against the error which leads them astray. Simple like the least of the Brothers, humble to effacement, devoted to every form of apostleship conformable to our vocation, sympathetic towards the working class whom he gets instructed in hundreds of adult courses, respected

(1) I Cor., III, 7.

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by the public authorities, the unstable favour of whom he makes no direct effort to obtain, a faithful servant of his Country in her sorrows and her prosperity, an eminent Religious whose regularity, supernatural spirit and zeal made him venerated by all, Brother Philip occupied the first position for thirty-six years, the incarnation of the spirit of our Institute and the principal worker in the extension of its works.

And what extension, very dear Brothers! During his administration, the number of our houses increases from three to twelve hundred; that of the Brothers from two to twelve thousand; that of the pupils, from one hundred and twenty to three hundred and forty thousand (1). Our establishments are multiplied in the Levant, Egypt, Canada and the United States; the District of Austria makes its debut and Equador receives our first colony; but after the Franco-German war of 1870-1871, our houses in Alsace Lorraine are closed, with the exception of a class at Metz. The Régime and the Novitiate of Paris are transferred from the suburb of Saint Martin to Rue Oudinot (1847), into that Mother House, the installations of which, a work of thirty years, formed a spacious and commodious group of buildings. This again had to be abandoned in 1905.

Trials were not wanting to Brother Philip. In face of all, whether interior or exterior, he fulfilled his duty with calm energy. The conflict for the gratuity of our schools, the war of 1870, the insurrection of the Commune and many others, did not discourage him. He lived and died as a simple Brother. The spontaneous solemnity of his funeral obsequies was a kind of reflection of the welcome that the good Master had reserved for him at the portals of eternity.

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This relative calm was succeeded, in France, by the squalls whose repeated assaults were destined to end in the disaster of

(1) The numbers given here are only approximately exact.

1904. In 1885, a law bearing on the "secularization of the teaching personnel" appeared. Numerous cases of the secularizing of schools, by administrative measures, had preceded it since 1879. The Brothers were excluded from the Communal schools which they had directed for sixty years. Public charity, excited and rendered enthusiastic by the bishops and clergy, substituted the "free schools" for those from which we were evicted. It was then that Brother Exuperian exclaimed: "God now gives us the means of being fully, in our schools, the educators that St. John Baptist de la Salle wishes us to be." For that, it was necessary that the religious life in our Institute should be fortified. This work, desired by Brother John Olympe (1874-1875), was vigorously pursued by Brother Irlide (1875-1884).

The year 1880 was a radiant break in the clouds of a sombre firmament. With brilliant and unexpected solemnity, the Institute celebrated in all our districts the second Centenary of its foundation. The bishops and clergy united with us in giving thanks to God for having raised up John Baptist de la Salle and having opened, by him, schools where youth might grow up in faith and the practice of virtue. "Although these exterior manifestations were very far from our thoughts," said Brother Irlide, "we could not be insensible to such a spontaneous transport of expression so honourable for our Congregation" (1).

On the 24th May, during the feast organized in Rheims, the Brothers re-entered into possession "of a large building which was the true cradle of our Institute, since it was to this house that the Venerable de la Salle, abandoning his paternal home, retired with his first disciples on the 24th June, 1682" (2).

Alas, very dear Brothers, little remains to-day of this dear house in Rue de Coutray, and of the Hotel de la Cloche where our Saint was born, except the ruins.

The name of Brother Irlide will ever evoke amongst us

(1) Instructive and Administrative Circulars, No. 18, on the *Second Centenary of the Foundation of our Institute*. — (2) Id., *ibid.*

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the souvenir of a man born to command, chiselled and prepared to combat obstacles, even the most overpowering ; a man whose qualities attracted and commanded respectful admiration and reverential fear rather than spontaneous affection ; a man of eminence by reason of his intelligence, his activity and his severe virtues, and who appeared as a providential instrument in the Institute at a time when circumstances demanded his energetic action.

Brother Joseph (1884-1897) did not allow the movement towards religious renovation, advocated and presided over by his predecessors, to weaken. The workers being better adapted to the divine impulsion, could not more be expected from their zeal ? Hence it was that at the request of Leo XIII and according to the long-standing inclinations of Brother Joseph, Associations for the Christian perseverance of our pupils, were multiplied everywhere.

The results consoled the venerated Superior. But these had to be purchased at the price of much suffering. Great was his joy at the feast of the beatification of the Venerable John Baptist de la Salle (February 1888) ; and great were his hopes from the more general organization of the Thirty-Day Retreats, the creation of the Second Novitiate, the diffusion of the Brothers in Ireland and in Spain ; those were the panels of joy in the diptych of his generalship. His panels of afflictions were poignant : the subjection of the young Brothers to military service in times of peace (1889), the expiration of the postponement granted for the obligatory secularization of schools (1891), the perplexities arising out of fiscal laws, the abandonments and injustices that his prudent decision drew down upon him. His heart was broken. The delicacy of his soul, his perfect uprightness, his need of re-comforting and faithful affection, and his desire to see us all, very dear Brothers, ascend with sprightly step the frequently abrupt heights of perfection, predisposed him to suffer a great deal. These sufferings caused his death.

It seems only yesterday that the generalship of Brother Gabriel Marie (1897-1913) closed. None of the important events of

his generalship are unknown to you, and your gratitude to the venerated Superior suffers no diminution. Like all human careers, his had its alternatives of joys and sorrows, and these latter were perhaps preponderant. But who then, unless indeed he be a stranger to the workings of Divine Providence, can be astonished at the persistence of the oppositions to Religious Institutes ? Is not the contradiction of the Cross the decisive proof that these works are of God ? The Cross appears along all the roads of human existence, at the cross-roads along the routes pursued by the Church, and at the turning-points of the history of the world.

The Canonisation of our Founder in 1900, the successful termination of the works relative to the Rules in 1901, the virile organization of our Novitiates and Scholasticates, the zeal of the Brothers in every country, gave great joy to Brother Gabriel-Marie. The year 1904 and the following years plunged him into poignant grief, into occasionally inextricable administrative embarrassments, and into afflictions, the intensity of which is known to God alone. He triumphed over them by his confidence in Jesus and Mary, by his perfect mastery over himself, and the devoted collaboration of the Régime and the Brothers Visitors. A simply human work could never have resisted this furious tempest. Five decrees, enforcing with brutal haste the law of July 1904, closed, during the first year, eight hundred and one of our schools out of a total of thirteen hundred and fifty-nine. The others soon fell afterwards. But an inconsolable regret for what no longer existed, persisted in the soul of the Superior.

You know, very dear Brothers, the sources from which emanated the joys and consolations of the second part of his generalship : from the creation of foreign Districts, from the development of Districts which were already prosperous, and from the courage of the Brothers who worked so perseveringly in circumstances so unfavourable. He tendered his resignation in 1913. Then after three years of comparative quiet, absorbed in study and sustained by prayer, he terminated the most useful of existences by a holy death.

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What generations of Brothers since 1719! They worked, suffered and sanctified themselves, and then disappeared, the greater part of them being unknown outside the threshold of the Community in which they lived. In the Middle Ages, Christians might be seen leaving their own country and going into foreign lands to construct cathedrals. These unknown artists erected splendid monuments respected by time and even by barbarians, which to-day still attest the genius of the architects who conceived them and the constancy of the crowds of workmen who executed them. For twenty or thirty years these anonymous artists sculptured and excavated stones. They made them blossom forth in flowers around capitals and sing a sublime poem in the form of magnificent Gothic Churches. Then, worn out by fatigue, they returned to their native country, content to have been the "good decorators of Notre Dame." Thus has it been with our deceased Brothers. Having come from diverse regions, they give themselves to God in our Institute, for the building and ornamentation of the temples of Jesus Christ, the souls of the Children. Then one day they joyfully take their departure towards Heaven to breathe the air of their "native land" (1).

Let us raise our eyes, very dear Brothers, towards this phalanx of glorified religious who surround our holy Founder and Father in eternal beatitude. By a divine munificence, they are recompensed for their works of a day and their sufferings of an hour. All have carried their cross; all have climbed their calvary; all have

(1) This is the expression of our holy Founder. "His whole desire," says his first biographer, "was to make new men of his Brothers, having no thought but for God and His service, elevated above the earth and themselves. This he testified one day by the agreeable answer he made to a person who advised him to send some of his Brothers to take the air of their native land as a remedy for their infirmities: 'The native land of the Brothers,' he answered, 'is Paradise.'" (*Spirit and Virtues*, Ch. XV; *Spiritual Doctrine*, p. 681.)

