

# 56. SAINTS

## Summary:

1. Some points with regard to Saints in 17th century France. – 2. The Saints in the writings of De La Salle. – 3. The teaching of De La Salle on the Saints. – 4. The Saint according to the vision of de La Salle. – 5. The Saints and the Brother. – 6. The Brother and the Saints.

## 1. SOME POINTS WITH REGARD TO THE SAINTS IN 17<sup>th</sup> CENTURY FRANCE

1.1 In 17th century France “the official recognition of sanctity was influenced by the decisions of the Council of Trent and, particularly, by the decree on the invocation and veneration of the saints and on the veneration of relics and holy images of the saints” (Session XXV).<sup>1</sup>

1.2. Following this Council, the Church wished for a time “to demonstrate its vitality and capacity to renew itself, and to propose to Christians and the clergy more appropriate models adapted to changing circumstances”.<sup>2</sup>

1.3. What leading spiritual reformers of the time were proposing by way of encouraging devotion to the saints can be seen from the “particular examen” proposed by Tronson to his seminarists for the feast of All Saints. Reflection on the lives of the saints should lead to detachment from created things and to a desire for the things of heaven; imitation of the virtues of the saints; the combatting of one’s defects and passions and to the courageous overcoming of the obstacles to one’s perfection; a sense of humiliation in the face of one’s tepidity and negligence in the service of God; confidence that God will grant the graces necessary to imitate the saints and to be able to share their happiness one day.<sup>3</sup>

1.4. In the 17th century there were 24 canonizations, one beatification and 24 proclamations of veneration. The process accelerated in the last third of the century in which there were 12 canonizations and 18 proclamations of veneration.<sup>4</sup>

1.5. Numerically, the countries which had most canonizations, beatifications and proclamations of veneration were Italy (22) and Spain (17). France had two.

1.6. Those figures proposed to the faithful for veneration and imitation in the 17th century were the great saints of the Catholic reformation, pastors who promoted the renewal of the Church such as Francis de Sales and Charles Borromeo; founders and renovators of religious orders at “the cutting edge” of the Catholic reformation such as Ignatius of Loyola, Philip Neri, Teresa of Avila, Peter of Alcantara; great religious such as Francis Borgia and zealous missionaries such as Francis Xavier; contemplatives and those devoted to prayer such as Magdalen of Pazzi; those devoted to the Eucharist such as Pascual Baylon; those faithful to the Church such as Francis Romana; governors and princes/princesses such as Isabel of Portugal; simple people such as Isidore, the peasant; a martyr, Peter Pascual, bishop of Jaen.<sup>5</sup>

1.7. Devotion to saints of an earlier age was still common in rural parishes whereas in newer

parishes this had been superseded by devotion in confraternities and Marian congregations. Moreover, religious families, including those recently reformed or instituted, honoured their patrons or the illustrious figures of their order<sup>6</sup> and propagated their devotion among the faithful. Biographies of local saints were not so numerous but there was sufficient to indicate a veneration of the saints at all levels and in all places.<sup>7</sup>

1.8. There was much writing and hagiography proposing saints for each day of the liturgical year<sup>8</sup> and this was a rich vein of the religious literature of the French Golden Age.<sup>9</sup>

1.9. The critical perspective in this hagiography is very superficial since the historical element was not a determining factor. "In the hagiography of the 17th century, piety was not in any way concerned with the historical. The life of a saintly person was of interest because it presented an "exemplum", the incarnation of certain aspects of sanctity; the faithful were to follow these living lessons and to copy the model. These edifying lives pertained more to spirituality than to biography; their value is religious".<sup>10</sup>

1.10. One of the characteristics of the so-called "French School of Spirituality" was the presentation of Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Word. In consequence, among the preferred saints of this time are those who were regarded as closest to Jesus such as St. Joseph, St. Mary Magdalene, St. John and the Apostles.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. THE SAINTS IN DE LA SALLE

2.1. De La Salle makes many references to the saints in Da, Db and Dc. In Da and Db it is with reference to explaining the commandment of God and in speaking of prayer while in Dc it is in developing "the feasts instituted in honor of the saints". In the same way he frequently refers to them in GA and in I while in R, although there are less references, they are very significant from the point of view of the characteristics proposed to the Brothers for imitation. While the theme of the saints is less frequent in EM, he nevertheless not only speaks of

them there but also indicates how one ought to speak of them. In his other works — CE, E, L, MD, MR, PA, RB, RC — there are few references to the theme. MF is the text which is almost completely devoted to this theme of the saints.

