

# 74. DIRECTOR

## Summary

### 1. Semantic context of the word “director”

1.1. “Director” and “superior” in Lasallian texts 1.2. “Superior” in the Trévoux dictionary. 1.3. In contemporary usage.

### 2. Justification and scope of the present article.

3. Great esteem of J. B. De La Salle for the position of Director, as reported by his biographers.

### 4. The Brother Director in the first legislative Lasallian texts

4.1. The “Rule of the Brother Director” 4.2. Two other old Lasallian texts 4.2.1. “Qualities which Brother Directors must have” 4.2.2. “Advice [...] to Brother Directors”.

### 5. The Brother Director in the “Common Rules” of 1718

5.1. Director-inferior relations 5.2. Specific obligations of the Brother Director.

### 6. Brother Directors in the letters of J. B. de La Salle.

### 7. “Director” and “superior” in Lasallian meditations.

8. Conclusion: The Institute “in the hands of the Brother Directors” (CL 8,145).

## 1. SEMANTIC CONTEXT OF THE WORD “DIRECTOR”

The word “director” belongs to the traditional language of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. If, on the other hand, we look at religious congregations as a whole, we find that its use is rare. “Director” is a term rarely used in religious life to describe the superior of a community, even though it is generally accepted as a term designating the person in charge of a group.

### 1.1. “Director” and “superior” in Lasallian texts

De La Salle uses the term “director” either to refer to the Brother who is in charge of a school, or to describe the same person in his role as head of a community of Brothers of the Christian Schools. In both cases, delegated authority is involved: it is exercised dependently on the Brother Superior of the Institute. “The name Director has been given to the Brother Director of each house of the Institute to make him realise that his chief concern must be to direct, under

the guidance and authority of the Brother Superior of the Institute, all that concerns his house and the schools which depend on it” (CL 25,154 = FD 1,2).

The *Lasallian Vocabulary* (Paris, 1984, vol. II) makes a distinction between “Director” — the superior of a local Brothers’ community — and “Brother Director”, who is either the head of the school (CL 25,158 = FD 1,36-37), or the superior of the local Brothers’ community<sup>1</sup> (cf. CL 8,145f).

As regards the term “superior”, apart from some exceptions,<sup>2</sup> it refers to either the Superior General of the Institute, always called “Brother Superior”, especially in legislative texts (RC & FD), or the superior of a local community, and then it is synonymous with director.

There should be no problem regarding these terms, since we have seen that the head of a school is never called a superior, and that the expressions “the superiors” or “your superiors” seem to include all those who

have authority over the Brothers in the context of their regular and community life (and not directly in that of the school).

It is clear from our examination of the *Lasallian Vocabulary* that the semantic context of "director" is very restricted. De La Salle seems to have wanted to distance himself from ecclesiastical and conventional vocabulary. "Director" and "superior" are not antithetical terms: they both refer to the same set of functions in the Brothers' community<sup>3</sup>. "Director" is a term that is more specifically Lasallian: it is a term that has been traditional throughout the history of the Institute.

### 1.2. "Superior" in the Trévoux dictionary

The Trévoux dictionary (1719) defines the adjective as follows: "He who is placed above others, who has the right to command them. [...] Society is so ordered that inferiors are submissive and obedient to their Superiors". It says of the noun: "Is used also to describe the person who has authority in a community [...] The abbot is called the superior of an abbey; the prior, of a convent. [...] Means also elevated, a person who has a rank, a prerogative, or some other advantage that puts him above others, such as rank, intelligence, power". The 1771 edition includes a quotation from Bourdaloue: "What is a Superior in a religious community? He is the guardian and protector of the rule, which, because of a special and specific duty, he must support, endorse, defend and avenge".

### 1.3. In contemporary usage

A recent theological dictionary of the consecrated life<sup>4</sup> recalls the etymology of the word "superior":

"A person in a human group who rises above the others, either by his innate qualities (natural superiority), or by his position (juridical, economic or political), which confers on him a certain prestige". In human societies, and by a process of antonomasia, the superior is "the one who occupies in them an eminent position serving as a principle of unity, order, authentication of membership, coordination of action, etc. [...] By derivation, in our context, the religious superior is the person in a community of consecrated Brothers who occupies a preeminent position of power and authority. [...] In civil society, and even more in religious society, when we use the term superior, we always have in mind his term of reference: the community. So much so, that where there is no community there is no appointed superior".<sup>5</sup>

If we replace "superior" by "director" in the last sentence, we return to the categories of Lasallian language. What we have is a group of terms, arranged in pairs, which are related:

- superior or director *and* community
- obedience *and* authority
- superior or director *and* will of God.