In the *Life of the Venerable de la Salle*, Brother Lucard says that this reply was made by the Founder to the doctor who was attending our sick Brothers.

died, crucified to their Rules and vows. Superiors whom incessant solitudes have made participants in the pains of all; Directors who have experienced the heavy burden of responsibility which the unworthy alone wish to bear; educators who have sown the good grain of religious truth in the intelligences of their pupils, and have then waited in a spirit of prayer and courage, that the hoped-for harvest, at times deceptive, always slow, might come to maturity; Brothers to whom Providence allotted the portion of Jesus and Mary at Nazareth; young religious, like fresh, newly opened lilies whom the Divine Gardener has transferred for further efflorescence to the eternal flower-beds; old Brothers whose long and varied experience caused them to be respected by all; Brothers Soldiers, victims of new duties, heroic workers in the sanguinary trenches whence peace has germinated,—all, all have come out of great tribulation (1). Behold them in glory, no longer placed according to the precarious hierarchy of this world, but according to their acquired degrees of grace and love. The divine essence being a revealing medium for them of all things, they follow us with tender affections in the labours of our earthly mission. They compassionate our sorrows, they know our wants, hear our prayers, and incessantly offer their intercessions and suffrages to God for us.

With a generous and suppliant charity, let us cast a look on Purgatory where a number of our Brothers are undoubtedly detained. Let us ask them why they suffer. "Because," they will say, "we have not been sufficiently supernaturally regular, sufficiently vigorously penitent, sufficiently detached from ourselves and from creatures. Try to abridge our bitter pains. Endeavour to extinguish the debts which you yourselves have contracted towards the Divine Justice. You can, while on earth, repair, by light sufferings, many faults; it is only by long and severe expiations that accounts are liquidated in Purgatory."

Let us frequently, very dear Brothers, make this double

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pilgrimage to the kingdom of beatitude, and the purifying regions of sorrow. And since such a great cloud of witnesses, our predecessors, are interested in us in both cities, "let us lay aside every weight and sin which surround us, and let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us, looking on Jesus Christ (1), and on St. John Baptist de la Salle, His most perfect imitator.

We should be lamentably tainted by rationalism, not to recognize and adore the action of Providence in the history of our Institute. We are surely not blind on this point, very dear Brothers, and the spirit of faith makes us recognize "the guidance of God" in regard to our Congregation. In this Centenary, we shall offer Him, then, the homage of our gratitude for so many benefits received from His liberality. We shall raise our minds and hearts towards Him, saying: "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, Who art and Who wast, and Who art to come; because Thou hast exerted Thy power in our behalf" (2). We thank Thee for the immense multitude of Thy favours, for the happiness we have experienced and for the trials we have borne. May it please Thee to continue Thy assistance, so that, with a docile will we may procure Thy glory as far as we are able and as Thou wilt require of us.

IV.

The Lessons of the Precious Death of St. John Baptist De La Salle.

It is not sufficient to admire the happy death of our Father and Founder, to wish to die like him in the embrace of the Lord and to thank God for the vitality and diffusion of our Institute during the past two centuries, that the celebration of the second centenary may produce its best fruits in us. The principal result

(1) Hebrews, XII, 1-2. — (2) Apoc., XI, 17.

of this celebration, should be a development of the spirit of our Saint in each one of his disciples.

We should like to explain to you the nature and extent of this renovation, by a commentary on the lessons contained in the Will, the last Recommendation and the final words of St. John Baptist de la Salle. You know these texts, because you have read them in the life of our Father and in the Collection (1). And because you have frequently meditated on them, you will profit by the reflections which they have suggested. Their meaning is profound, their applications multiple. Brothers of all ages, in all positions, in every country, may find therein light and guidance for their conduct. Though they are lessons from beyond the tomb, they are, nevertheless, living and opportune, and serve to recall and apply what St. Paul said of the just Abel: "He being dead, yet speaketh" (2). Let us recollect ourselves that we may hear this voice, and allow it full liberty to inspire us with its salutary lessons and resolutions.

Commencement of the Testament of St. John Baptist de la Salle.

When was this last Will or Testament of our Father drawn up? His first biographer does not tell us. Most probably it is the result of a prevision of an approaching end. His soul illumined by the lights of the dawn of the eternal day, the Saint gives us his advice and testifies to us his affectionate and tender solicitude. It is a message to all those who then composed his Institute, to all those likewise whom God would give them as collaborators and successors. It begins as follows (3):

(1) Collection, p. 222-224. — (2) Hebr., XI, 4. — (3) The Testament contains instructions relative to the property of the Institute, and especially to the houses of Rheims which were till then confided to the Canon Louis de la Salle. These precautions were necessary, because the Congregation had not yet received letters patent nor civil personality, and consequently, had no right to possess, acquire or inherit temporal goods.

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*I commend to God, first of all, my soul, and next, all the Brothers of the Society of the Christian Schools, to whom He has united me ; and I recommend them, above all things, to be entirely submissive to the Church and especially in these unhappy times ; and, in order to give proof of this, never to be at variance in anything with our Holy Father the Pope and the Church of Rome, always remembering that I sent two Brothers to Rome to beg of God the grace that their Society may always be entirely submissive to the Holy See. I also recommend them to have great devotion to our Lord, to have a great love for Holy Communion and mental prayer, and to have a special devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, and to St. Joseph, the patron and protector of the Society ; and to acquit themselves of their work with zeal and disinterestedness, and to maintain an intimate union among themselves and blind obedience to their Superiors, which is the foundation and support of all perfection in a community.*

When the Brothers became acquainted with the last Will and Testament of their Father, they probably remarked that it recalled the points of the Rules and the subjects on which the Founder had most insisted in the *Collection*, in his general exhortations and private directions. He had, besides, no new instructions to give, because God had given him time to instruct his disciples and to caution them against the dangers to which their vocation was exposed. His most profound convictions, his most ardent desires were then formulated in his last instructions.

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To believe firmly is an essential condition to live well. The first recommendation of St. John Baptist de la Salle has reference to the integrity of our faith which is safeguarded by *an entire submission to the Church.*

The admonition was opportune. The Jansenistic heresy had long been troubling the minds of men when it was solemnly condemned by Pope Clement XI, in the Bull *Unigenitus Filius Dei* of 1713. It had infected, in France, a large number of ecclesiastics, even of the highest rank. Even after 1713, some of the

great Orders were not able to continue immune from its infection. Joining its ravages to those of Gallicanism, it infiltrated Parliament. With irreducible obstinacy, the sect denied that the errors condemned were to be found in the writings of its doctors, and from the decision of the Sovereign Pontiff the sectarists " appealed " to the future council. Owing to the " rage for dogmatising," the purity of faith was everywhere in peril. Our Saint, like a vigilant pastor, took wise precautions to safeguard his Brothers. He gave them, " in these unhappy times," an example of the most unswerving orthodoxy. At Marseilles, he preferred to see the failure of his Novitiate rather than form a pact with the sectarists. He protested publicly against the inscription of his name on a list of " appellants " in Calais. In his Rules, he forbade his disciples, when travelling, to lodge in monasteries so that they might avoid the danger, then very common, of theological discussions and insinuations that might have falsified the rectitude of their religious beliefs (1). How happy are we, very dear Brothers, to have such a guide !

The Church is the depository of truth, as she is of holiness and authority. Consequently, " we must be intimately united to her, and testify such a dependance on her in everything regarding our religion, that we may listen to and receive her decisions as being oracles pronounced by Jesus Christ Himself " (2). Thanks be to God, our Institute has never wavered in this direction. It has always promptly obeyed every decision emanating from the Roman Congregations. " It has adored the authority of God in the Pontifical decrees of the Sovereign Pastor of souls," regarding him always " as the infallible Doctor of the Church " (3).

The rules of conduct traced out by St. John Baptist de la Salle for his disciples, two hundred years ago, remain as opportune to-day as they were then. Instead of being grateful to Jesus Christ for having given to the world in the person of His Vicar, an incorruptible guardian of truth and a courageous defender of

(1) Com. Rules, XXVI, 1. — (2) 106th Med. — (3) 106th Med.