2.2. The meditations in MF number 108\* of which 105 are of interest to us in this study since numbers 90, 91 and 92 refer not to saints but to the examination of conscience at the end of the year. Of these 105, 7 are dedicated to Jesus Christ (85, 86, 93, 96, 121, 152, 165) while have the theme of the Blessed Virgin (82, 104, 112, 141, 151, 156, 163, 164, 191).\*\*

Besides meditations on Mary, De La Salle also dedicates a meditation to each of the people directly associated with Jesus; his grandparents (Joachim and Anna), his precursor (John the Baptist), his father (Joseph), his friends (Martha, Mary Magdalen), the Holy Innocents and the Apostles. Paul, "specially named apostle" (Dc 242), is also found among these as is Mathias who "was considered as one of the apostles even though he did not belong to the original 12" (Dc 269). Along with the meditations on the apostles and on the Evangelists, De La Salle also dedicates a large number of meditations to bishops, doctors, founders or reformers of religious orders, martyrs and priests: many belong to more than one category as in the case of St Teresa — virgin, reformer and doctor at the same time — or St. Basil — bishop, doctor and founder. Among those considered by De La Salle there are, naturally, a good number of French saints, although not as many as one might imagine. With regard to gender, De La Salle devotes 79 meditations to men (including Jesus Christ) and 20 to women (including the Blessed Virgin) of which the majority are virgins. Three

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\* There were 114 meditations in earlier Institute editions of MF but 6 of these — 83, 94, 103, 181, 184, 188 — cannot be attributed to De La Salle.

\*\* In this work there are specific studies on Jesus Christ and on his Blessed Mother. In consequence, meditations with reference to these two themes, along with the other Lasallian teaching on the Saviour and on his Mother, will not be considered in this present article. This reduces the number of meditations under consideration to 89.

other meditations are devoted to the Holy Innocents, the Souls in purgatory and to All the Saints while another three are dedicated to the angels (St. Michael and the Guardian Angels). In the case of St. Michael, as with other Saints such as Peter, Paul, Augustine, John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, the Founder dedicates more than one meditation.

2.3. Why does De La Salle choose particular Saints for the consideration of the brothers?

A. Firstly, out of fidelity to the Church. "What are the principal feasts that the Church has instituted in honor of the Saints?" They are the feasts of: All Saints, the Faithful Departed, St. Michael, the Guardian Angels, St. John the Baptist, the Apostles and the Evangelist, St. Joseph, St. Stephen, St. Lawrence, St. Martin, St. Nicholas, the Saints who are patrons of the Diocese and of the Parish, the dedication of the Churches (Dc 213; RC 10,10 and 30,6.9).

B. He recommended others because they were patrons of the Institute or of pupils as in the cases, for example, of St. Joseph and St. Cassian (R 62,10; MF 110,1; RC 10,8; 30,9; 30,21,13).

C. Others were recommended by the Founder because they were distinguished by a particular characteristic which he wanted to recommend to the Brothers such as, for example, the spirit of faith and of mortification; zeal for the salvation of one's neighbor (R 62,10); a horror of the world and the need to withdraw from it; recollection or retreat; prayer; detachment from everything (R 63,7). Hence his choice of St. John the Baptist, St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John the Evangelist, St. Ignatius (Martyr), St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, St. Vincent Ferrer,\* St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis de Sales, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Francis Xavier, St. Philip Neri, St. Teresa.