Of these terms, two can be synonymous, as explained earlier, i.e. superior and director.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. JUSTIFICATION AND SCOPE OF THE PRESENT ARTICLE

This article does not deal with the role of Brother Directors in the mission of the Institute. Instead, it concentrates on the internal functioning of the religious community, where the Brothers lead their lives under the authority of their community Brother Director.<sup>7</sup>

The separation here of the functions of the Brother Director of the school from those of the Brother Director of the community may seem surprising. For De La Salle these two responsibilities were inseparable, to the extent that there is absolutely nothing in his writings that even hints at the dissociation of these two functions which, in our days, not infrequently are exercised by two different persons. What has not

changed is that community and mission are still inseparably united. What is exterior nourishes what is interior; what is interior gives an identity to what is exterior. The community does not exist for its own sake, but for a purpose.

Our choice of subject is inspired by the importance De La Salle attached to the role of Brother Directors, as guarantors of the vitality and survival of his Institute, as Blain tells us in his biography: "The holy priest often said that the Institute was in the hands of the Brother Directors; that it was they who worked for its destruction or its establishment; that its regularity reflected their own; and that fervour in it would be maintained only by their fidelity to the rule and

their duties" (CL 8,145). This expression, the quintessence of his thinking and the fruit of his experience, is as relevant to the school as it is to the community.

Modern psycho-sociology sees in the well-regulated exercise of authority-power — here, of the Brother Director — a major factor in bringing about social change — or in our case, the conversion of the community. Modifying group attitudes or bringing about institutional changes calls for a new way of exercising authority in the situation one wants to change.<sup>8</sup>

This secular language fits in well with our subject. The Brother Director — authority-power — is the point of reference for the development of the community. He is the guarantor of all renewal in a community.

Our study of De La Salle's thinking on the Brother Director, based on historical documents, is valuable only as a preliminary step, because, as Brothers living today, we must embody the dynamism we have received from the Founder. Today, as in every period of its history, the Brothers' Institute must rethink what it understands by community.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. THE GREAT ESTEEM OF J. B. DE LA SALLE FOR THE POSITION OF DIRECTOR, AS REPORTED BY HIS BIOGRAPHERS

"In its basic thinking, the teaching of De La Salle betrays his experience".<sup>10</sup> This is why, before analysing his writings, it is worth glancing at his biography.

De La Salle was beyond question the leader of the group of Brothers he had founded. This probably led him to attach importance to the role of Brother Directors. His biographers speak of the difficulties he had in establishing himself as leader, and of the qualities that enabled him to succeed.

According to Maillefer, he was "sensitive and accessible". He paid heed to the needs of his neighbour (CL 6,35). His "sense of observation" and of responsibility gradually brought him closer to the persons whom initially he considered "inferior to his valet" (CL 7,169). He invited them "to eat at his own table" despite the difference in social rank, and then he left his home to live with them in a more modest house. The wearing of an identical habit strengthened the **group-identity** of the Brothers. The union in which the Brothers lived was matched by the personal **detachment** of the Founder who several times resigned as superior or was removed from this position by order of the bishop. Except when his life was drawing to an end, **the Brothers insisted that he be responsible** for the government of the community, and refused all attempts to impose an outsider as superior. The letter of April 1st 1714 shows that the Brothers recognised that God gave him "the grace and qualities necessary to govern this new company" well and acknowledged that he had "always directed it with much success and edification". That is why, they write,

it is of the utmost importance that he take up again "the care and overall direction of the Society". This recognition by the Brothers of the qualities of their "very dear father" as a superior was the fruit of years of community life (CL 6,227).

J. B. Blain provides us with plenty of practical details regarding the role of directors. When he speaks of the *Rule of the Brother Director* (CL 8,145f), he picks out in particular the obligations indicated in it:

- "Watch over the Brothers who are his inferiors,
- preside over the exercises,<sup>11</sup>
- take care of internal and external business,
- render an account of everything to the Brother Superior whose vicar he is in a way".