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morals, degenerate Christians discuss, despise and deny this supreme authority. Protest by your conduct, very dear Brothers, against this decadence and this aberration. Demonstrate to the older pupils of your classes and to the young men in your Perseverance Societies, that the world has perhaps never had so much need of being instructed, guided and directed by the Pastor to whom is confided the care of the entire faithful. In your private cogitations and your conversations ever take the part of the Pope; it is the part of God Himself.

Let this respect extend to their Lordships the Bishops: "they are delegated to watch over the doctrine and morals of those who work under their ministry" (1). Treat with deference the parochial clergy and the ecclesiastics exercising any function in our establishments. Thus will you show the high esteem you have for their sacred character, and your gratitude for the supernatural benefits of which they are the dispensers in your regard.

In this second Centenary, we wish to recall the courageous zeal of Brother Gabriel Drolin. For more than twenty years he was, in Rome, a kind of guarantee, a living attestation of the sentiments of our Founder for the Holy See. He lived at a time when the Sovereign Pontiff was held in little esteem, and notwithstanding his isolation and the penury of resources, he was happy to work under the shadow of the Chair of Truth. Our Brothers in Rome have to-day the same honour and the same mission. They ought to be, and we believe we can truly say they are, of all, the most fervent in regular observance and the most united to their Superiors. Of no one amongst us can it be said with the same truth that he is "a spectacle to angels and to men" (2), that is, to those whom God designates for the government of His Church and to the Christian people of the Eternal City.

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If St. John Baptist de la Salle had limited his testamentary

(1) 106th Med. — (2) I Cor., IV, 9.

recommendations to a single one, he would undoubtedly have excited us, as he has done, *to have a great devotion to Our Lord*. All his desires in our regard would be implicitly contained therein. Because religious who fervently love our divine Master unhesitatingly believe all He teaches. A most active inclination leads them to love mental prayer in which they study this good Saviour, and the Holy Communion in which He gives Himself to them. They see Him in their Brothers; they obey Him in the person of their Superiors.

"Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh" (1): our Saint being consumed with love for Jesus Christ could not have failed to leave us as his last watch-word: "Have a great devotion to Our Lord." His life was a constant and generous effort to imitate Him by sacrifice, charity and zeal. His doctrine on the Redeemer is tender and practical.

You have had presented to your minds, his exhortations on this subject. The following are examples: "Let us often think that Jesus having given Himself entirely to us and for us, ought we not also to give ourselves entirely to Him and not seek ourselves in anything" (2). "The means to be dearly loved by Jesus Christ is, to attach ourselves to Him, leave all unhesitatingly for Him, and do all He demands and inspires, as soon as we hear His voice" (3). "Act in such a way that your pupils may think frequently of Jesus Christ, their good and only Master, that they speak often of Jesus, that all their aspirations be for Jesus only, and that they breathe only for Jesus" (4).

In imitation of our Father, let us make our Lord the be-all and end-all of our lives: of our thoughts, which should be habitually occupied with Him; of our heart, which should love nothing but Him or in Him; of our activity, which should co-operate with the impulses of His Spirit. Save to Jesus, to whom would we tend without error, without disregarding His absolute pre-eminence? He is the "Wonderful" of God, the Holy One, whom the

1) Luke, VI, 45. — (2) 88th Med. — (3) 78th Med. — (4) 102nd Med.

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Father hath chosen (1); He is God Himself who bowed the heaven and came down to us (2). With pious earnestness let us study everything concerning Jesus: His adorable Person, His Cross, His Eucharist, His Sacred Heart, His virtues and His teachings, His divine Mother become our Mother, His Church which He sustains and sanctifies, His predilection towards us in the call which has made us Religious. Let us adore the perfections of the Word made flesh, "the figure and substance of the Father" (3), "the life eternal which was with the Father and hath appeared to us" (4), and "of whose plenitude we have all received" (5). Ah, very dear Brothers, what transformations would renew our poor hearts, if we abandoned ourselves to our Lord according to the extent of His desires and His action, if we lived hidden in Him, He operating in us! Our life would become all heavenly, our deficiencies would be repaired by the fulness of Him who is filled all in all" (6), and our weakness would be sustained by Him who renders us capable of doing all things (7). We would then comprehend that our love is the measure of the expirations that we should offer to God for ourselves and other poor sinners.

A Religious, living as we are, at the epoch of the marvellous diffusion of devotion to the Sacred Heart, tends towards the imitation of Jesus Christ by this way. Love fills his soul with confidence and makes him honour the Divine Master as He wishes to be honoured now-a-days. This devotion was too new, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, to be recommended us by our Founder. The absolute silence with which his spiritual life was surrounded makes it uncertain whether he practised it or not. In all probability the revelations of Paray-le-Monial, and the first biographies of Blessed Margaret Mary, who died in 1690, were not unknown to him.

You know, very dear Brothers, and you desire that the promises made by our Lord to those, who, working for the salvation of souls,

(1) Ps., IV, 4. — (2) Ps., XVII, 10. — (3) Hebr., I, 3. — (4) I John, I, 2. — (5) John, I, 16. — (6) Ephes., I, 23. — (7) Philip., IV, 13.

make known the virtues and treasures of His adorable Heart, should be realized in you. Continue to be the ardent and enlightened propagators of this dear devotion among your pupils. Show it in its true form and in its serious practice, that is, as a worship of love manifesting itself in the generous accomplishment of duty, and as a worship of reparation towards the infinite Majesty of God outraged by sinners. You will thus prepare generous recruits for Catholic works, who will know how to pray, to do and to suffer that the divine Master may be better known loved and served.

This apostleship never appeared more urgent. For, though we may have but little faith in the future which our imagination conjures up, we are hastening towards the social kingdom of the "Lamb, the Lord of lords and King of kings" (1). Let us contribute towards this realization according to the measure of our ability; let us make Him reign over ourselves and over those whom we may be able to influence. The hour will come in which God will manifest the power of His Christ which in His time He shall show in the presence of His people. (2)

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Charity, infused into our souls with the state of grace, enables us to take hold of God and to unite ourselves to Him. Our spiritual progress depends on its development, because it is "the fulfilling of the law" (3), "the bond of perfection" (4). It is increased by every kind of good work, and especially by the fervent reception of the adorable Eucharist, the Sacrament of Union and of Love. Hence our Founder, after having recommended "a great devotion to our Lord," counselled us as a means of excelling in it: *to have a great love for the Holy Communion.*

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, large numbers of priests might be found, who seemed to forget that they had

(1) Apoc., XIII, 14. — (2) I Tim., VI, 14-16. — (3) Rom., XIII, 10. — (4) Coloss., III, 14.

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received the key of the Tabernacle that they might open it ; that they were constituted pastors of souls that they might distribute " the supersubstantial Bread " (1) and prevent souls from dying of inanition by the refusal of it. St. John Baptist de la Salle, with an amplitude of doctrine quite opposed to such a course, invites us to the sacred banquet several times each week (2). He begs of us not to abstain from it under vain protests (3). Like the Fathers of the Church, he calls daily Communion " the daily Bread " which we ask for in the Lord's Prayer (4). Several of his contemporaries imagined they saw in this conduct, a sort of prodigality that was but little in harmony with the respect due to the Most Blessed Sacrament.

" The love you ought to experience for Jesus Christ," he says to us, " as well as the desire of uniting yourself to Him, should induce you to have a great affection to communicate often " (5). " You should be very happy to be in a state in which, Holy Communion being very frequent, you can be always united to and make but one with Jesus Christ, possess His Spirit and act only by Him (6). " When Jesus Christ is in you, is He there a living Bread ? Do you allow Him full liberty to communicate His divine Spirit to your soul ? Does He live in your soul in such a way that it is no longer you who live, but Christ Jesus who liveth in you " (7) ?

Let us nourish our souls, very dear Brothers, with the correct and pious theology of our holy Father on Holy Communion (8). The more it is meditated on, the more consoling it is found to be. He is not one of those rigid doctors who formerly regarded as suspicious the sensible joys resulting from our union with Jesus Christ. On the contrary, he invites us to merit them, and to taste them as part of the hundredfold promised to detached souls here below.

(1) Matt., VI, 11. — (2) Com. Rules, IV, 2, 3, — (3) 51st and 55th Meds. — (4) 54th Med. — (5) 26th Med. — (6) 50th Med. — (7) 48th Med. — (8) Spiritual Doctrine, p. 169-190.

