

BAL
145
I
P1
Roma

INSTITUTE

OF THE

Brothers of the Christian Schools

INSTRUCTIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE
CIRCULARS

N° 238

January 1st, 1924

THE NEW YEAR
THE EXTERIOR SUPPORTS OF THE INSTITUTE



MAISON SAINT-JOSEPH
LEMBECQ-LEZ-HAL, BELGIUM

1924

J. M. J.
J. B.

Lembecq-lez Hal, January 1st, 1924.
(Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord Jesus Christ.)

INSTRUCTIVE
AND
ADMINISTRATIVE
CIRCULARS

N° 238

The New Year.
The Exterior Supports
of the Institute.



VERY DEAR BROTHERS :

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

This greeting of the great Apostle of the Gentiles is the one our dear Brothers Assistants and ourselves send you on this opening day of the New Year, being fully convinced that we cannot imagine a better one, or one more profitable to your souls. Is not grace the treasure by excellence, spiritual riches, in comparison to which all the goods of this world are but poverty and want?

Does not peace surpass all understanding? And who can tell all its advantages or fully appreciate its excellence, when it is truly the peace of God?

It is impossible, very dear Brothers, to better re-echo the good sentiments, full of heart and piety, which you so

touchingly express in your letters, than by the greeting of St. Paul. In these letters you make use of simple, confiding, and affectionate language, as loving sons do to tell their cherished parents the deepest, the most generous thoughts of their hearts.

Hence our joy to see how much your dispositions incline you to respect, obedience, and devotedness towards those whom God has given you as Superiors, and who, as such, would wish to deserve the title of Fathers. Yes, truly the sons of St. John Baptist de La Salle continue to be animated by his spirit. Like their holy Founder, they tenderly love their religious family, and, united as they are to the Superiors who govern it, with them they have but one heart and one soul.

Let us not fail, very dear Brothers, to cherish and maintain these general dispositions of union and devotedness. Let us continue to love one another, to help one another. A religious family is fit to do the work of God, and its members are happy in consecrating themselves to it, only on condition of being thus of one mind, in a joint family enterprise. From this they draw their strength; hence also their happiness. Then, in wishing you the Grace and peace of God, very dear Brothers, we desire what is most efficacious for your own happiness and what will most contribute to the prosperity of the works you have undertaken.

In order to assure the realization of the good wishes formulated in our behalf, you did not omit to make them pass through the mediation of our Immaculate Mother, and this was the best way to render them effective.

You may be sure, very dear Brothers, we have the same religious solicitude for you. It is under these sacred auspices that our good wishes for grace and peace, for fraternal union and supernatural devotedness, are also offered to you. And since the prayers which Superiors and Inferiors say for each other, are favourably received by God, this is a reason for

believing that, for all of us, the year 1924 will be blessed and fruitful. Moreover Heaven will help us and second our good will in the work of our personal sanctification and Christian Apostleship.

Certainly we shall have trials to undergo. This is the inevitable lot of all on this earth, and more especially of everyone who is resolved to live piously in Jesus Christ. But with the trial, will come the divine help; and as the good soldier finds in combat the occasion of displaying his valour and winning promotion, so the religious who is faithful in the struggles of the spiritual life, will become rich in merits. That year is good indeed in which one can thus store up for eternity?

Doubtless a quiet life suits him who seeks repose before all else. But what profit does he draw therefrom? The worldly man, whose only desire is to work for time, may be satisfied with that. But the Saint, who acts in view of eternity, appreciates his days and years, not according to the sum of ephemeral enjoyments which they procure for him, but rather according to the occasions they furnish of enduring something for the name of Jesus Christ.

« Good day, my friend, » said a person to a poor man, poor in earthly goods, but careful to increase his store in Heaven. Whereupon the latter replied : « I thank you very much for your kindness, but you must know that I never had a bad day. » And as his interlocutor was surprised, he resumed : « Well, as I have always desired only on thing — the most holy will of God, happiness for me consists in realizing that holy will as far as I possibly can ».

St. Benedict Joseph Labre made a similar reflection to a passer-by who, touched by his extreme destitution, cried out : « Oh! the poor unfortunate fellow! » « No, my friend », replied the Saint, « I am not unfortunate! There are none such, except those who are on the way to perdition. »

Thus, very dear Brothers, for those who are truly religious,

there are none but good years, because all years are to them the means of being happy here on earth, by accomplishing the most holy Will of God. Let us renew our faith in these truths, so consoling and so practical, and let us conform our actions to these principles. There are others more profound, but none whose application is more profitable. St. John Baptist de La Salle warns us against certain speculations of the mind where self-conceit finds its own satisfaction, but without improvement for the conduct. He requires us to keep to the plain doctrine of the Church showing us the way to Heaven and engaging us in it in a manner as safe as it is efficacious.

We will follow such a prudent counsellor. Far from seeking special or extraordinary means of perfection, we will employ those which are within our sphere and determined by the Rule and we will make use of them to become, day by day, a little less imperfect.

Of these means are the practices designated by our holy Founder as « Supports of the Institute. » These are, as you know, eight in number : four exterior and four interior. In this circular we shall say a few words on the exterior supports. Our explanation and reflections on these matters will be, if you have no objection, the Regime's little New Year's Gift for 1924.

The Exterior Supports of the Institute.

These are : The Accusation, the Advertisement of defects, the Reddition of conduct, and the Manner of spending recreation time well.

By giving these four exercises the name and the role of « Supports of the Institute », St. John Baptist de La Salle reveals to us at once their value and their importance. In fact, a support is something more and better than an accessory, it is an essential; it is something more and better than a crowning, it is something fundamental. In order to realize this, let us make a few comparisons by way of illustration :

In a building, the support is the wall, or, again, the pillar, which carries the weight of the material and which assures solidity, form and beauty to the structure. It is then something more and better than a tile on the roof or an ornament on the façade.

In a plant, a tree, the supports are the root and the trunk or stem. These are something more and better than a branch, and much more than a mere leaf. The branch may be cut off, the leaf may be carried away by the wind, without any injury being done to the life or growth of the tree; but the root, the trunk or stem are all-important for its preservation and development.

In the human body, the leg is a support. A hair falls from the head, even total baldness may occur; but that does no considerable injury to the functions of physical organism. Whereas, if one is deprived of a leg — even should it be replaced by a crutch — it is no longer the same thing : the equilibrium of body, the suppleness in one's walk, the agility in one's movement, are singularly upset. Well! in the same

way, if a religious deprives himself of one of the supports of his Institute, that is, if he neglects any essential exercise, he will no longer be strong and steadfast in soul. He will be wanting in the vigour and confidence necessary to continue his walk in the perfect way. He advances with difficulty, if, indeed, he does not stop or go back, as the masters of the spiritual life tell us.