D. In EM De La Salle suggests a personal motive for the choice of saints. In mental prayer one must invoke those saints for whom one "has a particular devotion" (EM 61; 87). He also indicates a more objective reason when he suggests that one must invoke the help of those saints who were present or had contributed in some way to the "mystery" (EM 88) or who were particularly outstanding in the practice of the "virtue" (EM

107) or the "maxim" (EM 121) on which one's meditation is based.

E. Obviously, one must also include the person of the Blessed Virgin; "...We only manifest our devotion to the Saints on certain days or at certain times of the year but the devotion we have for the Most Blessed Virgin must be continuous..." (MF 151,3). In meditating on the "mysteries" it is the Most Blessed Virgin who "preferably must always be invoked" (EM 88). Additionally, besides devotion to the Mother of God, one must also have "a particular devotion to one's own patron saint and to those saints whom one has an obligation to specially venerate as well as to those saints who are proposed as protectors for each month" (R 198,20).

2.4. In analyzing the list of feasts for which De La Salle has a meditation, one notices among them some which were celebrated in the France of the 17th century but which were not included in the Roman calendar – eg. St. Genevieve, the conversion of St. Augustine, St. Sulpice, St. Germanus — and others which no longer figure in the actual liturgical calendar — eg. the Invention of the Holy Cross, the name of Mary, the Apparition of St. Michael, St. Peter "ad vincula", the martyrdom of St. John the Evangelist, St. Peter of Verona, St. Alexis, St. Cassian, St. Marcellinus (Bishop of Paris) and St. Catherine (virgin and Martyr). The exclusion from the liturgical calendar of various of these feasts is prompted by a lack of historicity in the accounts on which the feast was based. In this, as in other aspects, De La Salle was consistent with the thinking and the knowledge of his time. In particular, he was dependent on the sources on which he drew.\* Thus, for example, he attributed St. Romuald (MF 105,2) with the age of 120 years and draws theological and ascetical conclusions from it when this fact was probably the result of

\* Although the Founder did not actually devote a meditation to this saint.

\* As Brother Jean-Guy RODRIGUE (op. cit. p. 538) has demonstrated these sources were: "the *Martyrology of France*", PARIS; "Les Fleurs de la vie des saints", de RIBADENEIRA, p., and the "Roman Breviary".

an error by a copyist which was transmitted from one biography to another over many years.<sup>12</sup>

In De La Salle's time there were doubts over the identity of some of the saints honored in the liturgy, and over some of the actions attributed to them, but the official Church had not pronounced on such cases. Consequently, De La Salle, renowned for his fidelity to the Church followed common practice until the Church spoke.<sup>13</sup> Hence, in this way he could describe the third century bishop of Paris, St. Denis, as the "Aeropagite", the same person whom St. Paul had converted to the "Unknown God", in spite of the fact that this version had begun to be challenged. In the same way he could comment on and transmit with ease historical traditions such as those of St. Alexis.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. DE LA SALLE'S TEACHING ON THE SAINTS

3.1. De La Salle's teaching on the saints is consistent with the teaching of the catechisms of his time exemplified by that of Trent.

3.2. In accordance with that teaching:

— In general terms, the saints were all the faithful in the state of grace — including those in Purgatory and those in heaven (Db 65).

— In the more restricted sense, and in the sense in which De La Salle practically always used the term, the saints were members of the "Church militant" who were proposed as examples for, among other things, their union with God (MD 67.1), their austerities (MF 113,3), their work for the salvation of souls and their detachment from created things (MF 179,1). They are now part of the "Church triumphant", that gathering of those in heaven (I 84; Da 64), united with God (MF 183,1), fulfilling the will (Db 281; GA 424) of Him in whom they are eternally happy (Da 456).

— There is a relationship between the saints and ourselves through which we form a single Church (I 84).

— They are concerned for our sanctification (I 84) and their one desire is that we join them (I 177). They ask pardon for us (Da 341). We separate ourselves from them by our sins (Da 323) but their merits can be applied to us (Da 342) and they are happy when we are moved to penitence (Da 215).