"What is good and what is bad in the Institute depends on their good or bad conduct. They are second in command, and each has a part of the flock to lead. [...] After studying for a long time the causes of the decline of the monasteries, M. de La Salle believed the fault lay with the Superiors" and their negligence or compromises. In the same way, the regularity of the Brother Director is the guarantee of the fervour of his community.

Around 1700, the Founder composed a rule for the Brother Directors. They were supposed to use it for their spiritual reading twice a week, and have it read once a month in the refectory. According to Blain, De La Salle came up against resistance from a number of Directors on this last point (CL 8,146). This gives us an insight into their mentality.

Inferiors, knowing the obligations of their Director, could find in them a source of edification and be

stimulated to vie with him in the observance of their own; words were translated into action. As a witness and, at the same time, a judge of his Director, the inferior rendered him the same service that the Director owed him. The public reading of this rule could serve as an endorsement of the Brother Director's conduct or as a public demonstration of his shortcomings. There were some proud Brother Directors who could not cope with this public judgment, while others, who were humble and obedient, were happy to accept the authority of this text and, following its directives, preached by example. If the Brother Director's posi-

tion in the community was that of an elder brother in a family, then it was his duty to offer his younger Brothers the example of his obedience to his father. If a Brother Director considered these obligations humiliating, then he was not sufficiently humble and obedient. It was a proof that he did not fulfil them, for the public reading of the text was a source of praise for those who did so.

To overcome this resistance, De La Salle asked the Brother Directors to draw up their own rule, in this way, making them their own lawgivers (CL 8,147).

## 4. THE BROTHER DIRECTOR IN THE FIRST LEGISLATIVE LASALLIAN TEXTS <sup>12</sup>

### 4.1. The "Rule of the Brother Director"

We do not have a copy of this text, and we know of its existence only through Blain. However, following the chapter of 1717, the newly elected Superior General, Brother Barthélemy, sent to each community a manuscript copy of a legislative text entitled: *Rule of the Brother Director of a house of the Institute* <sup>13</sup> (CL 25,154f = FD).

This document, which goes back to the time of the Founder, took the form of a list of obligations to be followed by the Director, maintaining him under the strict control of the Superior of the Institute. The Director is required to show hardly any creativity. The modern reader is given the impression that the Brother Directors of the beginning of the 18th century had very little experience when they took up their position. They needed clear and precise guidelines whose implementation called only for strict obedience.

This relatively short *Rule* (79 articles) opens with a triple declaration of principle:

- The Brother Director of a house is not called "Superior" but "Director".
- His function is "to direct, under the guidance and authority of the Brother Superior of the Institute, all that concerns his house and the schools which depend on it, and to direct interiorly the Brothers who are in his charge, and make them advance in virtue [...] by directing their conscience".
- He must be "dependent on the Brother Superior of

the Institute, not doing anything [...] except through submission to him".

The text goes on to describe in detail the behaviour the Brother Director must adopt, recalling several times the importance of dependence on the Superior General, and the fact that he must be informed more or less about everything. The Director must not give any orders independently. If he has advisers, they are appointed by the Superior. He cannot give any special permissions. Once a month, he gives an account of the permissions he has given. He does not introduce any practice into the house without the written order of the Superior (CL 25,154 = FD 1,3-6).

He reports periodically to the Brother Superior regarding the schools and the conduct of each Brother (CL 25,157f = FD 33 & 37). For information regarding the past of the Brothers in his charge, he refers to no one else except Brother Superior (CL 25,155 = FD 13). He needs his permission to go and visit his family, and even a written order to leave the town (CL 25,156 = FD 16 & 17). "When the Brother Director commits a serious fault, he asks the Brother Superior of the Institute for a penance" (CL 25,156 = FD 20).

In administrative matters, the Director must keep an eye on school matters (CL 25,158 = FD 36f) as well as on the expenses of the house (CL 25,158f = FD 42f). He cannot incur debts nor undertake exceptional expenditure without permission (CL 25,159 = FD 45f). Periodically, he must present a report on the behav-

jour of each of the Brothers, including himself, and submit to the Brother Superior his plans for allocating work to the Brothers in the school. At the end of the year, he must report on how each Brother has done his work (CL 25,158 = FD 33f). He does not write without permission. Regarding the community house, the *Rule of the Brother Director* lays down detailed instructions concerning sweeping, extinguishing candles, bolting the doors, collecting the keys and, every Sunday after Mass, visiting all the rooms of the house (CL 25,159f = FD 51f).