Doubtless, some one may object that there are pieces of furniture with three legs, carriages with three wheels, and that their balance and movement, are none the less possible and assured. But, if three supports have to carry the weight intended for four, should not their strength be increased in the proportion of the support they offer. Now, the religious who is so imprudent or thoughtless as to deprive himself of the help of one of the four supports of the Institute, will hardly take the wise precaution of strengthening the three others. Alas! any one who knows man, knows too well that, if he is negligent in one point, he will be so in others, being always more inclined to relaxation than to reformation.

I. — The Accusation.

The Accusation is, in the first place, a reparation of our exterior failings in matters of Rule, a vindication of the Rule for the transgressions it has suffered on our part in the course of the day just ended. It is also a precious means of studying ourselves and better knowing our deficiencies, our weaknesses of intellect and will. We will develop these two points briefly, and indicate the manner of making the Accusation so as to derive salutary fruits from this exercise.

1. The Accusation is a reparation of our exterior failings against the Rule and a vindication of the Rule for our transgression of it in the course of the day just ended.

We all know the saying of holy scripture : « A just man shall fall seven times. » (*Prov. XXIV, 16.*) He falls then very often. But is this a reason for discouragement and not rather for confidence? We shall venture to say that the above words of the Holy Ghost should produce in our hearts a two-fold sentiment : a sentiment of sorrow, since it shows the greatness of our weakness; a sentiment of joy, since it gives us to understand that, by the divine mercy and notwithstanding our many failings, we continue in a state of justification.

Is not this something to console us for the consequences of our weakness? Certainly it is not proper easily to excuse the multiplicity of our moral falls, were they ever so slight. No, a good religious should ever deplore his faults, even those that are more particularly imputable to human weakness, and he should feel the need of making up for them. Still, we cannot forget the encouraging lesson given us by the Liturgy in one of its most beautiful chants, the *Exultet* of Holy Saturday, where we find this astonishing exclamation, applied to the sin of Adam :

● *happy fault, which deserved such a Redeemer!*

How can the Church give expression to that cry of joy and enthusiasm with regard to a fault the consequences of which have been so appalling and which will cease only with the world itself, or rather will never end, since hell will last for ever? — Well! it is because of the sublime expiation Jesus Christ has made for it. The Church goes almost so far as to congratulate and thank our first Parents for having fallen, so much does the good God find glory, and souls profit, in the satisfaction offered by the Divine Saviour of mankind. What a striking proof of the value of atonement and of the esteem we should have for it!

Yes, what is, in truth, regrettable, is less the falling than the not rising up again; less the sinning than the remaining in sin. The proverb proclaims this, saying : « To err is human;

to persevere in one's error, is diabolical; but to retract it, to atone for it, is angelic. » Besides, there are two kinds of perseverance, one consists in not falling, the other in always rising again, and is not the second very honourable also?

We have fallen. Why are we so much surprised? Are we not liable to fall? Let us rather admire the power of grace which so quickly puts us on our feet again when with good will we correspond to it. Certainly we must not draw the conclusion that it is good to violate the law in order to give oneself the merit and the joy of repairing the infraction. But very favourable and encouraging indeed is the act of reparation, furnished us by the Accusation, in its special and recognized forms.

The Accusation implies the avowal of the exterior faults committed contrary to the Rule, and the accomplishment of the penance imposed after making the accusation. Now to avow one's faults is a praiseworthy action. What is shameful, is to have committed them. To declare them, to reproach oneself with them, to humble oneself for them and show one's sorrow, is to give proof of intelligence and nobility of soul. It is not to lessen oneself, but to make oneself greater; it is to desire advancement. Proud minds alone refuse to acknowledge their mistakes or to take means to atone for them, because passion blinds these persons or courage fails them. Devoid of wisdom and humility on this point, they will not go far nor rise high in the way of the perfect; and if they are educators, they will not exercise a beneficial influence on the hearts which it is their mission to form to virtue.

Great results in the exercise of the Apostleship are obtained by those who, believing themselves to be very imperfect, exert themselves with zeal for their amendment. Besides, the masters of the spiritual life assure us that the religious is on the road to ruin who hides himself, who seeks to deceive his Superiors and delude himself. Thinking he deceives men, he makes

himself less estimable and becomes odious in the sight of God. Shunning the remedy, he aggravates his disease and renders it incurable.

On the contrary, what an edifying example, what a good sign the religious gives who loyally avows his faults and asks help to atone for them. It is one of the most beautiful spectacles under Heaven.

Above and beyond all others, the Saints were eager in this respect. It was thus with St. John Baptist de La Salle who was always so anxious for whatever might procure him some humiliation and serve him as a means of expiation.

In order to forgive and forget our faults, the good God and even men themselves await only this sincere avowal, accompanied with sorrow. Happily in religious communities, the greater number of the subjects accept this doctrine and put it in practice. Many times during the long years — too long for our wishes — during which Divine Providence kept us at the head of a number of Brothers, we have heard some excellent religious say to us : Dear Brother Director, Dear Brother Visitor, Dear Brother Assistant, I have committed such a fault, such an irregularity; for instance, I have spoken without much necessity during the time of strict silence; I have been slow in rising; I have slept without resistance during Mental Prayer; I have wounded fraternal charity by unkind words; I have neglected the preparation of my Catechism; I have allowed myself to be distracted from the supervision of the pupils; I have failed in patience in class, etc.; kindly give me a penance as a means of making up for this wrong and of effacing the bad impression left on those who saw me.

This, very dear Brothers, is a way of acting that cannot but edify, for it indicates a firm and practical will to follow oneself up, to punish and correct oneself. For the Superiors, it is no small joy and encouragement to see one of their subordinates thus watching over himself and taking occasion from his faults

in word and action to humble himself and strive to do better. Needless to add that they would wish to see such good dispositions more generally and universally practised in their communities.

At the Accusation, as we have said, these is question of exterior faults. We have cited a few. Let us also point out another one, — the want of kindness in the exercise of our employment. If a Brother had gone so far as to treat a pupil roughly, to use insulting words or violent proceedings in his regard, that Brother should not fail to reproach himself with this fault and to accuse himself of it. It is honourable for the teacher who is thus frank and who blushes for failing to control himself properly, he who ought to be a model of self-control and urbanity. On the contrary, shame on him who, a victim of his cowardice, does not declare such a fault and neglects the efficacious means of preventing its recurrence. Such a teacher will continue to be unkind. Sooner or later he will undergo the bitter consequences of his pride, by bringing on himself and his community troubles from which Religion cannot but suffer.

2. The Accusation is also a means of studying ourselves and of better knowing our deficiencies and weaknesses both intellectual and moral.