Since the issue of the Decree on frequent and daily Communion it is no longer necessary to demonstrate to hesitators that this is indeed the spirit of the Church. But it is still opportune to remind religious that Communion, received each day, should be daily prepared for, and in a serious manner. We do not wish to insinuate by this, that it is necessary to read over, on the eve of Communion, one of the exercises contained in our prayer-books. The perfection with which we accomplish the duties of our state, is the true preparation for the Eucharistic Banquet ; to this the masters of the spiritual life recommend us to add some sacrifices and fervent aspirations to Jesus in the Sacred Host, by way of spiritual communion. You will thus have the happiness of communicating every day with profit.

To communicate well is to participate in the life of Jesus. Then the sap of the Olive Tree transforms and divinises our life ; it prepares us for eternal union in heaven (1).

To communicate well is to learn to pray with Jesus and as Jesus prayed, whose Spirit excites in us supplications of a truly filial piety (2). Jesus intercedes with us ; and, filled with the spirit of grace and prayer, we ask everything by Him and through Him (3).

To communicate well is to learn to work with Jesus and as Jesus worked. Let us understand by this, that our love for Jesus inspires the accomplishment of the duties of our state ; that is, it applies our whole mind, our whole strength and our whole life to our daily labour. We become truly the servants of God who, for love of us, envelops and penetrates us with His benefits. Working in that spirit glorifies the Master to whom we belong, and enables us to expiate our faults by the most necessary of penances.

To communicate well is to learn to suffer with Jesus and as Jesus suffered. Our union in his dolorous Passion is an obligatory condition of our superabundant participation in His glory. Nature shrinks from this intimacy of suffering ; but fervent Communion makes us understand the beauty, necessity and admirable fruits

(1) Romans, XI, 17-24. — (2) John, XX, 17. — (3) Zach., XI, 1.

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of it. After the first Mass and the first Communion in the Cenacle Jesus said to His Apostles: "But that the world may know that I love the Father: and as the Father hath given Me commandments, so do I: Arise, let us go hence" (1). And He went to His Passion. Thus does the fervent soul accept the chalice which is prepared for her; sometimes she even anticipates it.

To suffer with Jesus and as Jesus suffered does not imply that one should feel afflictions equal to His, but that one should, in sufferings, have intentions like those of His Sacred Heart. Jesus, being impassible, is incapable of further sufferings; He desires then to unite Himself to His most generous friends, whose sufferings He sanctifies and fecundates. Happy are those who consent to this redemptive co-operation!

From sad experience, our dearly beloved Brothers Soldiers have felt all that a religious in the army loses in not being able to communicate. During the war, their great privation was to have to pass sometimes whole days and weeks without being able to receive the Bread of the strong; but they owed their sweetest joys to these communions made in the very midst of danger. "When one is engaged in the activity of the apostleship and enjoys flourishing health," wrote one of them, "one has only very imperfectly, I think, the real sentiments and dispositions that one has at a Communion received as Viaticum. But when face to face with imminent death, one abandons oneself earnestly and with a true detachment to our Lord, and He sustains us."

Finally, to communicate well is to learn to know Jesus, His mysteries and the general economy of the supernatural world better. "Take the book and eat it up," said a mysterious voice to the Apostle St. John (2). We can, if we wish, hear this voice at the door of the Tabernacle. Jesus is the Book of Life which must be eaten to be properly understood. "Thousands of holy souls have no other knowledge than that which they draw from their Communions; they have spoken and performed sublime things" (3).

(1) John, XIV, 31. — (2) Apoc., X, 9. — (3) P. Monsabré.

How does it happen, very dear Brothers, that many of those who frequently receive Jesus in the Sacred Host have only a poor activity in the spiritual order? Does not Jesus "come to them that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (1)? To eat the vivifying substance of the "Bread from heaven" (2), "to draw water out of the Saviour's fountains" (3), and to make scarcely any progress in perfection, is an anomaly. Jesus comes to us to communicate to us the dispositions of His Holy Will, the riches of His grace and the uplifting strength of His love, and we remain languishing in His service! St. John Baptist de la Salle assigns two causes for this state: unrepented venial sins and voluntary faults (4). May Our Lord, preserving us from such cowardliness, grant us, so to venerate the Sacred Mysteries of His Body and Blood, that we may ever feel within us the fruit of His redemption (5).

In communicating, let us not have in view our personal advantage only; let us receive Jesus Christ to be agreeable to Him, for the delight He takes to be with the children of men (6), and for the accomplishment of His designs. By a mode of sensibility, compatible with His glorious state and which we cannot understand here below, He is touched by our generosity and our devotedness in His regard, as He is affected by our indifference and our coldness. Let us then embrace His interests with disinterestedness and indemnify Him for the ingratitude of which He is the object.

In your classes and in your Perseverance Societies, you have, very dear Brothers, the honour and the joy of being the collaborators of the clergy in the Eucharistic education of youth. Let the preparation of your disciples for their private First Communion and afterwards for their solemn First Communion, and their progressive formation in serious piety towards the Most Blessed Sacrament,

(1) John, X, 10. — (2) Wisdom XVI, 20. — (3) Isaias, XII, 3. — (4) 55th and 58th Meds. — (5) Collect of the Mass for Corpus Christi. — (6) Proverbs, VIII, 31.

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be one of the principal objectives of your zeal. Those whom you instruct see you before the Tabernacle, in our chapels and the parish churches : your respect for Jesus in the Sacred Host should fortify their faith, your fervour sustain their devotion. Seeing you communicating frequently and fervently, they will wish to imitate you. Perhaps even grace will incline some of them to embrace a religious or sacerdotal vocation to facilitate the intimacy of their life of union with our Lord. Happy classes, happy societies, where Jesus is the first Forming-Master, the first Master of a docile youth !

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St. John Baptist de la Salle, recommending his Brothers to have a great love for mental prayer, speaks with the authority of a practitioner for whom mental prayer was the great occupation of his life, and with that of an ascetic author, who reveals himself in the *Explanation* of our method as a guide of consummate wisdom and prudence. After having given us the example in his own person, he left us the light of his teachings.

By the practice of fervent mental prayer, the soul of our Founder was habitually united to God in a sort of continual communion. It took its delights in God, imbibed God in a certain manner, and allowed itself to be penetrated by the spiritual unction of the Holy Spirit. His mental prayer was truly vital, in this sense, that it transformed his life, and was continued throughout the day in a profound recollection, an absorption in God, without interfering in the least with the perfect accomplishment of the duties of his state.

In his admirable *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer* he places a most difficult knowledge of things divine within the reach of every soul. Besides, he says, again and again, that mental prayer is the principal of our daily exercises, that it draws down the blessing of God on all the others (1). He wishes that our

(1) Com. Rules, IV, 1 ; *Spiritual Doctrine*, p. 379-385.

application to make it well should cause us to enter into such intimacy with our Lord that our intelligence would be illuminated, our heart inflamed, and our will established in rectitude, confidence and holy joy. He does not teach a discursive and logical method of meditation, but an affectionate conversation which should fill us with an unctious and savoury knowledge of God. He wishes us to be so tenderly occupied with Jesus in mental prayer that it may leave us the perfume and balm of His virtues. Let us hear him on the subject :—

“ By mental prayer, we enjoy God by anticipation, as far as a lively faith can procure this happiness here below ” (1). “ If you love mental prayer, God will be the food of your soul ; He will enter into you and will make you eat at His table, as St. John says in the Apocalypse, and you will afterwards have the advantage of having Him present in your actions, and of having no other view than to please Him ” (2). “ To be pure and real, its operations must take place in the inner recesses of the soul ; for, were they confined to the intellect or did they merely consist in sensible affections, the soul would easily yield to external distractions, which necessarily frustrate the chief purpose of mental prayer ” (3).

“ You ought,” he again says “ to make your great love for Jesus appear in the assiduity with which you converse with Him in mental prayer ” (4). Hence it is that our Founder wishes that we should habitually place ourselves in the presence of Jesus during this holy exercise. The examples and the teachings of Jesus, the mysteries accomplished by Jesus, and the virtues practised by Jesus, are the inexhaustible subject he presents to us. He hopes, by that means, that we shall imitate the Divine Model of the predestined (5), and that we will work out our salvation according to the designs and will of God (6). It is not possible to find another method better adapted to our needs or surer in its

(1) 177th Med. — (2) Id. — (3) *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer*, p. 1. — (4) 177th Med. — (5) Rom., VIII, 29. — (6) I Thess., IV, 3.