There is also a more positive side to the text. For example, when an urgent decision has to be taken, the Brother Director must not put it off: instead, he must examine it "for half a quarter of an hour, on his knees, in the presence of God, to see if it is of this nature" (i.e. urgent). Then "he will consult the Brother or Brothers given him by the Brother Superior of the Institute to advise him" (CL 25,154 = FD 4). In his apostolate, he will show "affection and a special tenderness of heart for all the Brothers who are in his charge [...]; his chief concern regarding the Brothers will be to establish and maintain them in a true spirit of faith" (CL 25,156f = FD 21f).

## 4.2. Two other old Lasallian texts

In 1986, Br Saturnino Gallego published a volume of De La Salle's writings in a Spanish translation. In it, he speaks of the existence of two documents in the archives of the Brothers' Generalate, entitled: "Qualities which Brother Directors of houses of the Institute must have in order to acquit themselves well of their duties" (4 pages) and "M. de La Salle's advice to Brother Directors, religious<sup>14</sup> of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools" (8 pages). He does not quote from either document.

There are doubts about the authenticity of these texts which could be simply compilations produced after the death of the Founder. The ideas and often the style are reminiscent of the *Rule of the Brother Director*, passages from letters and meditations, and statements attributed to De La Salle by Blain. We should consider these texts, therefore, as witnesses of a past age to Lasallian tradition. They tell us that the generation which took over on the death of the Founder (1719) and that of the first Superior (1720) attached a great deal of importance to the function of director in the accomplishment of the mission of the Institute.

### 4.2.1. "QUALITIES WHICH BROTHER DIRECTORS MUST HAVE"<sup>15</sup>

A Director must be convinced that his work is important for the good of the Society (1) and that he will have to account for any Brother he allows to become lost through his negligence. When inferiors open their conscience to him, he will be prudent and respect secrecy (introduction, 10, 11).

He is expected to have high **moral qualities**: a lively and ardent faith (1) and much humility. He must abandon himself into the hands of God who helps him to lead others (1-3). He must be gentle and calm (6), discreet, prudent and simple (6-8). He is willing to bear with patience the defects of his inferiors (9), and he is affable and docile in his words and in his behaviour. With persons of the world, he is modest and circumspect (12-13). His piety and modesty lead him to speak to his Brothers only for the good of their soul (14) and to keep his mind attentive to the voice of God (15). He must show great care and vigilance in looking after the house, but even more so where he himself is concerned, making sure he remains constantly united to God (18).

### 4.2.2. "ADVICE [...] TO BROTHER DIRECTORS"

There is no change in tone, but there are some new elements. The Brother Director must be vigilant over himself so as not to give scandal (I,III; V,I; V,III = 11-12) nor reveal anything to outsiders about the life of the community (II,III = 22). If he differs from his Brothers, it must be by his piety and regularity (I,IV; V,II = 14). He should not be fastidious at table and he should ensure that the Brothers are not either (III,XII; VII = 15). He should speak little and after reflection (III,VIII; V,I = 10) and not have recourse to threats (IV,VI = 44).

In his **pastoral care of the Brothers**, he ensures in particular that there is an atmosphere of silence in the house. At any given time, he must know what the Brothers are doing, where they are if they are not in community or in school (II,VII; III,III = 38). He shows particular concern for the young Brothers and the sick (II,VII = 42). He makes sure the Brothers receive communion in accordance with the rule. He is careful to ensure that those who do not fulfil the conditions of age do not fast (IV,III = 51).

In **the administration of the house**, he keeps an eye on the bursar, cook, gardener, etc, without, however, exercising any of these functions himself.

As we can see, these two documents do not contradict the *Rule of the Brother Director*, but neither do they repeat what it says. The text of the Rule (1718) explains in a somewhat juridical style the duties of the Director, of which one of the principal ones is subordination to the Centre of the Institute. The other documents, which are not dated, are first of all practical in nature: they give a glimpse of the Brothers' everyday life in community. And then, instead of stressing dependence on superior authority, these documents reveal an overall concern to look after the local community, by promoting a climate of piety, work, regularity, as well as fraternal life around a director who, instead of being distant, is affable.