It furnishes us every day with an occasion of rendering an account of our failings and short-comings, of taking stock of the bad fruits in our spiritual garden. Now, it is by their effects that causes are known, just as disorderly inclinations constitute the « old man. » We must spend our life in studying and combating our lower nature, in unmasking and destroying it. It is against the sinful man in us that the Accusation and Confession are particularly directed. Preceded by examination and accompanied by true sorrow, they are eminently proper to assure us, little by little, the dominion over our bad

inclinations. Hence the great worth of these two exercises, which makes them instruments of such value for our spiritual progress and the attainment of holiness.

The Rule of Government prescribes that we be faithful to the daily Accusation. Here is what it says : « The Accusation shall always be made..... The Brother Director shall not habitually replace it by a penance given in common; this would not supply its place, but, in reality, suppress it. » (*R. of Gov.*, XXIII, 85.) The Accusation, in fact, is an exercise of humiliation or mortification. It is under this title that St. John Baptist de La Salle treats of it in the Chapter (V, 6) of the Common Rules in which he gives directions on this subject. Now, the saying of a prayer — which is generally the general penance imposed — is neither an act of humiliation nor an act of mortification. Thus the exercise is suppressed, as the Rule of Government says, since the effect it should produce, humiliation or mortification, is not obtained.

5. Let us now answer the following questions :

How should the Accusation be made? What form should be given to it that we may really profit by it?

If we would have the Accusation to produce its fruits and become a means of atonement for the faults we have committed, we must perform it with care, conforming to the customs of our Institute and the prescriptions of the Rule in this matter. The exercise generally takes place at the beginning of Spiritual Reading. After having read a few verses of the New Testament kneeling, the Brother President says : « Live Jesus in our hearts! » All respond : « For ever! » Then immediately, each one reflects himself and examines himself, looking back over the whole day and calling to mind the three or four principal faults committed. Then he excites himself to contrition for these faults. This requires but very little time; which should be so employed and not otherwise in continuing to read the

New Testament. Without preparation or examination we should have to improvise an accusation which, vague and without regret, would not be of any profit to us.

Let us be careful, very dear Brothers, never to fail in the respect we should show to God in our relations with Him or with His representatives. This would happen if, at this exercise, we were to accuse ourselves lightly of any infractions that come to our mind, without even asking ourselves whether these faults were really committed during the day, or if we were to confine ourselves to mutter a few badly articulated words, which the presiding Brother could scarcely hear, and would have for the most part to guess.

Our spiritual exercises bring us into close relations with God. These relations should be really dignified and religious. Would this be so, if our accusation were reduced to a mere formality, a more or less imperceptible muttering, a kind of refrain repeated every day, after the manner of a hand-organ, and without the slightest contrition. Under such conditions one might perform this exercise for years and remain always the same, repairing no faults and correcting no defects. To make such a bad use of this means of perfection would indeed be a serious responsibility.

We have mentioned the hand-organ. Assuredly the maker who designed its mechanism was an intelligent man. But he who plays it, is a poor artist. In like manner, very dear Brothers, the Founders of religious orders who organized our spiritual life, were men of genius inspired by God. Why must some of their disciples be so unthinking or so careless in the use they make of the means of perfection they gave us?

Let us conclude this subject with a few words on the manner of performing the penance received at the Accusation, of which it is an integral part. In general, this penance is very light ; but nothing prevents us from adding to it. At all events, it should be accomplished in a true spirit of reparation. It may

be afflictive or humiliating : it is afflictive, when it concerns the body, as giving oneself a few strokes of the discipline, depriving oneself of a little food, saying a prayer with arms extended in the form of a cross; it is humiliating, when it more particularly concerns the mind, as, kissing the feet of a Brother, asking him for the alms of his prayers or of a piece of bread, begging his pardon... But whatever be the nature of this penance, it should be accomplished punctually, faithfully, and with simplicity.

Punctually, that is, in all points, as to time and place, in the spirit and to the letter; like Sister Theresa of St. Augustine, daughter of King Louis XV, and a Carmelite nun, who, during the visit of a Bishop, left him suddenly, saying : « Excuse me, My Lord, this is my time for washing the feet of our Sisters. »

Faithfully, that is, complying with the smallest circumstances of the penance imposed; like St. John Berchmans, when told to carry in a spoon the water required to wash a floor.

With simplicity, as a little child would do it. Was not St. Bonaventure found washing the dishes when the envoys of the Pope brought him the Cardinals' hat? and St. Aloysius Gonzaga, was he not quite happy to be found, in the corridors of the Roman College with a broom in his hands sweeping, when visited by persons of distinction?

II. — The Advertisement of Defects.

The Advertisement of defects, like the Accusation, is one of the four exterior supports of the Institute. Its name readily shows its role and paramount importance. Besides, as a means of reforming a religious and even an entire community, this exercise would appear to be more important than the Accusation. The latter, in reality, is only worth what we make it, for in it each one says what he thinks best. The confusion it

begets, the sorrow it excites, the repentance that is shown, are proportioned to the sincerity of the accuser and the delicacy of his conscience, as well as to his desire for advancement. Now, if there are noble souls who are afflicted and stimulated by the sight and the thought of their infidelities, there are also many common souls who easily excuse their faults, who accuse themselves of them only lightly and do not generously repair them, souls for whom the Accusation is little more than an empty formality, without effect for their amendment.

But at the Advertisement, the matter is no longer in the hands of the penitent, who accuses himself of his faults, but in those of a confrere who fills this role. All that is to be desired, is that he be a good religious and have the courage to do his duty, without allowing himself to be stopped by any apprehension or by human respect, telling what seems to him irregular or reprehensible in the words and actions of his Brothers.

Besides, do we not generally see the defects of our neighbour much better than we see our own? Our Lord remarks this in the Gospel : « Why », He asks us, « seest thou a mote in thy brothers eye and seest not a beam in thy own eye? Or how sayest thou to thy brother : Let me cast the mote out of thy eye, and, behold, a beam is in thy own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thy own eye, and then thou shalt see to cast out the mote out of thy brothers eye. » (*St. Matth.*, VII, 3-6). The poet has expressed the same truth in the verse in which he says we are « Lynxes towards our likes but moles towards ourselves. » In fact how many men are subject to divers failings, the existence of which they are ignorant until some one does them the service of calling their attention to them. Are there not also religious who have a blamable fear of losing the esteem of their Superiors and who, at the Accusation, dissimulate their irregularities, especially when these are humiliating? They need a charitable

friend to point out the faults they dare not declare, and to avenge the Rule for the violations which they have committed.

Such is the role of the Advertisement. It supplies for our want of light and stimulates our good will; it helps us to know and correct ourselves; it is an efficacious means of religious and professional advancement; — on one condition, however, that it be performed in a true spirit, that is, according to the Rule, by him who advertises as well as by him who is advertised.