— We may honor them as creatures but not adore them (Da 107; GA 357).

— Honoring them does not cause dishonor to God.

The honor that we give to them is less than that which we pay to the Lord (Da 421; GA 357) and, in fact, through the saints we are actually honoring God (Da 107; De 125; 215).

— We may also honor their relics (Da 109; GA 357) as well as possessing and venerating their images (Da 109; GA 358), not for the images in themselves but for the saints which they represent (Da 109; GA 358), placing candles and lamps before such images (Dc 29), offering incense to the saints represented by the images (Dc 48; 50), making vows in their honor but not to them (Db 88).

— We can direct our prayers to them (Da 451; GA 427) but not in the same way as to God (Db 290-291). We pray to them that they may intercede for us as our representatives or mediators (Da 109; 461; 463; Db 291; GA 421; 184) having confidence in their relationship with God as his friends and faithful servants (Da 108; 461; Db 291; Dc 215; GA 427). By themselves they can grant us nothing nor can they respond to our prayers (Da 109; 461; Db 291). The power and the merit of their prayers is Jesus Christ, the sole mediator (Da 463; Db 291).

— It is not obligatory to invoke the saints (Da 464; Db 292) but it is extremely useful and very traditional in the Church (Da 109; 461; 464; Db 292; EM 87-88).

— If it is necessary to invoke all the saints it is all the more necessary to frequently and specifically invoke the Most Blessed Virgin (Da 108; 464; 468; Db 292; Dc 159-212; GA 427-430).

3.3. Some of the doctrinal emphasis of the time which De La Salle assimilated can be better understood if it is seen from the perspective of the Church's concern to respond to Protestant attacks on devotion to the saints. Hence, for example, the emphasis that honoring the saints does not dishonor God and that devotion to the saints is very useful for the faithful. Such Catholic truths can be found in practically all the catechisms of the time — eg. Trent (414; 416; 417; 418); Fleury (345); Chartres (51; 70; 111); Clermont (265); Troyes (85; 101); Cesar de Bus (II 71+).<sup>15</sup>

### 4. DE LA SALLE'S VISION OF THE SAINT

De La Salle always has a particular insight when, in the meditations on the saints, he focuses on a characteristic of the saint whom he is considering. These characteristics, summarized in the context of a faith-journey, could be outlined as follows;

4.1. Some have been “favored by the grace of God” with a Christian education from an early age. Others have been converted later in life. However, without exception, they have separated themselves from the world, many in a physical sense and all from its spirit, and have given themselves radically to God.

4.2. This self-giving entails an ascetical attempt to detach oneself from created things and from the comforts of life. It entails poverty and detachment, an austere life of renunciation of the senses, penance, sacrifice, mortification, suffering, humiliation and interior purification of motives. Detaching oneself of everything “... has been the practice of all the great saints, who separated themselves from the world and worked for the good of souls” (R 179.18). Or again; “... All the saints made use of austerity to overcome passions and prevent the flesh from rebelling (MF 179,2).

4.3. The work of purification is accompanied by a particular way of life entailing recollection and piety, long and deep prayer, study which is centered on Sacred Scripture, and the cultivation of a faith-vision and of attitudes which are consistent with it.

4.4. The faith of the saints is expressed in creative zeal for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls, especially the poorest. It is expressed through the example of their life and in their pastoral work of announcing the Word of God, in the defense and support of the Church, in the struggle against sin and errors, in Christian education and catechesis, in the varying faith responses to the demands of life. Their life becomes a progressive liberation, their motivation more disinterested, their activities focused on the glory of God and the salvation of souls. In this way, purified and inspired with zeal, the saint becomes effective in his work for the Kingdom of God; thus, for example,

“When a man called to work for the salvation of souls has succeeded in filling himself with the thought of God and of his spirit he can accomplish all that he undertakes. Nothing can resist him, not even God...” (MF 171,3).

Or again;

“... Apostolic men who have worked effectively for the salvation of souls have taken care to have no attachment to created things” (MF 179,1).