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directions (1). Beholding Jesus affectionately in mental prayer, looking on Him and doing all things in Him, is the way of holiness. In the proportion in which we contemplate Him and imitate Him, Jesus will enlighten our souls; by the action of His Holy Spirit, and by our co-operation, Jesus will reproduce Himself in us.

May it please the Sacred Heart, in this centenary, to increase the spirit of mental prayer in our Institute! He desires it, provided we put ourselves in the dispositions He wishes. You know, very dear Brothers, that the faithful observance of regular silence is one of the most indispensable of these dispositions.

The Superiors have frequently spoken on this obligation during retreats; you have frequently read the warnings of St. James on the abuse of the tongue; you have frequently admired, with him, the perfect man who offends not in word (2), and you are desirous of imitating him. It would be inopportune to recall here the causes which, for the past four years, have lessened or diminished respect for silence in certain Communities and among certain categories of Religious. A notable loss has been the consequence for the violators. We are assured that they wish to repair as soon as possible the breach by which holy recollection escaped from their souls. They have many motives for doing so! By silence we give a preference to the voice of God who speaks in us, to that of creatures who draw us away. It constitutes an essential condition of the interior life and the life of perfection. Hence it is "a perfect pæan of praise to our Lord" (3).

Besides, why do religious indulge in vain and useless words? Because their minds and hearts are unoccupied with God and with the duties of their state. Because they wish to communicate their own impressions, or to provoke the confidences of others, or to

(1) St. Vincent de Paul gave his religious an analogous direction. They ordinarily commence mental prayer by adoring our Lord practising the virtue on which they meditate, by paying homage to Our Lord accomplishing the mystery or teaching a maxim. — (2) James, III, 2-3. — (3) Benedictine Maxim: *Silence is accepted by you, O Lord, as a pæan of praise.*

learn news for which they manifest an insatiable and indiscreet curiosity. A multiplicity of words involves us, by an almost inevitable consequence, in numerous and varied faults which increase our debt towards Divine Justice (1). It weakens our resistance to evil, whilst "in silence and in hope shall our strength be" (2). The dissipated soul becomes like a desert where the infertile waters are lost in the sand. Let it recollect itself in God, let it keep silence so as to listen to His voice, "and the desert shall be transformed into an orchard, and the orchard into a forest" (3), that is, holy thoughts and good works will be multiplied where disheartening sterility formerly reigned. "The most silent soul will be the best instructed by the Sacred Heart," wrote Blessed Margaret Mary. Let our desire to be instructed by Divine Wisdom make us "unite interior with exterior silence, forget created things to think only of God and His holy presence" (4). This will ever be the pre-occupation of faithful souls, who, after the example of the Immaculate Virgin, have received and preserved "the better part."

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The name of Mary was one of the first uttered by the lips of St. John Baptist de la Salle as a child. During his lifetime he repeated it everywhere: under the vaults of the dear cathedral of Rheims, when, as a young canon, his piety enraptured his colleagues of the Chapter; at the Saint Sulpice where he daily recited the Rosary with great fervour; when travelling, to obtain the maternal benediction of the Immaculate Virgin on his enterprises; in his days of sadness, to obtain light from on high; in the midst of the Brothers, and in the classes, where it was repeated without interrup-

(1) Matt., XII, 36. — (2) Isaias, XXX, 15. — (3) Isaias, XV, 15. — (4) Collection, p. 142-143.

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tion, (1). Even when almost cold in death, our Saint still murmured the name of "Mary, Mother of Grace, sweet Mother of Mercy." So devoted a servant of the Queen of Heaven owed it to himself to leave his religious this crowning recommendation: *Have a special devotion towards the Most Holy Virgin.*

His mission did not permit him to be, in the France of his time, a propagator of new forms of devotion to Mary. Hence he did not, very dear Brothers, write long treatises in her honour, as the Blessed John Eudes and the Blessed Grignon de Montfort, his contemporaries, have done (2). His apostleship among children has caused the Mother of Jesus to be loved by millions of young hearts. For his Brothers, he condensed in his *Meditations* the traditional doctrine with such theological earnestness as to merit admiration. On the predestination of the incomparable Virgin, on her prerogatives and the power of her intercession, on her exemption from original and actual sin, on her mysteries and her virtues, on the motives, character and practices of our devotion in her regard, he has written what was essential in a few words and in perfect harmony with the different subjects (3). According to the teachings of the Sorbonne and the University of Rheims, where he had studied, he asserts his belief in the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady (4). He hints at her Maternity of grace

(1) We know that the Rosary was recited continually before a statue of the Most Blessed Virgin in our classes, until 1853, by two pupils who were replaced at regular intervals. For this perpetual recitation, a decade of the Rosary was substituted, to be recited in common. It was decided, by the General Chapter of 1861 that the pupils who cannot assist at Mass during the week, shall recite three decades of the Rosary after the morning prayers to make up for the deficiency. — (2) Blessed John Eudes and Blessed Grignon de Montfort were, in the seventeenth century, ardent propagators of devotion to "the admirable Heart of Mary," and the "Holy Bondage of Mary," respectively. — (3) *Spiritual Doctrine*, p. 630-643. — (4) After the publication of the thesis of Duns Scotus, the Franciscan, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Sorbonne obliged all its Doctors of Theology to take an oath to teach the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin **Mary**.

and her rôle as Dispensatrix: "If Mary," he says, "has received such an abundance of grace, it is that she may bestow a portion on us" (1). And in the *Collection* he characterizes our filial sensibility towards her in these words: "We should be sensitive about all that relates to her honour" (2).

How many millions of *Ave Marias* have sustained and consoled our Brothers during the past two hundred years! How many have blossomed forth like mystic flowers on the lips of our pupils! In how many catechisms and exhortations has not the name of Mary been praised amongst us! Let us not tire, very dear Brothers, of honouring our heavenly advocate and of causing her to be honoured. Because no creature has equalled her in sanctity, because no one has participated like her in the perfections of Jesus and corresponded to His graces, she is more glorious and more powerful in heaven than all the saints together. Our confidence in her intercession should then be without limits. "Jesus, owing to Mary the blood of the Redemption, pays the debt in a certain way by listening to the prayers of His Mother" (3). And this Mother has, by the will of Jesus our Brother, become our Mother also. She knows our thoughts, sees our needs, hears our prayers, and loves us: let us have confidence, then, and let that confidence be unailing! "Who is the man for whom the sun does not shine? Who is he for whom the mercy of the Queen of Heaven does not shine forth" (4)? Let us add that she is the Protectress of our Congregation: "Saints Bernard and Francis," says our holy Founder, "were so tenderly devoted to Mary that they chose her as the Protectress and the Support of their Orders. Let us consider her the same in reference to our Institute" (5).

O Blessed Virgin! we all have recourse to you: Brothers in class, because you are the Queen of the Apostles and you incline wills to the fervent love of Jesus; Brothers in domestic work, because you have lived the hidden life in Nazareth and accomplished

(1) 163rd Med. — (2) *Collection of subjects on which the Brothers shall speak in recreation*, p. 58. — (3) Thought of a Greek writer. — (4): St. Bonaventure — (5) 129th Med.

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your humble labour with incomparable perfection ; young religious because your virginal hands cultivate the lilies in the hearts committed to our care ; the afflicted and suffering, because as Queen of Martyrs you pour on every wound the balm of your sweetness ; Superiors and Directors, to learn from you to see, love, sustain and console Jesus in those who regard us as guides and fathers ; old Brothers at the threshold of eternity, because you are the Gate of Heaven whither our wishes tend. We are all yours and forever, O clement, O pious, O sweet virgin Mary !

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*Devotion to St. Joseph*, which St. John Baptist de la Salle recommends us in his Testament, attracted interior souls in the seventeenth century. They considered it a natural consequence of the devotion to the Incarnate Word which was very dear to them. The seminary of Saint Sulpice had frequent recourse to the great St. Joseph; and his feast was celebrated there with great solemnity. Should we attribute our Founder's love for the Patriarch of Nazareth to his clerical education? Rather it was the hidden life of the Brothers and their humble functions among children that inclined him to chose him as our Patron and Protector. The *Meditation* for the feast of the Saint leaves no doubt on this point (1).

The worship of St. Joseph is traditional in our Institute for the past two hundred years. The number of our houses that have been founded and have prospered under his auspices and protection is very considerable. Our Brothers in their classes, have been propagators of the pious exercises of the "Month of St. Joseph." Our heavenly patron seems to have responded to their zeal by the grace of profound peace obtained by our Brothers at the moment of death.