Duties of the one Who Advertises

The Common Rules indicate them as follows :

« The Brothers shall charitably advertise one another of their defects in the presence of the Brother Director, one day every week. » (*Com. Rules, V, 7.*) In this text we find a three-fold duty, well worthy of our most serious attention :

1. THE BROTHERS SHALL ADVERTISE ONE ANOTHER. — We should therefore advertise; and for many reasons, all weighty ones. In the first place, because the Rule makes it an obligation for us. Is not this sufficient to determine us to do so? A good religious does not question his Rule; he obeys it, regarding it as the expression of the most holy will of God.

We must advertise, also because our Brothers ask us in suppliant language to do so. What reason have we to doubt their sincerity and good faith, and therefore not to grant their request?

In fine, we must advertise because it is one of the most valuable services we can render to our Brothers, to our Congregation, even to God Himself. Let us not refuse this service, we who should be charitable; let us render it to our Brothers, by helping them to know and correct themselves; let us render it to our Congregation, which will perform its religious and

apostolic task so much the better as its sons are more virtuous and holy; let us render it to God Himself who is so much the more glorified and better served as the workers in His cause are less imperfect.

Let us advertise in the interests of God. — We read in Ancient History that two kings were at war, and that one of them took the son of his enemy prisoner. This capture furnished him with the means of revenging himself in a shocking manner. The prisoner was young and his education hardly begun: he lived under the sway of his instincts which he had not yet learned to overcome and regulate. Far from any pains being taken to educate this youth as a well brought up young man, he was allowed to grow without correction, every thing he asked for was given him, his most unreasonable whims and the most depraved instincts were excited and satisfied. In time he became a monster; and having reached this degrading state, he was sent back to his father. This was a dreadful chastisement for the royal family, and for all the court an indescribable shame.

Now, our Brothers are children of God, exiled for a time, away from their heavenly Father and their blessed country. One day they will take their place in the divine family, They will be admitted into the society of the King of kings, to share His glory and to contribute to the honour of His royal court. The best service we can render them on this earth, is to help in making them acquire all the perfection possible, so that in heaven they may procure God more honour and glory.

Let us advertise in the interests of our Brothers. — Our worst enemy, more bitter and more dangerous than any other, is ourselves. The dangers that beset our vocation come from our defects. If we are not doing more good in our community and in our class, to our Brothers and to our pupils, our defects are the cause. How greatly we ought to appreciate the

exercise in which we are warned of them, and what gratitude we owe to the Brothers who fulfil in our regard this office of charity.

Let us advertise in the interests of our Congregation. — For our defects tarnish its beauty and compromise its work. Holy Scripture, we know, curses, « the silent watch dog ». But since God, according to St. Paul, « does not care for oxen », neither is He preoccupied about dogs. These silent watch dogs are a figure of those religious who look on unconcernedly and silently at the loss of a vocation, who show indifference for the honour and reputation of their Institute attacked by the irregularity or the imprudence of some negligent or relaxed Brother. The flock which is not guarded by a vigilant dog becomes the prey of the wolf. In like manner how many religious have been the victims of their tepidity and their defects because they were not advertised of them in time, because no one had the charity to inform the Superiors, because those that should do so acted the part of silent watch dogs. Yes, « cursed be such a dog »! Better the mad dog, which injures only the body, for this life only.

Let us add that we should advertise notwithstanding the trouble we might apprehend, even if we feared, by provoking a bad temper, to invite reprisals then or later. Such an apprehension should not deter us. We should accomplish our duty at all times, even were it to become onerous, being careful to bring to it charity and moderation. Was our Lord ignorant of the sentiments He excited in the hearts of the Pharisees, whilst He was pronouncing against them the anathemas which the Holy Gospel records? Did that prevent Him from telling the truth? Did not St. John the Baptist foresee the consequences of the holy liberty with which he reproached Herod for his bad conduct? How many similar examples are to be found in the lives of the Saints?

2. THE BROTHERS SHALL ADVERTISE CHARITABLY. — Charity alone, that is, a motive of the supernatural order, should engage us to advertise. It is the good of the Brother that we propose to effect. It is the welfare of the community that we seek. It is the glory of God that we strive to procure. Everything should show this purity of intention and this high purpose : the tone of the voice, the matter, the form of the advertisements. Woe to him who would give way to malevolent after-thought, or would make use of this exercise to gratify his spite and to take revenge! Might it not be said that he commits a sort of profanation, since he makes a means of perfection subservient to an end he dares not acknowledge? We should rather imitate the surgeon: if he makes the patient suffer, he does not do so in a spirit of animosity, but to relieve and cure him of his disease.

Then, let there be no egotism, no bitterness in the advertisements. Let us not be unbending like an iron bar, nor pitiless like justice, but kindhearted like charity. Let us extenuate rather than exaggerate. Let us incline towards indulgence, without however becoming weak and too accommodating. Let us not use the words *always*, *never*; nor even the adverb *often*. Let us rather use the words *sometimes*, *occasionally*. Let us not give out a solitary fault for a defect; but let us try and make the advertisement as moderate in matter as it should be in form. We thus render it acceptable and beneficial. Besides, may it not happen to any one to see evil where there is none or to exaggerate that which exists. This is what the formula which we use for this exercise expresses : « It seems to me, my dear Brother, » as if one feared to be mistaken or to have been led into error.

5. THE BROTHERS SHALL ADVERTISE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE BROTHER DIRECTOR, continues the Rule. In this circumstance there is an instruction for all and a reproof for some. It is not

unheard of to find, even in religion, unkind hearts, inconsiderate tongues, who speak when they should be silent and are silent when they should speak; hence detractors and critics. Not a day, nor even an hour, is allowed to pass without their saying something bad of some one, giving vent to complaints against another, or turning a third into ridicule; whilst at the advertisement of defects, at the time it is permitted, even prescribed to speak, they do not open their lips. From such religious, without discretion and charity, whose tongues distill more venom than honey, may the good God ever preserve our Communities! Then, very dear Brothers, let us make it a duty to advertise, — to advertise charitably, to advertise in presence of the Brother Director. This is a serious obligation; to fulfil it well is to show a true love for one's Brothers, for one's Institute, for God Himself. Such are, summarily stated, the duties of the one who advertises.

Duties of the one Who is Advertised.