Or again;

“It was in this way (through mortification) that the saints who worked successfully for the salvation of souls prepared themselves to be effective in their ministry” (MF 79,1).

4.5. However, “one cannot work for the destruction of evil without drawing on oneself the enmity of those who practice it” (MF 120,2). “...The ungodly and the libertine cannot abide their waywardness being challenged...” (MF 132,3). “The world can only love those who love it and follow its ways...” (MF 182,2). In consequence, “... those who uphold the Gospel and religion are persecuted...” (MF 100,3). “... Insults, affronts, calumnies, persecution and even death, such was the reward given to the saints and to apostolic men, and also given to Jesus Christ” (MF 155,3).

4.6. Yet God rewards those who love him (MF 144,3) even in this life repaying a hundred-fold what they have done for Him (MF 118,3). Thus, they can bear anything knowing that they “owned something that was better and lasting” (Hep 10,34) not wishing “to save themselves here so that they would rise again to better life (Heb 11,35)...” (MF 183,2).

Thus, the characteristic most consistently considered by De La Salle in the saints were: “fuga mundi”, recollection, spiritual and material detachment, mortification, prayer, faith and zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. It is not a fortuitous coincidence but rather an expression of the consistency on De La Salle’s teaching that the same characteristics which he focuses on in his analysis of the lives of the saints are those that the Brothers had to take as topics of conversation during their recreation (cf. 2.3.c).

## 5. THE SAINTS AND THE BROTHER

De La Salle traces a relationship between the saints and the Brothers indicating *similarities*, *contrasts*, and *continuity* between the lives of both.

### 5.1 Similarities

The same thing that happened to St. Augustine can also occur in the life of the Brothers — strengthened by grace he was moved to overcome himself and to practice extraordinary virtue yet found it difficult to remain faithful, coming at times even to resist grace (MF 123,1). Similarly, God confers on the Brothers the same honour as he conferred on St. Joachim: to be the spiritual fathers of their disciples (MF 157,1) while their employment is similar to that of St. Joseph as well as being as holy as his — to be charged with the care of children as he was with Jesus (MF 110,1,3). As with the Apostles, the Brothers are called to make God known (MF 78,2) and in their ministry they exercise one of the essential apostolic functions which is the education in faith and religion (MF 102,1) and which they exercise through catechesis and through instruction in Gospel maxims (MF 159,2; cf. R 179,21). As in the case of Luke, the Brothers also can be a friend of Paul if they frequently read his letters extracting, studying, meditating and practicing the principle maxims contained in them (MF 116,1). The goal of the Brother is the same as that proposed by St. Germanus — ie. to instruct so as to convert (MF 131,3). It is similar to that of St. Ignatius and his followers which was to save souls as well as to educate children in piety (MF 148,3). In the same way as the followers of St. Norbert, the objective of the Brothers is to transmit the Gospel to the poor (MF 132,2) while the martyrdom which the Brother has to endure in their spirit is as violent as that endured by St. Bartholomew in his body (MF 159,3).

In these ways the life of the Brother is similar to that of the saints and, at times, he even has advantages over them. Thus, for example, if Martha had the honor of waiting on Jesus, the Brother has an even greater privilege of which he can partake whenever he wishes — to receive Jesus in the eucharist (MF 147,1).

### 5.2 Contrasts.

The Brothers are not born free of sin, as in the case of John the Baptist, but they must at least live removed from it after their “spiritual birth” and their consecration to God (MF 162,1). Neither are

they precursors of Jesus as was this prophet of the desert but they are his successors in the ministry (MF 138,3). The disciples of De La Salle do not fight against the heretics as did St. Augustine, nor do they convert infidels like St. Gregory the Great, but they fight the evil inclinations of their pupils and teach them the mysteries of the faith and the Christian spirit which is work that is in no way inferior to that of the conversion of infidels (MF 161,2; 109,3).