Since we are his time-honoured clients, let us rest assured

(1) 110th Med.

that he will continue to place his power and goodness at our service. What should we ask? Should they be principally temporal favours? It would be manifesting but little esteem for his influence if, in our requests, we did not follow the indications of our Founder: imitation of the virtues of St. Joseph, abandonment to the Divine Will and disinterested zeal; this is what our Founder recommends in order to honour our Protector (1). In this second centenary, let us beg of him also to obtain for us an increase of the spirit of mental prayer. He did not here below contemplate the Divinity in Jesus; but he admired the radiancy of its traits in the words and actions of the Emmanuel. Happy Saint! Jesus was his happiness, his all; in his relations with Jesus he showed himself the worthy representative of the Divine authority. After his example, let us love the Divine Master with our whole heart, and let us be with our pupils virtuous representatives of God.

"Joseph shows us the place, the foundation, the means and the limits of sanctity: the place is at our feet, everywhere we are; the foundation is in our hands: prayer and work; the means, nothing is more simple: living in the view of Jesus and of Mary; the limits, nothing more natural: remaining, like St. Joseph, where one is, finishing as one began, dying as one has lived; one opens the lips a little to allow a breath which happens to be our last, to pass; and from the breaking heart, the unfettered soul suddenly escapes with the three freedom-giving words: "Jesus, Mary, Joseph" (2)!

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*I recommend the Brothers to acquit themselves of their work with zeal and disinterestedness.*—Your employment, very dear Brothers, is ordinarily, the apostleship of the Educator; it comprises every function or charge to which obedience subjects you. Our employment occupies a large part of our time; hence St. John Baptist de la Salle was inspired to give us counsels and directions in regard

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to it. Hence also he reserves an important place for the duties of our state in his Rules and *Meditations* (1). The *School Conduct* is entirely consecrated to them. His last recommendation is, then, the echo of one of his most constant solitudes: to prepare zealous and disinterested masters who will be the means of leading children to God.

Our rules determine, in a few words, the nature of the spirit of zeal and the means to be employed that it may attain its end. Our zeal should be a supernatural and constant ardour regulated by obedience "for the instruction of children, and for bringing them up in the fear of God, inducing them to preserve their innocence if they have not lost it, and inspiring them with a great aversion and horror for sin and whatever might cause them to lose purity" (2). It tends vigorously towards its ends by prayer, instruction or teaching, vigilance or attentive surveillance, and by good conduct in school, that is, by the constant edification that the masters shall give their pupils (3).

The disinterestedness which St. John Baptist de la Salle demands of us, renders our zeal pure, courageous, continuous and fruitful. It is a supernatural detachment from every egotistical interest in our functions. For the school, it pre-supposes gratuitous teaching; for the masters, the refusal of every gift or present (4). It generates a devotedness which reckons neither pains nor fatigues; which does not seek the personal affection of pupils, nor does it repine at their ingratitude; but which, looking upon them as children of the Church and candidates for heaven, prepares them for a truly useful and Christian life, and orientates them towards their eternal destinies.

What a beautiful model of this disinterestedness is presented to your admiration, very dear Brothers, by our holy Founder!

(1) Common Rules, Chs. VII to XI; *Meditations* for Sundays and Holidays, and for the time of retreat. — (2) Com. Rules II, 9. — (3) Com. Rules, II, 10. For the ends, qualities, motives, means and recompense of zeal, *vide Spiritual Doctrine*, p. 666-679. — (4) Com. Rules, VII, I, II.

He sacrifices the ease and joys of family life, his personal tastes, ecclesiastical honours, strength, health and reputation, to withdraw children, especially the poor and abandoned, from ignorance, and to fortify them against vice. By his example, he teaches us to live a life of voluntary poverty in the midst of the poor by necessity; to pass, free and detached, through the world where feverish longing for "gilded dust" and "bubble reputation" curbs to the earth (1); to be content with what the Rules accord you, with your merits and with God who will crown them.

If your pupils manifest a feeling of gratitude towards you, let it not be an occasion for personal rejoicing or pleasure in which your heart may repose as in an end; rather let it be a powerful means of turning towards God souls whom your kindness has gained. At Nazareth, the Immaculate Virgin reared and nurtured Jesus, not for herself, but for the human race that was expecting its Victim. Thus, let it not be for individual or collective vain-glory that Christian Schools are to prosper, but for civil society which expects from them virtuous and well-instructed citizens; for the Church, which kindly wishes to have us as her auxiliaries; for God, who raised up our Founder "for the preservation of youth in the way of salvation" (2). Those views of faith will emancipate you from the influence and frequently tyrannical obsession of natural sympathies and antipathies. With reason, you love poor children under whose ragged garments you recognize Jesus Himself (3); you love children devoid of attractive physical qualities and charming intellectual gifts, because you seek their souls to form them in a Christian manner. You love all your pupils, because you are, in their regard, the ambassador of Jesus, our common Redeemer. "Did Christ die on Calvary chiefly for the rich and intelligent? Did he preserve a drop of His Blood for the privileged of nature? No; He died for all, having before His mind the unworthiness of all" (4).

(1) Expression of St. John Chrysostom. — (2) Collect of the Mass of St. John Baptist de la Salle. — (3) 96th Med. — (4) Père Lacordaire.

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Disinterested zeal draws down the blessings of God on your work: it obtains ordinary graces which incline the will towards good; it receives from the Sacred Heart of Jesus choice graces in the form of holy vocations. You have often read in our *Necrological Notices*, very dear Brothers, that it is in classes directed in a Christian manner, won over to virtue by fervent religious, that the Divine call is heard. "Religious houses of education are the holy Ark in which youthful innocence is preserved. When it goes forth, it often feeds on carrion, like the raven of Noah. But sometimes also, like the dove, not being able to find rest for its immaculate soul, it returns in full flight towards those who saved it from the deluge. A multitude of vocations are due to this delicacy of pure souls" (1).

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The last two recommendations of St. John Baptist de la Salle relate to the virtues of charity and obedience: the sources of strength and happiness in Communities.

What is the nature of that intimate and fraternal union which our Founder wishes to see reigning amongst us? Does it pre-suppose a unity of tastes and inclinations? a similarity of acquired ideas of men and things? Does it consist in the convergent application of wills towards a same end, in order to attain it more surely? Does it consist in not depreciating the merits of our collaborators, so as not to risk the success of a common work? Is it an affability in words, an affectionate eagerness to be of use to others? Fraternal union, indeed, produces these results, the unity of free opinions and personal tendencies excepted; but it does a great deal more. "It revives the sentiments of the first Christians, who had but one heart and one soul" (2). It aspires to be "so intimate and so stable, that it resembles the union of the three divine Persons." In all those who live together in a spirit of charity, it produces "a similarity of sentiments and will, the same maxims and the same practices" (3). "My Father, grant that those whom Thou hast given Me may be one, as We

(1) P. Monsabre. — (2) 113th Med. — (3) 39th Med.

also, Thou and I, are one": this is, according to our Lord, what Divine charity should produce amongst us.

Cordial and fraternal union proceeds from faith, which sees God in our neighbour; from charity, which loves Him in all men; from justice, which loves, among all, the Brothers associated together by Him for the same work; from humility, which leads to voluntary self-effacement; from abnegation, which knows how to give preference to the desires of others over egotistical tastes; from discretion, which sets a guard over our lips against indiscreet or piquant words, destructive of peace. Communities in which this mutual understanding reigns are the very vestibule of Paradise. Those from which immortalized passions have excluded it, become a kind of hell (1). "Religious who do not love each other, drag themselves along as if each were a chain and ball of a galley-slave to the other" (2).

When His disciples reminded our Lord that they had left all to follow Him, He promised them a hundredfold in this life for the sacrifice they had made (3). From whence will this superabundant compensation come, very dear Brothers? From the graces received, from the facility given to work out our salvation, from the happiness experienced in the apostleship; but also from the sincerity and cordiality which charm our fraternal relations. Perhaps custom makes you forget it a little. Let one be deprived of it, as our dearly beloved Brothers Solders were, then its full value is appreciated. During their rare and short furloughs, they tasted with delight "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (4).

But the religious life allows each one his proper character, his personal tastes and views; it realizes but slowly, and in choice souls only, the elevated sanctity which is obtained by perfect abnegation; finally, zeal tends to analogous ends by very different means: hence the divergencies of opinions and the opposition

(1) 65th Med. — (2) P. Monsabre. — (3) Matt., XIX, 29. — (4) Ps. CXXXII, 1.