Happy he who loves admonition and seeks it, very dear Brothers! This attraction is one of the distinctive signs of the wise man, of the man who aspires to holiness. Whoever experiences this longing, gives proof that he has understanding and good sense, that he is the sincere friend of progress, that he is a virtuous man, and that he is of the proper stuff from which true religious and saints are made. A learned man was one day asked: « How have you been able to acquire so much knowledge? » To which he replied: « By never being ashamed to ask an explanation when I did not understand, and by allowing myself to be corrected whenever I was wrong. » In the same way the religious who possesses solid virtue might say: « I have never avoided advertisements or humiliations; on the contrary, I have always sought them. » You know, very dear Brothers, the example given on this point by Alexander the Great, though a pagan. He held it as a principle that an

admonition is a pledge of friendship and that to dissemble a man's faults, is to treat him as an enemy. He conformed his conduct to this principle, and so dismissed from his court a philosopher who never admonished him, through it was his business to do so. To justify the dismissal, Alexander said to the philosopher : « Being a man, I assuredly must have defects; you, being a philosopher, must have noticed them. Now, you have never pointed them out to me. You have therefore no friendship for me. Begone, you are useless to me. »

We must love the truth and love to hear it told us, even though it should humble our self-love. We must sincerely ask it of him who is in a position to teach us, and willingly accept it, whether it be agreeable or painful. Truth is a gift of God and a pledge of true liberty. To fear having it told us, especially to repel it, is to be proud or foolish, and to understand nothing of the nature of the religious state and the obligations it imposes. In fact, St. Francis of Sales teaches « that the religious life is a School of Correction, a workshop in which each one should let himself be chiseled, planed, and polished until he be worthy of being united to God. »

To love admonitions or to seek them, is indeed a sign by which Saints may be recognized. One day St. Pacomius being on a visit to one of his monasteries, and having a little leisure time he employed it in making a mat, so as to give the example of industry. While he was engaged in this work, a boy, brought up in the convent with the monks, happened to pass by St. Pacomius and said to him : « In truth, Father, you are going about the work the wrong way; you do not know how to make mats as well as we do. » St. Pacomius rose up immediately, made the boy sit down and thanked him for his remark. Then he asked him for a lesson in mat making, which the Saint immediately put into practice.

St. Bernard declared that, far from fearing advertisements he would like to have a hundred times more eyes fixed on his

conduct, so as to be better informed on his defects; and he added : « It is only those who are proud, superficial, wanting in judgment, that do not accept the truth even when it is offered in a friendly manner. »

St. Francis of Sales said in confidence to one of his friends : « The greatest proof of affection you can give me, and by which I shall recognize that you sincerely love me, is, often to reprehend me for my defects. »

One day St. Vincent of Paul was met in Paris by one of his old pupils who had left the right path of duty and had even conceived in his regard bitter sentiments of antipathy. Whereupon, this man so forgot himself as to say to St. Vincent : « How are they so blind in your Congregation as to appoint a man like you as Superior General? »

Whereupon St. Vincent replied : « You are right, my friend! and how much I should be obliged to you, and how much the Congregation would be indebted to you, if you could persuade our Fathers to depose me and elect another Superior instead. » — That is how the Saints acted. They quite agree with those who depreciate them and who even make them unmerited reproaches. Did not St. John Baptist de La Salle belong to the same edifying school? To one of our Brothers who asked of him some counsels in the spiritual life, he replied : « You then wish, Dear Brother, that I should take charge of your conduct. I shall gladly do so, on one condition, however, that you tell me my faults without flattering me. » These lessons and examples are an authority in this matter. They trace out for us the way we should follow. Let us, very dear Brothers, follow it faithfully.

Since we ask to be advertised of our defects, we should be logical and sincere with ourselves, rejoicing that so much charity is shown us, cordially thanking him who gives us this precious alms, and utilizing it, to the best of our ability, for our religious and professional betterment.

III. — The Reddition of Conduct.

The Reddition of Conduct is the third exterior support of the Institute. In importance it is scarcely equalled by the Accusation or the Advertisement of defects, for it is a most necessary exercise for forming and perfecting the religious educator, such as the Brother of the Christian Schools. Here we shall dwell on the nature of the relations which the Inferior has with his Superior in Reddition and the conditions that must be fulfilled on both sides, so that these relations may be beneficial.

1. NATURE OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN SUPERIOR AND INFERIOR IN REDDITION. — In order that these relations may be well regulated, it is expedient, first and foremost, to make our *Sursum Corda*, that is, to raise our hearts and minds so as to fix them in the sphere of the supernatural, and of faith. — Who is this Superior before whom we present ourselves to treat of our spiritual interests and to receive counsel and encouragement? Is he simply a man of experience, wise and intelligent? No, he is something else and more than that. — Is he merely a well informed man, whom study and communing with God have amply supplied with natural and divine light, of which he is to make his subordinates the beneficiaries? Again, he is something else and more than that. — Should we add that he is a man of solid, tried virtue, who is the first to walk in the perfect way into which he seeks to draw his disciples by word and example, would we have sufficiently stated his claims to our esteem and respect? No, for he is assuredly something else and more than that. — In fine, should we go so far as to recognize in him at once an accomplished man, a man of firm and upright judgment, of rare good sense,

of large and cultured mind, of excellent heart, of generous will, of strong and kindly nature; should we take him for a Saint, but a Saint who has struggled and who therefore knows by what combats virtue is acquired and by what means it is rendered accessible and even lovable to others, — would we then have indicated all the qualities of that man, all the reasons which justify the confidence he should inspire? No, it remains to be said that this man is, in our regard, the representative of God, and that in this capacity we should respect him, listen to him, and obey him.

Perhaps this Superior is young and without much experience; perhaps he is only of ordinary intelligence and common virtue; he may seem less sympathetic, even less worthy of esteem than some one of his inferiors. Was not St. Joseph the least perfect member of the Holy Family, of which he was the Head? But he was the representative of God. It was from this title, from this quality that proceeded all his rights as counsellor and guide. So it is with every Superior. If his title as representative of God be denied; if we look upon him only as an ordinary man whom administrative needs have made our Chief; if we do not look on him with the eyes of faith, we are in error, a very pernicious error, because, then, this Superior will be of no assistance for our salvation, much less for our sanctification.

The Inferior who wishes to draw profit from the reddition, must, according to the formal and re-iterated prescriptions of our holy Rules, « always see God in the person of his Superior and address himself to him only as to one invested with God's authority ». (*Com. Rule, XII, 3.*) He must make abstraction of the qualities and defects of his Superior, to « see in him only the authority of God and the Divine Majesty which he represents. » (*Com. Rule, XII, 10.*) — « I am but a voice of one crying in the wilderness, » said St. John the Baptist. Now a voice is no more than a sound proceeding from the mouth of a more or less capable man. Such also is your Superior, considered

merely as man. He is of no worth, he deserves no consideration or obedience, except by virtue of the authority he represents, — that of God. This is what must never be forgotten.