These texts were printed and distributed around 1745 (CL 25,7). In 1814, the two texts were amalgamated under the title: "Advice of M. Jean Baptiste de La Salle to the Brother Directors of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools" and incorporated in the *Rule of Government* following chapter XIII which was entitled "On the qualities that Brothers Directors of houses of the Institute should have". In 1947, this material was taken out of the Rule of Government, but the second text was included in the form of a foreword with the title "Advice of St John Baptist de La Salle to Brothers in charge". The long life of this document was an indication of the extent to which it fulfilled expectations in the Institute.

## 5. BROTHER DIRECTOR IN THE "COMMON RULES" OF 1718

Written for all the Brothers, superiors and inferiors, the 32 chapters of this text contain both a "rule of life" for the Brothers and regulations, timetables and calendars for the administration of the Institute. There are no specific sections intended for Directors, but among the directives governing the daily life of the Institute, there is a partial description of their role. The word "director" is used 107 times. The "Brother Director" is shown as an "active subject" — having duties towards his inferiors and the Superior General — and as a "passive subject" — the inferiors having duties towards him.

### 5.1. Director-inferior relations

The first commandment of the Institute, "You will honour God in your superior and obey him promptly" (RC 16,8; cf. 12,3; 12,9-10; 20,2), expresses the strict dependence that ought to exist between each Brother and his Director, and the marks of exterior respect that this entails (RC 6,4; 12,4; 12,5-7; 12,11-13; 15,13).

The Brother sees in his Director a guide to lead him along the path to perfection (RC 4,5; 5,8). In his presence he is told of his faults (RC 5,9). Each week, he gives him an account of his conduct (RC 5,14) with complete confidence (RC 12,8), accepting his advice as coming from God (RC 12,9-10). The somewhat restrictive climate in the community protects the group and makes it easier to govern: all mail passes through the hands of the Brother Director (RC 25,3-5); his permission guarantees that Brothers do God's will (RC 20,8), whether this involves speaking to a fellow

Brother (RC 13,10) or leaving the house (RC 13,15). When a Brother travels his route is decided by the Brother Director (RC 24,1).

In the case of conflict or simply difference of opinion, there is provision for an appeal. Since each Brother had to write regularly to the Brother Superior, he had an opportunity to express his wishes and even ask to change community (RC 25,4). The letters to Brother Mathias are a good example of this procedure (LA 42-51 = English transl. 55-64).

Such close dependence may be thought to have been exasperating and damaging for inferiors. However, we have to remember that the Director had some serious obligations towards his Brothers.

### 5.2. Specific obligations of the Brother Director

The Brother Director had two important functions. He was the guardian of regularity and he had a pastoral role.

By the **pastoral role** of the Director we mean that he has to induce his little flock to imitate Jesus Christ, since he is responsible for the spiritual progress of each Brother. He observes the exterior behaviour of his Brothers, punishes their faults (RC 4,4; 5,7-8), authorises them to go to communion in certain cases (RC 4,5), takes appropriate measures if something inappropriate is said in community (RC 13,8), keeps a check on correspondence (RC 7,19; 25,5) and on visits, especially if a woman comes to the parlour (RC 14,5 & 6). He renders an account of everything to the

Superior of the Institute (RC 25,1).

As **guardian of the Rule**,<sup>16</sup> the Brother Director has to preside over all the exercises, a term which has to be understood in its broadest sense, that is, meaning all the activities in which the group participated (see note 11). In practice, the Director had to ensure the observance of the timetable indicated in such great detail in the Rule which, however, invited him to alter it if necessary: "What cannot be done before Holy Mass will be done after" (CL 25,131 = RC 30,20,44).

Often there were young Brothers in the community whose novitiate had lasted only a few months. Some of these could be "unrefined, simple and without much schooling, who normally behaved on the basis of their impressions" (MH 36). The Director together, with the older Brothers, had a teaching role in their regard, as is clear from the Rule. An example of this is the "Accusation", a daily exercise which took place "before supper in the oratory". The Brothers would accuse themselves, each in turn and aloud, of some fault against the rule or fraternal charity committed during the day. The Director would give them a penance "to do immediately or at some other time

[...] according to what was indicated in the Collection of Pences. The Brother Director could, however, give them heavier penances depending on the needs of the Brothers and the seriousness of their faults" (RC 5,7f).