### 5.3. Continuity

Today St. Luke can continue being an apostle of Jesus and a preacher of his Gospel to the extent that the Brothers read his writings (MF 178,3). In a similar way, again today, the chains of St. Peter must be the source of miracles in the life of the Brothers, the greatest of which should be communicating to them the love of suffering and of insults (MF 149,3). Today, too, the Brothers also continue responding to decisions made by the saints in a previous era. Thus, for example, St. Leo the Great forbade religious to involve themselves in worldly affairs, a prohibition to which the Brothers more than anybody are attracted (MF 149,3). Similarly, while the Apostles have accomplished their mission, as has St. Cassian, the Brothers continue this mission today through their employment and especially through catechesis (MF 145,3;155,2).

According to De La Salle, the Brothers had to view the saints as *teachers*, inspirational *models*, *prophets*, *animators* and *intercessors*.

**Teachers:** primarily for their written teaching such as that left to them by St. James which enables them to sanctify themselves and to form their pupils in the Christian spirit (MF 119,2; cf. Da 187). Secondly, through the example of their lives. Thus, for example, St. Joachim, in giving his daughter to God and giving most of his goods to the Temple for the poor and to help pilgrims, teaches the Brothers to detach themselves from creatures and to ensure that their disciples are prepared to meet their Lord. St. Monica, in her patience with her husband, teaches them that when they have to deal with people who by nature

are difficult they need to possess much patience and docility. They also need to ask God for the grace to bear with such people and also to make such people more affable (MF 122,2). Finally, St. Margaret (Queen), in her consideration for the poor, teaches the Brothers how they should look on the poor (MF 133,3).

**Inspirational models:** at times it may be difficult to imitate Jesus, as when, for example, he pardoned his enemies. However, there is no excuse in not imitating the Saints, such as St. Stephen and St. James the Just, since they like us were his servants (Da 455-456). They teach us that we should be in continual prayer (MF 167,1; 95,1) wherever we are (Da 434) and that we should be chaste, practicing heroic acts in order to preserve it, and like the saints, fleeing from the demon of impurity at the first attack (MF 129,1). Like St. Peter of Alcantara, the Brother can approach God through prayer, recollection and mortification (MF 127,1). The reading of the lives of the saints can also be a means of overcoming vices such as laziness (Da 180) while a consideration of the humility of the saints may serve as a remedy for pride (Da 170). Moreover, the Brother can also find inspiration for his educational work in the teaching and practice of the saints; "... Experience based on the constant teaching of the saints, and on the example which they have given us, is sufficient evidence to indicate that to lead those confided to our care to perfection, it is necessary to be both firm and gentle with them at the same time" (CE 140).

**Prophets:** in his meditations De La Salle considered some aspect of the life of the saint and then made a reflection on it in a way that confronted the life of the Brother. He transformed the contemplation and the reflection through pertinent questioning; thus, for example, "...Will we complain about living a poor life when so many great saints have practiced such extremes of austerity?" (MF 113,3). Or again, "... Are we as faithful as St. Anthony to the first inspirations which come to us from God?" (MF 97,1) or "... Do you endeavour to have such affection and kindness for the children whom you instruct as St. Barnabas showed for those whose conversion and salvation he was concerned?..." (MF 134,2).

**Animators:** As inspirational models, the saints not only demonstrate what should be done in the spiritual and apostolic life, and how one should do it, but through their example they encourage us to do it effectively. In speaking of the "martyrdom" of St. John the Evangelist (MF 124,2), De La Salle recalls the affirmation of St. Cyprian that "the feasts of the martyrs are so many invitations to martyrdom" and immediately applies it to the feast of the day; in celebrating the martyrdom of St. John, "... in imitation of him, let us be disposed to suffer with joy and for the love of God..." (MF 124,2). Similarly, the example of the constancy of St. Lawrence should serve as a stimulus for the Brother to develop a love of sufferings (MF 145,3) while the example of the saints in general should encourage them to undergo the long and arduous bloodless martyrdom which is involved in mortification (MF 89,2). The austerities which we read about in their lives should stimulate us to imitate them, according to the spirit of the Institute. In the same way, the very presence and veneration of the images of the saints is useful because they, too, encourage us to imitate the saints (Db 84; GA 358).