Therefore, before presenting oneself to the Superior, it is important to elevate one's soul to these supernatural heights. Do not discuss the merits of your Superior, nor conceive doubts as to his clear-sightedness, his abilities, perhaps even his intentions. ● otherwise his influence for good is gone. Your rationalism and your pride would have utterly destroyed it, and you would experience a serious spiritual loss. St. John Baptist de La Salle did not fail to make us mindful of these truths in his recommendations concerning the practice of this support of the Institute. In fact, he bids us « to prepare for the reddition in the spirit of faith, and to convince ourselves that it is to God Himself we are going to speak, and that it is God who will console us and give us the means of doing better and advancing in virtue. » He suggests to us, for this purpose, the following act of faith and humble submission : « ● my God, I firmly believe and hold for certain that it is Thou who art to speak to me today, to teach me what I am to do, to console me in my trials, to admonish and reprove me for my faults by the mouth of my Director, to whose guidance Thou has intrusted me. » (*Collection*, p. 58.) The counsels which St. John Baptist de La Salle repeats with most insistence, in season and out of season, are, we may say, those which refer to our having views of faith in the respect and obedience we show towards Superiors. It is because he understood all the importance of such views to acquire merit, and because he knew, moreover, with what difficulty we submit our reason before the will of God.

After having put ourselves into this disposition of faith, the most important thing for us in reddition, very dear Brothers, is to show therein an uprightness and a simplicity becoming a

religious. It is evident that confidence cannot be imposed by law and that one cannot make it obligatory by a decree. No, confidence must be merited; it must be won. But when we feel confidence in some one, how easy our relations with that person become! How readily we speak to him of our interests, our thoughts and our difficulties! How joyfully we impart to him the hopes and fears conceived all through life! How we wish to know his opinion of our past conduct or to have his advice for the future! These are the happy effects of confidence. How desirable and how salutary they are!

We may add that unless confidence exists in some measure, the relations between Superior and Inferior will be neither pleasant nor fruitful. The reddition will become a painful, useless task, instead of being a source of joy and spiritual profit. The means to promote this indispensable confidence between the one who directs and the one who is directed, and to increase it in us, very dear Brothers, is to show uprightness and simplicity in our habitual relations with each other. Nothing facilitates these relations, nothing makes them so agreeable and salutary as do reciprocal frankness and good faith. Two men who deal fairly with each other, if they have ever so little good sense, soon understand and esteem each other and inspire mutual confidence. Besides, we know that such dispositions are at the basis of all Christian and religious virtues, that they constitute the foundation of our spiritual edifice. If then we work to acquire them more and more, we shall soon find that mutual confidence between Superior and Inferior will be the blessed result. From experience we know that the members of our Institute are, indeed, few who feel an invincible repugnance to the reddition, or to asking advice from their Superiors.

The reddition is beneficial both to the Superior and the Inferior. In fact, we must not think that this exercise is profitable to the Inferiors only; it is equally advantageous to the

Superiors who benefit, by the edification they receive from the sentiments of faith, straightforwardness, and simplicity of their subordinates; and also, in virtue of a principle that might be called the reversibility of merit and spiritual goods. The revered Brother Exuperian expressed it in the following words : « Over and above his personal merits, a Superior will enjoy in heaven a discount on the merits he has made his inferiors acquire by the spiritual direction he gave them. » Moreover, when a man has at heart the noble ambition of being useful to his fellow men, of helping them in the accomplishment of their duties, of relieving them in their physical infirmities or sustaining them in their moral weaknesses, such a man will soon feel himself more compassionate, more devoted, more supernatural, -- in a word, a better and more virtuous man. These precious advantages are the reward of every one who exercises charity towards his neighbour.

To finish on this point, we shall give an advice to those of our Brothers who worry about the reddition they have to make, because their ideas do not agree well with those of their Director, or because they have not sufficient confidence in him. Such Inferiors should in all simplicity explain to the Director the repugnance they have to make their reddition, acknowledge their embarrassment and give the reasons for their repugnance. How many times has it not happened, very dear Brothers, that two souls, though made to understand and help each other, have lived in a kind of reciprocal distrust very hurtful to their spiritual interests, when it was only a trifle that separated them and when so little would have been required to unite them in friendly agreement. — How sad it is, therefore, and how disastrous for an inferior to feel ill at ease in his relations with his Superior. In this way the effect of one of the best means of sanctification and happiness that the religious life can offer, is brought to nought. Should this state of things exist for any one among you, very dear

Brothers, we would earnestly beg of him, in the interests of his soul, to put an end to it as soon as possible.

2. OBJECT AND MATTER OF THE REDDITION. — *What should be said in reddition?* Well, in general, anything that one wishes, anything that in any way concerns us, anything that may give the Superior occasion for a timely advice, a kind word of encouragement to the inferior.

Speak of your health : whether good, middling, or poor; whether it is getting better, becoming weaker, or remaining unchanged; and say whether you take proper care of it, without, however, spoiling yourself, as St. Francis of Sales used to say.

Speak of your employment : if it is class-work, make known what results you have obtained in physical, intellectual, and, especially, Christian education. Indicate the difficulties you encounter, the consolations you feel, the pupils who give you most satisfaction, and those with whom you have reason to be displeased, Tell also of the means you have used to encourage the former and correct the latter, and of the effects that followed. In a word, speak of your pains and joys as teacher, so that your Director may help you, by every means, to alleviate the former and increase the latter.

What may also be said. — How you are getting on in the Community; whether you enjoy peace in it; whether you feel happy and are on good terms with the Brothers; whether you meet with any troubles and what is the cause of them; do they come from your character or from the behaviour of others in your regard? Whether you seek by regularity, by charity for your neighbour, by your care to help and edify him, the sweetness and peace that are the precious fruits of the common life.

What should be said, especially. — Whether you are advancing more and more in the spiritual life, keeping alive in your heart a fervent love of the Rule; whether you try each day to become more master of yourself, more supernatural; whether you perform the spiritual exercises faithfully and with care. The *Collection* gives an authorized direction in this respect. The best for us is to draw our inspiration from our *Collection* and to follow its prescriptions. By doing so, we shall pass in review, every month, our regular obligations. For, the counsels which are there recalled, embrace all questions relative to the religious life bearing on one's exterior conduct, — which alone form the object of the reddition. The *Collection* also gives directions on the subject of the free and spontaneous opening of one's mind which every religious may make as far as seems good to him for the welfare of his soul.

In a word, in reddition the inferior may say all that he wishes, all that may turn to his profit, all that may suggest to the Superior an observation, a counsel, a word of encouragement, proper to strengthen the former in his vocation, to make him happier, and to enable him to do more good.

Do not be afraid, very dear Brothers, that this exercise will annoy or fatigue your Superior. This would be to have a poor idea of his love and zeal for souls. Besides, he is there to listen to you, to receive your confidences, to be your light and comfort in your darkness or weakness. His first duty is to hold himself at your disposal for this purpose. And it is your personal right to lay open to him your particular circumstances from a material, religious, or professional point of view, — in short, to make use of him according to your needs. As the M. H. Brother Philippe one day said : « So much the worse for him, if he is Director! »

You have also other rights, notably those of counting on the discretion, the devotedness, the affection of your Superior.