Likewise it was the duty of the Director to ensure that the "great silence" was observed in the dormitory, even in his absence (RC 3,1); it was his duty to reprimand Brothers who said something inappropriate (RC 6,12), and he alone could authorise a Brother to eat outside of the fixed mealtimes (RC 3,2). During recreations, he called upon Brothers to speak (RC 6,4), and he controlled the outings and journeys of the Brothers (RC 13,15; 24,1), etc.

These prescriptions were presented in a spiritual context. Like the Benedictine Abbot, the Director is the representative of God in this cell of the Church, the Lasallian community<sup>17</sup>: "They will speak to the Brother Director only with great respect, always in a low voice and in terms that show the great veneration they have for him as holding the place of God, whom they must recognise and respect in the person of their Director" (RC 12,6).

## 6. BROTHER DIRECTORS IN THE LETTERS OF J. B. DE LA SALLE

When De La Salle writes to a Brother Director he does not distinguish between the Director's conduct and that of his Brothers, nor between the running of the community and that of the school.

What is immediately clear is that the Director does not have to do everything himself. Catering, for example, with its need to leave the house to go shopping, is the work of the serving Brother: "If a Brother Director becomes too concerned about day-to-day affairs, his whole community suffers; [...] Your exercises and your schools require all your care. If you involve yourself in anything else, you are acting in opposition to the designs of God. [...] There are not two masters in the house, for in all religious communities there is one person who is in charge of spiritual matters and another of domestic arrangements" (LC 38,2-5 & 25, to Br Hubert, Oct. 2nd 1710). One feels that this sharing of responsibilities did not always work too well, given the mentality of the times, the social background of the Brothers and habits adopted before the arrival of the serving Brothers.

De La Salle urges several of his correspondents, all inferiors, not to speak too freely to their Brother Director, but to adore God in his person (LC 97,6; LI 87,10). He recommends them to speak to the Director of their worries: God will bless them for doing so (LA 33,4; 44,6; LC 102,3). In this connection, the Director must give proof of great equability, as one of De La Salle's letters to a Director says with a certain amount of humour: "A Director must have such great patience and such solid virtue that he should look upon himself as a receptacle for all the refuse of the house, that is, that he must be prepared to put up with everything without showing pain or displeasure" (LI 79,1). Another Director is reproached for being as cheerful as a prison door (LI 80,1).

However, putting up with everything does not mean allowing everything: "Often pray that your community may be faithful to the Rule, and for your Brothers when they don't do as they ought, or when they are troubled; and ask of God the understanding you need

for your guidance on these occasions" (LA 35,17). This means accepting to reprimand the Brothers, not always a pleasant task: "You must not get upset about having to reprimand your Brothers. You are only doing your duty. [...] So you are ready to let the Brothers lose their vocations because you are not coura-

geous enough to reprimand them?" (LC 38,9 & 17). Reprimands should be given without any bad feelings, however: "We must love our Brothers in order to correct them with gentleness and affection, for otherwise a reprimand will not normally bear fruit" (LI 71,3).

## 7. "DIRECTOR" AND "SUPERIOR" IN LASALLIAN MEDITATIONS

The terms "superior" and "director" are used by De La Salle in his meditations for Sundays, both in the series of meditations on obedience (MD 7-15) and in various others<sup>18</sup> (MD 19, 21, 72, 73, 75, 76). The term "Brother Director" does not occur a single time. The Brother who is worried is invited to show "the wounds of his soul to his spiritual physician", that is to say, "to make them known to his Director" (MD 19,1). In the rest of the meditation "Director" is replaced by "Superior".

The word "Director" is used twice in the plural (MD 71 and 99). Speaking of the cure of spiritual paralysis, De La Salle writes: "Above all, open your heart completely to your Directors" (MD 71,3). Elsewhere, if God inspires you with his interior light to perform some good action, "he wills that you should have recourse to your Directors and Superiors, to whom he is careful to make known what is expected of you, and whom he has appointed to direct you" (MF 99,3). In fact, as "the interior light of God is not sufficient to conduct you safely to him, you stand in need of a guide who will direct you in a visible man-

ner" (MF 91,1). It is the responsibility of superiors, therefore, to discern and, if necessary, demand obedience (MD 13,3).