**Intercessors:** the saints can greatly help us (Da 109) and obtain abundant graces for us through the merits of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. They want to be intercessors for us before God (Da 461) and, in fact, help us with their prayers from heaven (Da 65) since God listens to them because their prayers are always pleasing to him (EM 87-88). One of the reasons why we should venerate the images of the saints is because they encourage us to imitate them (Da 110).

What we should seek from each saint should be their "speciality". Thus, for example, from St. Philip Neri, ardent in the salvation of souls, one should seek zeal (MF 119,3); from St. Paulinus, detached from created things, one should seek interior renunciation of the world and of all that men seek in it (MF 137,3); from St. Peter, who left all in faith, one should seek to abandon oneself into the hands of Providence (MF 139,1); from St. Cajetan, abandoned into these divine hands, one should seek the spirit of disinterestedness (MF 153,3); from St. James, so highly qualified in matters pertaining to religion, one should seek to deeply possess the truths of religion (MF 145,2); from

St. Lawrence, who desired martyrdom, one should seek the desire to suffer (MF 154,2,3); from St. Michael, the defender of the Church, one should seek protection for “this Church of Jesus Christ which is our Community” (MF 169,3).

## 6. THE BROTHERS AND THE SAINTS

6.1. “Why does the Church institute the feasts of the saints? It was (a) to thank God for the graces which he granted to them; (b) to honor them; (c) to invoke them” (GA 372; Da 154; Db 115).

De La Salle presents “the principal feasts instituted by the Church” in Dc (213-301) and almost invariably finishes each “instruction” with a response to the question “What must we do to honor the saint and to celebrate the feast properly?”. The responses which are most repeated are practically the same as those in GA – i.e. to thank God, to honor the saints (besides esteeming and respecting them) and to imitate and invoke them.

**A. To thank God:** for “the graces which he granted to them” (Da 154; Db 115; GA 372). Among these graces are: faith, liberation from enemies, love of Jesus, spiritual lights, the call to ministry, zeal, the Holy Spirit (MF 149,2; Dc 213-301). God is also to be thanked for the graces which we receive through the saints; for example, their inspirational and enlightening example, faith for preaching (Dc 213-301). Parallel and complementary attitudes to thanksgiving are *adoration* of the power of God which is manifested in the lives of the saints (MF 149,1) as well as *admiration* for the Lord who is “admirable in his saints” and who honors them with his favors (MF 146,2; 157,1). His goodness to us is expressed in the protection which he grants us through the saints (angels) (MF 127,1).

**B. To Honor the Saints:** De La Salle insists on this in various passages of MF (MF 138,1; 145,2; 149,3; 169,2). In Da (154) he succinctly explains what is to be honored in them — the glory which they enjoy and the virtues which they practised. The one condition associated with this is that it must be *in God* because it is in Him that the Brother finds everything (MF 183,1). He also indi-

cated the manner in which we are to honor them; one should *listen to them* and to what they teach us. Furthermore, we should also do it by *acknowledging them, praying to them, invoking them, thanking them* and *imitating them*.

“We *acknowledge them* by giving them some sign of respect and veneration”.

“We *pray to them*, asking some grace from God through their intercession” — in summary form this is expressed in Da (154) as: to share in their glory or to possess the virtues which they practiced.

“We *invoke them* when we implore their help in our sorrows and temptations”.

“We *thank them* when we express our gratitude for some grace or favor which we have obtained”. Thus, for example, “... to give thanks for the help of their prayers and for the material and spiritual benefits which we have received from God through their merits...” (Da 154).