1. *On his discretion.* — In the exercise of reddition the Superior is bound by professional secrecy. He cannot in any way make use of what he has learned in that manner; it is as if he were totally ignorant of it. He should not even allude to it, either by word or act.

2. *On his devotedness.* — The time, the strength, the cares of a Superior belong to his inferiors. He should make himself the man and the servant of all his Brothers; and that to the very sacrifice of his own convenience, of his life even. If he were not disposed to devote himself in this way, he would not have the qualities of a Superior, a father of a religious family. He ought to ask to be relieved of his functions and leave them to more valiant hands and a more magnanimous heart.

3. *On his affection* — This affection should be supernatural, strong, and disinterested : *Supernatural*, that is, being rooted in God so as to be inspired and nourished by Him alone; *Strong*, that is, filling the heart and rendering it capable of all the sacrifices imposed by his office; *Disinterested*, that is, seeking first the kingdom of God and His justice, the rest being promised in addition. All Superiors, in fact, are established by God for the sake of their inferiors. God grant that their mutual intercourse may always be pleasant and for the welfare of both parties!

IV. — The Recreations.

In order that the Recreations be an Exterior Support of the Institute according to the intention of S. John Baptist de La Salle, it should be well spent.

In this respect, we shall dwell on two points :

1. The utility of Recreations;
2. The manner of spending Recreation time well.

4. UTILITY OF THE RECREATIONS.

In order to realize the advantages we may draw from recreations, it is well to consider their physical, intellectual and moral utility :

Their physical utility. — After his labour, which is usually sedentary, and after his class-work, which is generally fatiguing, the Brother of the Christian Schools has need of rest, air, and exercise; and he should take them in sufficient measure.

Rest. — Our Lord gave this rest to His Apostles. After their missions He said to them : « Come apart and rest a little. » (*Mark, VI, 51*). As every one knows, rest is an excellent restorative. It is important to take it at the proper time, especially at the time fixed by the Rule.

Air. — The air in the class-room is vitiated, either because the apartment is not sufficiently large, or because the ventilation is badly arranged. From this, arise heaviness of head, stomach troubles, and other inconveniences. Now, recreation, especially when taken in the open air, is a good antidote to all such discomforts.

Movement. — The immobility, at least relative, imposed by many employments, does not conduce to robust health. Recreation is an efficacious corrective, if it be not taken in some close or over-heated room. To go out, in the fresh air, and, as far as possible, to take good long walks on recreation days, is an excellent exercise when it is judiciously regulated. Of course, the walks should not be too long; but still it is well to avoid taking conveyances on every occasion in order to spare oneself the trouble of walking. We should do well to

believe in the following little verse, — the lines of which are less those of a poet than of a good hygienist :

*Gaieté, doux exercice et modeste repas,
Voilà trois médecins qui ne se trompent pas.*

(« Cheerfulness, moderate exercise and light repasts, are three physicians that never fail. »)

Intellectual utility of the recreations. — Immediately after meals, all serious intellectual work is antihygienic. It may even become dangerous by sending the blood to the head, in place of leaving it free to act in the digestive organs. The wisdom of the Founders of Religious Orders appears in this point of Rule. For, they never prescribe meditation or study after meals. Many among them, like St. John Baptist de la Salle, prescribe for that time pious and useful conversations which rest the mind, without leaving it altogether idle. This family talk is indeed, if you will, an intellectual work, but not didactic nor austere. It may improve the mind without fatiguing it, rather by relaxing it.

Moral utility of the recreations. — Taken according to Rule the recreation is very educative. There we learn to know ourselves and to know others. The ancient philosopher made no mistake when to such as applied to be instructed he would say : « Speak, young man, that I may know thee. » Did not our Lord also declare : « Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh, » (*St. Matt.*, XII, 54) for it is by the mouth that the sentiments of the heart are expressed. If it can be said : « The style is the man », it can also be said that the spoken word makes him known still better, for it is less prepared, more natural, and consequently truer than the studied productions of the mind. Recreation time well spent, polishes one's language, one's manners, and one's character.

It has, on our nature, an effect similar to that which the sea has on the pebbles it rolls about. It teaches us to speak with moderation, wisdom, and circumspection; and also to listen, which is an acquisition not less important. Then in recreation we are animated and encouraged to better things. Let us call to mind the edifying and salutary conversations of our Lord with the Samaritan woman, whom He converted, and of whom He even made a zealous apostle; with the two disciples of Emmaus, who felt their hearts all inflamed with love, after having heard Him explain the Holy Scriptures and prove the necessity of suffering to attain glory. And also the conversation of St. Benedict with his sister, St. Scholastica, who spent a whole night delighting each other by discourses that were more heavenly than earthly.

2. — MANNER OF SPENDING RECREATION TIME WELL.

How should we behave during this time? First and foremost, we should always be present from beginning to end. Our duty in this regard, is to go there directly on leaving the refectory, without delaying on the way, under some more or less futile pretext; on the other hand we should not begin before the President has given the signal: « Live Jesus in our hearts; » again we should not leave recreation without a serious reason, or without permission, as long as it has not been concluded. We must, at the same time, comply with the prescriptions laid down by the Rule, which have for their object, chiefly, the two following points: our conversations, and our conduct towards our Brothers.

The Conversations we should hold. — In the first place, they should bear on what was read during the preceding meal and on the lessons that may be drawn therefrom, laying stress on the passages that were more interesting and profitable for a

religious or for a Christian educator. In the Holy Scriptures, in the lives of the Saints, and even in the books of instruction when they are well chosen, the matter is generally abundant, and practical too. Finally, the subjects of conversation may extend to all the topics mentioned in the *Collection*, a list of which is read every month at meal time. There we have a host of topics which can give matter for conversation both useful and varied, each Brother speaking according to his aptitudes with a view of recreating and edifying his Brothers.

On the other hand, our Rule forbids what would be out of place in our conversations. « The Brothers shall not speak of what has happened in any of the houses of the Institute, nor of the affairs of their own house. They shall not speak of other persons except to speak well of them. They shall not speak of themselves, nor of their relatives, nor of eating, drinking, or other bodily wants. They shall not inquire about anything curious or useless. » (*Com. Rule*, VI). — It is strange, very dear Brothers, but only too true, that man is more inclined to disparage than to praise his neighbour. The author of the *Imitation* remarks this fact and judiciously tells us of it: « Alas! such is our weakness, that we often more readily believe and speak of another that which is evil than that which is good. » (*Imitation*, Bk. I, Ch. IV, 1). This fatal propensity is doubtless a consequence of original sin. Since that time, the tongue of man is as it were poisoned and full of deadly venom. Does not St. James tell us that it is « set on fire by hell? » (*St. James*, III, 6). In fact, slow as it is to move in praise of others, it is feverishly prompt to narrate scandal. As if the telling of the deficiencies, the suspected intentions or misdeeds of our neighbour, aggrandizes us personally? Or, as if there was pleasure in distilling gall, in pouring out vinegar, in showing the wrong side of the picture. What a deplorable inclination and how shameful its gratification! But, in general,

we do not give away to it except in private conversations with confreres. In larger groups one is more cautious against this lamentable tendency. Here is truly one of the advantages of recreation in common : to render detraction and the abuse of the tongue less possible or prevalent.