Some wonder why. "He is only a Brother like myself! This is true, but he is commissioned by God to assist you in attaining salvation" (MD 72,3). The ultimate authority where obedience is concerned is not the personal qualities of the director, the spiritual guide of his Brothers, but the word of Christ to the Church: "Anyone who listens to you listens to me" (Lk 10,16, quoted in MD 7,1 & 21,1). In this way, obedience becomes one of the most eminent acts of religion, directed to "God hidden under the form of a weak and mortal man, but vested with divine authority" (MD 9,1).

To fulfil his duties well, the Superior must "not be annoyed at the remarks that are made", "watch over his conduct so as to do nothing that might give bad example, or that might be contrary to the duties of his position". He should have "no special affection for anyone", and "strive to be a model to all by his piety and regularity" (MD 75,1).

## 8. CONCLUSION:

### THE INSTITUTE "IN THE HANDS OF THE BROTHER DIRECTORS" (CL 8,145)

In section 2, paragraph 3, of the present article we quoted the exhortation Blain attributes to the Founder regarding the important role of Brother Directors in maintaining the founding spirit of the Institute. Even if these are not the exact words used by De La Salle, they reflect accurately enough his teachings on community, the sphere of the Brothers' life and apostolate, and on the important role given to Brother Directors by the *Rule* in the daily life of the Institute.<sup>19</sup>

To adapt these words to our present situation would

involve the redefinition of how our communities function, their external apostolic commitments, and their attitude towards power. Community, as De La Salle conceived it, does not correspond to the way in which the Lasallian charism can be embodied in our time, and this, of course, has a bearing on the function of the Brother Director in a community. Often we find it useful to return to our sources before deciding to go out and take up the struggle again to promote God's Kingdom. We always find inspiration but never any

ready-made answers. Let us pick out some of the things required of the Brother Director of a community:<sup>20</sup>

1. The quality of his presence in the community, as a passive presence ("being" available to his Brothers), and as an active presence ("attentive" to their needs).
2. Personal attention given to each Brother in the community. All must be the object of his concern, especially young Brothers and the sick.
3. Provide new facilities and opportunities in community to encourage creativity and personal relations, including rooms which can help the community to affirm its identity, and the Brothers to develop as persons.
4. Accept plurality of behaviour and diversity of expression. This becomes possible when a strong link with the Brother Director, the guarantor of unity in the community, takes the place of the former bonds resulting from uniform behaviour.
5. Borrow from the teachings of the Founder anything that can infuse new energy into the animation of the community and strengthen the function of the Director of a house of the Institute.

For example, from the *Collection* :

- giving an account of one's conduct (R 8)

- the 1st commandment of the Institute (R 3)
- the 4 external supports (R 4,2)
- the 9 qualities of obedience (R 9)
- the considerations Brothers should make from time to time (R 16)

In the same way, study the letters of the Founder, especially LI 65-81. Read the first biographers, bearing in mind the present-day work of a Director inspired by the spirit of De La Salle.

6. Nowadays, when the desire for personal independence is so strong among Brothers who work that it can compromise the idea of working "together and by association", the Brother Director needs special support which makes possible both his role as coordinator and his relations with the District leadership and the Centre of the Institute.
7. Ask each Brother Director to stand back a little from his job, and, in the presence of God, reflect quietly about the specific mission he has.
8. Prepare Brothers to become Directors of communities. Ask current Directors to speak of their duties. Young Brothers react positively to this kind of thing.

Seen in this way, the duties of the Director of a community can be enriching both for the one who fulfils them and for those of whom he has charge, in the common pursuit of the aims of the Institute.

1. Without wishing to draw any conclusions, we note that in the *Conduct of Schools*, the term always used (about 50 times) is "Brother Director", and not "Director", while the opposite is true of the *Meditations* (MD 19,1,1 & 71,3,2; MF 99,3,2).

2. Not included are the few cases where ecclesiastical superiors are mentioned or, in RB, high ranking members of society.

3. Although only "Director" or "Brother Director" refer to the school context.

4. *Diccionario Teologico de la Vida Consagrada*, Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid, 1989, p. 1691.

5. *Id.*, p. 1692

6. See 1982 French edition of the *Meditations* of SJBS, the word "obedience" in the subject index.

7. The *Lasallian Themes* series deals with the role of the Brother Director in the school context in an article on the "School" by Br L. Lauraire in the present volume.