“We *imitate them* (Da 108-109) following the example “which they gave us throughout their lives” (cf. Da 187); “... like them, devoting ourselves with great care to our sanctification...” (MF 123,3; 132,3; 182,2; 182,3); practicing the virtues which they practiced (MF 179,2; 155,2; 150,1); doing what they did (MF 142,1; 147,2; 162,2); having the same aspirations, values, attitudes, convictions, desires and joys as they had (MF 173,3; 78,2; 107,3) 131,3; 140,3; 154,2; 166,3; 183,2). Honouring the saints through imitating them is what most pleases them and what is most beneficial for us (Da 109).

With regard to this *imitation of the saints*:

**A.** As ever, De La Salle is both realistic and demanding; thus, for example, the Brother does not need the eloquence of St. Ambrose in his work with children but he does have to participate in his apostolic zeal (MF 81,2). Similarly, while the Brother is not called on to practice the austerities of the saints, he must at least mortify his senses and his mind (MF 79,1). In the same way, if St. Peter of Alcantara cannot be a model for the Brother in all that he practiced by way of mortification of the body, he can at least be imitated in his recollection (MF 179,2).

**B.** This is due to the fact that the spiritual life of the Brother has its distinctive character. His mortification has to be in accordance with that stipulated in the Institute (MF 153,1) as well as being in keeping with its spirit (MF 113,3) and appropriate to his state (MF 80,1). The Brother works in the Church according to the specific gift which he has received (MF 170,3) and his journey towards God must be along the path marked out for him in his Rule (MF 125,1).

6.2. Not only does the Brother thus have a rela-

tionship with the saints but he also introduces his disciples to this relationship. Thus, in Baptism the child received the name of a saint "whom he can imitate and whose protection he can implore" (Da 229) and the Brother teaches the child to invoke this protection. Hence, for example, in the morning and evening prayer he prays the following prayer with the pupil: "... St. Joseph, ...(here the patron saint of the parish is included), St. Nicholas, my holy Patron, and all the saints who enjoy the happiness of God, through your prayers obtain for me the grace both to live a good life through imitating all of you as well as the grace to die well..." (E 12,35). On particular days they also recited the litanies of the Most Blessed Virgin and of St. Joseph as well as the Litany of the Saints (E 36; 41; 43).

6.3. In order to imitate the saints it is necessary to know them and to nourish this knowledge. The outline of the saints which De La Salle gives in his meditations (MF) can be seen from this perspective as can the inclusion of particular practices, such as the reading of a brief life of the saint during dinner (RC 27,20), or the inclusion of the lives of the saints and "the maxims and practices of which they made use" among the topics of conversation during recreation (R 62,10; 63,7).

<sup>1</sup> VARIOUS, "Dictionnaire de Spiritualité", Paris, Beauchesne, p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> ID., IBID.

<sup>3</sup> TRONSON, "Supplément aux Examens Particuliers", in "Oeuvres Complètes", Paris: MIGNE, J.P., 1857, col. 871-872.

<sup>4</sup> "Dictionnaire de Spiritualité", p. 224.

<sup>5</sup> ID. p. 223-224.

<sup>6</sup> LE BRUN, J., "Le grand siècle de la spiritualité française et ses lendemains", in "Histoire Spirituelle de la France", Paris, Beauchesne, 1964, p. 273.

<sup>7</sup> LE BRUN, J., *op. cit.*, p. 273.

<sup>8</sup> RODRIGUE, J-L., "Contribution à l'étude des sources des Méditations sur les principales fêtes de l'année". in CL 47, Rome, 1988, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> LE BRUN, J., *op. cit.*, p. 273.

<sup>10</sup> LE BRUN, J., *op. cit.*, p. 273.

<sup>11</sup> GAUTIER, J., "La spiritualité de l'école française du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle", in "La Spiritualité catholique", Paris, Le Rambeau, 1953, p. 254.

<sup>12</sup> RODRIGUE, J-G., *op. cit.*, p. 146, n° 1.

<sup>13</sup> RODRIGUE, J-G., *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>14</sup> RODRIGUE, J-G., *op. cit.*, p. 482; 37.

<sup>15</sup> "Le catéchisme du concile de Trente", Paris, Chez Etienne Savoy, 1736, 4a. ed.

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