We must, therefore, watch over our conversations, that they may edify and be agreeable to those who hear them, and that they may be profitable to them in every way. One of our best Presidents of the *Great Exercises* having reminded the Brothers on Retreat of the nature of our recreations in common, shortly afterwards found that the four groups forming the recreation, were speaking, the first on politics, the second on the perquisites of a country curate, the third on the city markets, and the fourth on stock-raising. This was for him an occasion to enforce the prescriptions of the Rule on religious proprieties, and to promise that the example he had witnessed would be a lesson to all his future retreatants. Have we not likewise experienced some similar occurrences in other places, to which a similar correction might be applied?

Let your ideas and your language, very dear Brothers, be of the highest tone. None is bound to this more than a religious; he especially, should have « his conversation in heaven, » according to the exhortation of St. Paul (*Phil.* III, 20). In this respect what progress has still to be made in some communities in order that their recreations may be according to the Rules of the Institute. Though there may be nothing bad said; yet how often the discourses descend to a very common level? Who has not heard and more than once has had to deplore conversations made up of burlesque stories like those of the Athenians of old, who were never done telling about the dog of Alcibiades, because its master had let it run through the streets, deprived of its tail? Who has not also had to endure injudicious, idle stories or gossipings taken from very questionable sources, empty expressions of opinion, or at least

useless words, of which S. Bernard says that, in the mouth of a religious, they are a kind of blasphemy? More frequently the subjects of conversation are trivial and commonplace; they turn on the rain and the fine weather, or on topics scarcely befitting serious and educated men.

Religious should not be satisfied with this. Their speech should be about useful things and be characterized by good taste and good sense, treating of edifying things in such a way as to nourish the mind, such as literary or scientific narrations, historical events, or things concerning the community, the parish, the country. But, especially, let their conversations be an efficacious means of inclining them to what is good; let them be worthy of religious whose great pre-occupation is to perfect themselves in the practice of the virtues of their state, and who as educators wish to become efficient in forming men for society, and Saints for heaven. Such are the conversations we should hold, always showing ourselves charitable and edifying in them, being habitually interesting and cheerful. Then they will produce their effect. Every one will be pleased and honoured by them : God, our Brothers, and ourselves.

The behaviour we should observe in the Recreations. — Here is what our Rules prescribe on this subject : « No Brother shall ever indulge in mimicry or raillery with regard to any one. » — « No Brother shall contradict or disapprove of what the others say. » This role the Director only, should fulfil when it has to be done. — In recreation, the Rule continues, « The Brothers shall avoid being disagreeable or troublesome to the others by a gloomy and unsociable exterior, or by not speaking at all. » (*Com. Rule, VI*).

It is proper, very dear Brothers, that each one should take part in the conversation. When the topics recall some event calculated to edify or recreate, something instructive or

agreeable, it should be told. By putting into our conversations a tone of truthfulness and simplicity, which become religious men, we will edify the community, and make ourselves useful and agreeable to them. Besides, the advantage of speaking publicly is a very profitable exercise of formation. Then, each one should show himself of good humour, neither obstinate in his ideas, nor displeased if he does not succeed in making them prevail, being rather disposed to give way for the sake of peace, when there is no question of doctrine to which one must hold steadfastly, but merely of ordinary topics, opinions of small account, tastes and fancies, not worth discussing.

We should not, therefore, be of those who always want to be right, who persist in speaking and asserting an opinion simply because it is they who have advanced it; nor of those who imagine they belittle themselves by giving way to their neighbour. Nothing is more unwise, nothing more unjustifiable than such a mental attitude. The more so, as there is a way of keeping one's opinion without failing in the consideration and respect due to our Brothers; it suffices to make use of some expression required by religious politeness and charity; one of the following, for example : « It seems to me, my dear Brother, that your story is somewhat exaggerated. — No doubt, the facts were not related exactly to you. — I always thought it should be looked upon differently, but perhaps I am wrong, etc..... »

It is civility and good breeding that suggest these polite formulas. They are much more pleasing and acceptable than those taciturn manners and condemning moods, which are the fruit of ignorance and want of education. — We say : of ignorance, for no one is more absolute in his assertions, more intransigent in his opinions, than he who knows but little, not having reflected on the subject or else having looked at it from only one point of view. — We say also : of want of education; because this necessarily begets want of respect, ill-considered

language, hurtful words, trivialities, — the result of unrestrained and indelicate manners, which a well brought-up person will always avoid.

Courteous and refined teachers, such as religious teachers should be, ought never to forget that they are strictly bound, even more than others, to the perfect observance of social proprieties; professional carefulness should appear in all their words, and actions, notably in the conversations which they have with their Brothers in recreation time. Let them therefore speak of good things — as St. John Baptist de La Salle requires — and do so in an amiable and gentlemanly manner, avoiding talkativeness which makes one troublesome, as well as taciturnity which renders one disagreeable, taking everything in good part and not allowing anything to appear in their temper which would indicate a sulky or pouting disposition.

We have just mentioned sulkiness, and intentionally so, because it is a defect proper to children. But men, and sometimes even religious, are afflicted with it, which is at once sad and ridiculous. Sulky people are to be pitied, poor people who, thinking themselves offended, take refuge in themselves and, barricading themselves, resolve not to do anything nor to say anything courteous as long as honourable amends have not been made to their wounded susceptibility.

Sulkiness is a pitiable disposition which does not in any way tend to improve matters, or to bring about the reign of happiness in a community.

It is peculiar to childish minds, small hearts, and weak characters, who are indeed badly out of place in the religious life, where thoughts, sentiments, and actions should always be noble and generous.

Here, very dear Brothers, we shall close our reflections on the Exterior Supports of the Institute. We have said enough about them to remind you of their value and to make you

appreciate their advantages, and to engage you to give them the role our holy Rules have assigned to them.

May we always perform with care and in a true spirit of humility these essential exercises! In this way they will produce all the good effects which St. John Baptist de La Salle expected of them for his Institute.

In this hope and in sentiments of religious affection, and renewing the expressions of our most fervent good wishes, we are, in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Very dear Brothers,

Your very humble and devoted servant,

BROTHER ALLAIS-CHARLES.