8. Cf. Mailhot B., *Dinámica y Génesis de Grupo*, Madrid, Marova, 2nd edit., 1973, p. 59.

9. Reference texts are plentiful for this task: the 1987 *Rule*, the documents of the 41st General Chapter, and several pastoral letters of Br Superior (1987, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1992).

10. *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. VIII, p. 809, article by A. Hermans and M. Sauvage, 1974.

11. In addition to "community exercises", there are "school exercises": R 10,2,26 speaks of "laxity in the exercises of the house and of the school" (cf. MF 92,3,1; LC 98,6; CE 18,6 & 21,2,5). Many of the "daily exercises" (RC 27) of the community refer to school — reading, writing and arithmetic (9 & 10) — or are connected with it: reading from the school rules (11), litanies of the Child Jesus and St Joseph (16 & 22). The special exercises for Sundays and feasts (RC 28) include the catechism taught to the pupils (7) and the catechism of formation (19).

12. The *Collection* (R) and the *Directories* included as appendices (RD) describe to a certain extent the relations between the Brother and his Director.

- The vows oblige the Brother to obey the particular Directors given by the Brother Superior (R 2,4). The person obeying must be totally indifferent and be prepared to obey without discernment (ie. without judgment) (R 8,2,8; RD 1,11), wishing only to obey God (R 9,2,1; 15,2,5).

- The Brother must render an account to the Brother Superior whether he has esteem and affection for his Director and whether he has always obeyed him (RD 1,12).

- In addition, it is God who speaks through the mouth of the Director responsible for my conduct (R 8,1,3); he teaches me what I must do, consoles me in my sufferings, points out my defects and reprimands me (*id.* 5), whether they refer to the school or community (R 8,2,20-21).

- Let us note finally that the "Opening of one's conscience to one's Superior or Director", listed in the "Means the Brothers may use to become interior" (R 13,2), is not developed subsequently in the text.

13. It is likely that the 1718 *Rule of the Brother Director* was a copy of a previously produced text, and included changes asked for by the 1717 Chapter, even though this is not mentioned by the biographers.

14. The use of the word "religious" with reference to the Brothers seems to imply that the title at least of the document was drawn up after the Bull of Approbation was obtained (1726).

15. In section 4,2,1, the references refer to a document kept in the Generalate archives (N° X BO 776-1). In section 4,2,2, the references in Roman figures refer to the document kept in the Generalate archives (same document number) and those in Arabic figures to the 1947 *Rule of Government*, p. V onwards.

16. This expression, although traditional, is not part of either De La Salle's or Blain's vocabulary.

17. The words are more risky than it seems and can be understood only in reference to a humble and hidden God. Brother Directors had very little human prestige, as the Founder had been obliged, in spite of not wanting to (CL 8,55; cf. LA 37,6), to increase the number of communities serving schools with only 2 classes (8 out of 22), and consisting therefore of only 2 Brothers (or 3, if there was a serving Brother). In 1717, the young Institute numbered only 7 houses with 5 or more Brothers.

18. In several of these meditations, the Superior is shown as a spiritual guide and not at all as the Director of the community or a Superior of the Institute. One is led to wonder whether, in its first printing, the text was intended for the FSC or for persons living in community in general. However, since the Lasallian Brother Director is also a spiritual guide for his inferiors, the texts were able to apply to Brothers just as easily.

19. De La Salle was able to see how important the role of a Director was after a number of unfortunate experiences: Directors who were too hard on their inferiors or lacked tact, in 1690 in Rheims (CL 7,311), or in Paris, in 1702 (CL 6,140; CL 7,404). There were Directors who left the Institute and their schools were harmed: in 1705 (Nicolas Vuyart in Paris), in 1713-14 (Ponce in Avignon, Henri in Mende).

20. Given the international character of the Institute, it would take a great deal of space to describe the evolved role of the present-day Brother Director of a community in the pursuit of the community's specific mission; and what his position is in relation to that of the headmaster (possibly a lay person) of a school. See the report on the seminar given by Br Jorge Bonilla ("Construir la comunidad") during the SIEL session, February-March 1989 (CIL secretariat, Rome).

### Complementary themes

Brothers  
Community, Society, Institute

Conduct of the Christian Schools  
Formation

Ministry  
Religious  
School

Br Jorge BONILLA SORT DE SANZ and Br Alain HOURY