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of tendencies among the members of the same Community. Painful clashings and regrettable collisions are produced, if charity does not intervene to soothe and appease. May the love of Jesus living in each of our Brothers, lead us to renounce egotistical views, so as to maintain cordial union. This is a treasure that cannot be purchased too dearly.

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The series of recommendations contained in the Testament of our Founder, begins by one relative to the obedience due to the Sovereign Pontiff; the Testament closes by an appeal for blind obedience towards the Superiors. Hence it would appear that St. John Baptist de la Salle wished to remind us that this fundamental virtue should envelop, move and sustain all the manifestations of our activity; that it should be the alpha and the omega of our religious perfection. Though inferior to the virtue of religion, it is more excellent than poverty and chastity, because of the sacrifice of our will which it offers to God (1). Without it, we cannot expect those powerful graces which enable us to overcome ourselves and be vanquishers of hell, nor those special blessings which render our apostleship fruitful.

Such is, in substance, the doctrine of our Father. Few Founders, we believe, have written as much as he on Obedience, and very few have treated it more incisively. After having dedicated to it a chapter of our Rules (2) and a treatise in the *Collection* (3), he further insists on it in some twenty *Meditations* (4) and a large number of letters (5).

Of the nine conditions which St. John Baptist de la Salle assigns to Obedience in the *Collection*, why does he recall in his Testament

(1) St. Thomas. — (2) Com. Rules, Ch. XXI. — (3) *The Nine Conditions of Obedience*, to which should be added, in the *Collection*, the brief indications on the renoucement of our own will and judgment (*Means of becoming Interior*) and the counsels on Obedience in the treatise on the Virtues. — (4) *Meds.* 6th to 15th, 21st, 24th, 37th, 57th, 72nd, 73rd, 83rd, 92nd, 107th, 109th. — (5) *Spiritual Doctrine*, p. 350-378.

only one: that it should be "blind"? After having replied that it was not the place to give a full exposition of a subject which he had already superabundantly treated, we may add that voluntary renoucement of every examination of the thing commanded and of the Superior who commands, renders obedience perfect. It is a homage paid to God, venerated in His representative, to whom we yield, as a consequence of this view of faith, a Christian and religious obedience, which is, at the same time, indifferent, exact, simple, prompt, cordial and devoted.

You love our Institute ardently, very dear Brothers: continue to give proof of your love by filial and supernatural obedience to those who direct you. Obedience is indispensable to Religious: it is the virtue proper to their state (1). Its exact practice appears to be specially necessary in political troubles, when so much ruin and destruction result from the spirit of revolt and from the violent separation of the elements which give stability to the social order. You are not unmindful of the reason; it springs from your convictions in this respect. In the religious state, which is a system of moral and supernatural education, souls never find, out of obedience, the perfection to which they should tend (2). It preserves Institutes against the mournful consequences of general commotions; it alone gives to the fascicle of unified wills the powerful action which averts obstacles or repairs ruins.

Let a holy emulation then ever reign among you to obey promptly and devotedly. Your prudent initiatives will lose nothing thereby of their splendour. Sustained by the indispensable support of authority, preserved against excesses and deviations, guaranteed against pride by the humility of your submission, and blessed by God who alone can give success in the supernatural order, they will procure you the happiness of reaping abundantly on furrows fecundated by your labours, perhaps even by your tears (3).

Then can it be said of each one of you, as of the Divine Master:

(1) St. Thomas and *Collection*. — (2) *Imitation of Jesus Christ*, Book I, Ch. XI; Book III, Ch. XIII. — (3) Ps. CXXV, 5.

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“ He hath done all things well ” (1). Jesus received this eulogium from a grateful and enthusiastic people, because no malady was able to withstand His power. He deserved it especially from His Father, whose will He accomplished in all things, thus bringing them, the most humble as well as the most brilliant, to their supreme perfection. Jesus said at the moment of His Incarnation: “ I come to do Thy will ” (2): let us repeat it and let us accomplish it each day. Is it difficult?

To tend to perfection, on our part, does not require strange or sublime works, but the most humble, simple and common actions accomplished through obedience. To tend to perfection is to do all our actions *well* and *to do them for God*. *To do them well: with exactness*, as to time, place and manner; *with fervour*, not from natural inclinations, but with a generous desire and a liberal expenditure of energy, and in spite of every disgust; *with perseverance* not to-day only, or to-morrow, or some future time, according to the impulse of caprice or of varying good will, but always, until the end. *To do them for God alone*, that is, everything in us, the ordinary and the extraordinary, should be consecrated to Him and be penetrated with His love ” (3).

**The Last Recommendation  
of St. John Baptist De La Salle.**

Our Father and Founder was already struggling with the pressure of his agony, when, collecting his ebbing strength, he wished once more to warn his Brothers against the ravages caused by the spirit of the world in religious organizations:

*If you wish to persevere and die in your vocation, never have any intercourse with people of the world; for, little by little, you will acquire a taste for their habits and be drawn into conversation with them to such an extent, that you will no longer be able, through policy, to refrain from applauding their language, however pernicious*

(1) Mark, VII, 37. — (2) Ps. XXXIX, 9. — (3) P. Monsabre.

*it may be; this will lead you to unfaithfulness; and being no longer faithful in observing your Rules, you will grow disgusted with your vocation, and finally you will abandon it.*

Perhaps the logical order is what appears to be the most admirable in this text, received from the lips of a dying man. The recalling of a general maxim: “ Never have any intercourse with people of the world,” is accompanied by its motive which also fixes its limits: “ If you wish to persevere and die in your vocation.” Then follows an exposition of the alteration and progressive degradation of the religious spirit by the spirit of the world, and an announcement of the final catastrophe: serious and habitual infidelity to the Rules, disgust, and finally the loss of vocation. Of how many imprudent, presumptuous and impassioned religious do not these lines recall the sad history! Let us meditate on this warning, as those who heard it from our Founder himself must have done.

*If you wish to persevere and die in your vocation.*—A double alternative is implicitly recalled here: perseverance in our vocation, prepared by flight from the world and the practice of virtue, or wilful abandonment of our vocation, consummated by the loss of the religious spirit. To the elect of His Heart, Jesus addresses the same lesson under another form: “ He that is not with Me is against Me ” (1). “ No man can serve two masters ” (2). “ One is your Master, Christ ” (3). If you will follow Him, fly from the world, His enemy. Cowardliness would vainly seek accommodation in a “ just medium,” which if called by its true name, should be designated an “ unjust calculation”: on account of the aggravation of faults and blindness of heart one hardly ever dies in the vocation, the responsibilities and duties of which are neglected.

*Have no intercourse with people of the world.*—The prohibition is general as to its nature and its aims. “ No intercourse,” that is, no relations outside those, always rare, authorised by the Rules

(1) Matt., XII, 30; Luke, VI, 23. — (2) Matt., VI, 24. — (3) Matt., XXIII, 8, 10.

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and obedience. As to relations with the parents of the pupils, they should be brief, limited to what is essential, and reserved to those who have the direction or inspection of the schools. Neither age nor function will render religious immune against the contamination of the worldly spirit. Prudence is the mother of security for us all.

This formal injunction: "Have no intercourse with people of the world," is, besides, nothing more than a repetition of that of St. John: "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him" (1). Does not the religious profession establish a definite divorce between the world and ourselves? "You are not of the world," said our Lord, "as I also am not of the world" (2). "Because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (3). Spurned as we are by the world, let us repudiate its maxims and its seductions. "All that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father" (4).

The opposition between the world and the religious life is radical and irreducible. "We have received not the spirit of this world, but the spirit that is of God" (5). "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is seated in wickedness" (6). What a grace of preservation you would have received, very dear Brothers, if your horror of the world were as absolute as that of St. John or St. Paul, whose words we have just quoted! Happy the religious who can say like the great Apostle: "I am crucified," that is, become an object of violent repulsion, "to the world, and the world," attached to its vices, "is crucified to me," that is, become as loathsome to me as a crucified person would be (7).

Without doubt, the devil violently draws certain religious towards the world; but what will it avail them to yield to his

(1) I John, II, 15. — (2) John XVII, 16. — (3) John XV, 19. — (4) I John, II, 16. — (5) I Cor., II, 12. — (6) I John, V, 19. — (7) Gal., VI, 14.

suggestions? "The world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof; but he that doth the will of God, abideth for ever" (1).

The doctrine of the Holy Bible, on this point, had penetrated so deeply into the soul of our Founder that, during his whole life, by word and example, he manifested a severe contempt for it. He appeared there but with regret; he left it very quickly after having edified it and having guarded himself against its fatal influence. With a rigour that nothing could bend and which experience only fortified, he forbade his Brothers every procedure that would bring them into contact with the world which he abhorred: "The spirit of God and the spirit of the world," said he to them, "cannot exist together. Hence, we no sooner become impregnated with the one than we lose the other" (2). "Your duties require you to have occasional relations with the world. Beware lest you imbibe its spirit" (3). "Faith should make us despise all that the world esteems" (4). "The aversion you should have for all communication with externs, should make you fear to leave your retirement, and thus separate yourself from the companionship of your Brothers" (5). "How happy you are in having left the world! You should look upon this grace as one of the greatest you have received in your life, and every day thank God for it" (5). It is then his habitual war-cry that our dying Founder repeats: "Down with the world."

If you do not fly from the world, *you will, little by little, acquire a taste for the habits of people of the world and be drawn into conversation with them to such an extent, that you will no longer be able, through policy, to refrain from applauding their language, however pernicious it may be.*—Are all conversations with people of the world to be feared? Do they all distil their subtle venom which impairs and destroys the religious spirit? The least that can be said of these discourses, very dear Brothers, is that they cause us to lose much precious time, that they treat of subjects foreign to our state,

(1) I John, II, 17. — (2) 174th Med. — (3) 127th Med. — (4) 90th Med. — (5) 6th Med. — (6) 182nd Med.

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that they are a source of distraction of mind, a cause of dryness of heart, and a frequent occasion of troubles of conscience. Outside your exercises of piety and your employment, there remains but little time for study, and will you squander it in useless gossip?

We admit that some of these relations with the world are agreeable to nature. These are by no means the least dangerous. The religious who abandons himself to them alienates his liberty. How, indeed, can one converse with those whose conduct he cannot approve, and whose opinions he should condemn? He will, good humouredly at first, make timid objections; then, through sympathy or policy, he will approve what is blameworthy. This is liberalism and cowardice. "But," one will say, "is it then possible to be unceasingly disapproving of the opinions of those with whom one has to converse?" We agree that it is not; and hence why take them into your confidence? "In listening to them I experience no loss." This is an error! Does a corrosive acid fall, drop by drop, on a sheet of metal, with impunity? The world has its perspective and we have ours. It looks upon all things "from the point of view of time"; we should consider them "from the point of view of eternity." "Let the dead bury their dead" (1), that is, let us abandon to worldlings the care of that which passes away. Let us follow Jesus Christ "who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever" (2).

If you frequent the world, you will be led into unfaithfulness, and being no longer faithful in observing your Rules, you will grow disgusted with your vocation, and finally abandon it.—A Brother can not maintain with the world useless relations, unapproved by obedience, without violating his Rules. But, to exculpate oneself, it will be objected that the Rules do not bind under pain of sin. We have already made that point clear (3). Why does a religious seek relations with the world, if not prompted thereto by curiosity, vanity, imprudence or some other ill-regulated passion?

(1) Matt., VIII, 22. — (2) Hebr., XIII, 8. — (3) Instructive and Administrative Circulars, January 6th, 1917: *Rules and Regular Observance*.

Is it a matter of indifference to expose oneself, without a plausible motive, to the occasions of sin? Is it a matter of indifference to run the risk of lessening or weakening the religious spirit, and of losing the vocation with which God has honoured us? Enlightened by the experience of forty years passed in the midst of his Brothers, with his mind perhaps full of remembrance of falls and disasters that broke his heart, St. John Baptist de la Salle authoritatively warns us that religious who become lovers of the world, place themselves on an incline plane which inevitably leads to the abyss. Should we dare, very dear Brothers, consider ourselves wiser than our Saint? "He that loveth the danger shall perish in it" (2), and the son who makes light account of the counsels of his father runs to his ruin (3).

Last Words

of St. John Baptist De La Salle.

The last words received by the Brothers of Saint Yon from the dying lips of their Father, are an act of perfect abandonment to the Divine Will: *I adore in all things the guidance of God in my regard.*

Let us not be deceived, very dear Brothers: if it is relatively easy to submit to the will of God in a particular instance, Saints alone can practise this abandonment in all the details of their life, without claiming any remission of that which they have made of themselves into the hands of God. This surely presupposes virtue of an uncommon kind: effective detachment from everything created, a practical indifference to every eventuality the consequences of which we may feel, and a generous love which tends to God alone and is content with Him alone, and which will inspire the ensemble of every detail of our activity.

At the moment of death, casting a retrospective glance on his earthly career, St. John Baptist de la Salle admires and adores the Providence of God in his regard. He admires its power and its

1) Eccles., III, 24. — (2) Proverbs, XIX, 27.

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wisdom : it has led him, despite innumerable obstacles, to establish the Christian Schools. He adores it in all the paths, sometimes rough and rugged, which it led him to traverse. One might expect that an institution so favourable to the interests of the humble, should have been supported by the current of popular favour. It was quite the contrary ; opposition had everywhere to be met with : here, it was passion exasperated by routine and jealousy ; there, injustice on the part of those whom the Saint had reckoned among his protectors ; then, humiliating scorn, inflicted by wounded pride and by disappointed and vindictive heresiarchs ; and finally, the supreme sorrow caused by the withdrawal of some of his Brothers sworn to maintain the works of the institute he had established, and whose desertion put them in peril. And now, at the portals of eternity, turning his eyes away from the secondary causes which have tried his patience, he fixes them on the primary Cause, and protests that he blesses it for all it ordained or permitted.

For upwards of sixty years, the life of our Founder was a *fiat*, an *Amen* to all the Divine wishes ; his last word was an *Amen*, a *fiat* to the death which was at hand. This messenger of God may strike : he is welcomed with joy. Besides, he had nothing to take from a man whose treasures are in heaven. Death places them within his reach for eternity.

Let us endeavour, very dear Brothers, to establish like dispositions in ourselves. To all the decisions of obedience : *fiat* ! to all the prescriptions of our Rules : *fiat* ! To sufferings and to failure, to everything which may weaken the body, to everything which may bruise the heart : *fiat* ! To sickness, old age and death itself : *fiat* ! *Amen* ! Let us also, adore in all things the guidance of God in our regard.

With calmness and courage, let us approach the better world which God reserves for people when they have shaken off this mortal coil with its varied and continuous trials and afflictions. Is the social kingdom of the Sacred Heart about to be established and proclaimed amongst the nations of the earth ? Are further efforts required to prepare for it ? This is the secret of heaven.

“ In the hand of the Lord,” says the Psalmist, “ there is a cup of strong wine full of mixture,” that is, filled with divers evils. “ And he hath poured it out from this to that,” on all whom He wishes to put to proof ; “ but the dregs thereof are not emptied : all the sinners of the earth shall drink ” (1), those whom “ the great world war ” will not have instructed and improved. Let us pray that the superabundant effusion of divine mercy may console the afflicted, sanctify the just more and more, and lessen the number of obstinate and impenitent sinners.

Let your new and purified zeal be everywhere exercised in giving a virile and Christian education to youth. This is your part in the necessary work of restoration and reconstruction. Whatever your functions may be, should your lot be that of inactive suffering, “ act manfully for our people, and the Lord will do that which is good in His sight ” (2). Let your hearts remain stable in peace and holy abandonment, in the midst of the perturbations which astonish even the wise and frighten the pusillanimous. “ The world quakes, but God directs it ” (3). Let us fear nothing. Travellers tossed about on the ocean of time, let us row with intrepidity ; we are approaching the shore where our feet will tread on the firm soil of eternity. We shall then have no regrets for the trials accepted, the sacrifices accomplished, to enter into the views of Him who preordains all things here below for the sanctification of His elect. “ Let us frequently ask God that He would make us embrace the perfection of our state, since He has placed us therein, and consequently has wished and still wishes that we should take the means of sanctifying ourselves ” (4).

We are, with the most religious affection in Jesus Christ,

Very dear Brothers,

Your most humble and devoted servant,

BROTHER IMIER OF JESUS.

(1) Ps. LXXIV, 9-10. — (2) I Paralip., XIX, 13. — (3) Fénelon. — (4) 3rd Med.

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