

78. GRATUITY

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"The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a society in which profession is made to keep schools gratuitously" (RC 1,1). "The Brothers will keep schools gratuitously everywhere and this is essential for their Institute" (RC 7,1). These two articles of the Rules of 1718 are explicit. They affirm the importance of gratuity in St John Baptist de La Salle's approach to education, even if the words "gratuity" and "gratuitously" appear infrequently in his written work (20 or so times). The same thing can be said about "association" and "stability" which, like "gratuity" are fundamental concepts in the thinking and work of the Founder of the Brothers.

To appreciate properly the role and meaning of gratuity in the thinking of De La Salle, it would be useful to glance briefly at the historical context of the first "Christian and gratuitous schools".

1. GRATUITOUS SCHOOLS IN 17th CENTURY FRANCE

We should not think of gratuity in schools as a feature that is exclusively Lasallian. There were certain colleges which taught the humanities, colleges run by the Jesuits and Oratorians, for example, which offered free education to their pupils. Their intake, it should be said, was mainly from better-off and more cultured sections of society.

There were also the "little schools" which were closer in nature to those of the Brothers :

- There were the "free day schools" set up next to women's convents which ran parallel fee-paying boarding schools. There was a great increase in the number of these schools for girls in the 17th century as more and more women's congregations were founded.

- There were also the "charity schools", opened by parish priests for the children of families whose names were listed in the Poor Register. They constituted one

of the visible signs of the concern of the Church and of society as a whole for the less well-off social classes of the day. To this we can add the schools that were run in certain general hospitals. These latter institutions had been created to confine vagabonds and so diminish the widespread begging that existed. Children who attended these schools were among the most underprivileged in society.

Because the first schools set up by De La Salle resembled these charity schools so much, the first biographers called them the "Christian and gratuitous schools". Later on, they began to call them "Christian schools", just as the Founder does in all his writings. Gratuity continued to be practised in them, and was the cause of much conflict with the teachers of the Little Schools and the writing masters.

One can see, therefore, that the work of De La Salle and the Brothers was part of a vast ecclesial and social movement born of a new awareness in society of its duty to help the poor. This awareness was particularly widespread in the second half of the 17th century. It did not restrict its concern simply to physical needs — food, clothing, housing — but to moral needs also.

For more than ten centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire, the Church had been responsible for the creation of schools, colleges and universities, but it had not concerned itself with the education of the children of the common people. From the 16th century onwards, the situation began to change slowly but steadily, and De La Salle was part of this whole movement.

2. GRATUITY "ESSENTIAL FOR THE INSTITUTE" (RC 7,1)

Blain begins his biography of De La Salle by saying a few words about De La Salle's approach to education. He says the following in his "Discourse on the institution of [...] Christian and gratuitous schools":

"By SCHOOLS should be understood places where young people go to learn how to read, write and count, for a fee. By CHRISTIAN AND GRATUITOUS SCHOOLS should be understood places where they go to acquire Christian instruction and a holy education for no payment. The former, by comparison with the latter, should be considered profane and secular, because children go there to receive a fairly indifferent sort of profane instruction, of no importance and not in any way necessary for salvation. It is not charity but gain which opens them and attracts. Those who have no money to give to the masters and mistresses who teach there will find the doors closed."

"In the second, reading, writing and arithmetic are taught, and the lessons are free. The only aim is the interest of the children, but that is not all. This sort of instruction is considered as a bait which leads on to more important and necessary instruction."

"Gratuitous schools are opened to teach the truths of salvation and the principles of religion to the boys and girls who come to learn to read, write and count. This last kind of instruction is subordinate to the first, but it is the first kind which interests the teachers and

is considered the most important. Consequently, what has been said in praise of the holiness, excellence, need and benefits of Christian doctrine can be applied only to the gratuitous schools" (CL 7,34).

To make his point, the biographer tends to minimise the importance given to the learning of secular subjects in the Brothers' schools. This was not the way the Founder saw things. It is sufficient to refer to the numerous instances where he insists on the need for teachers to be competent, as for example, in the *Conduct of Schools*. All the same, the text we quoted serves to highlight the fundamental criterion of gratuity in the schools which had been opened to "teach the truths of salvation and the principles of religion".

From the very beginning, in Rheims, the Brothers' schools had been gratuitous. When De La Salle agreed in 1688 to take over a school in Paris in the parish of St Sulpice, it was a "charity school" and consequently, gratuitous. But here, as in Rheims, the Brothers set aside one of the principles applied in this kind of school: instead of accepting only the children of parents listed in the "Poor Register", they took in also children who were not poor, the sons of artisans or of workers with fixed jobs. They did this in response to parents who were very impressed by the organisation and efficiency of their schools.

De La Salle and the Brothers, therefore, ran schools intended and organised for poor children, but some

better-off families took advantage of them also. They too did not pay fees.

As the plan for organising the *Society of the Christian Schools* took shape, the idea of gratuity was strengthened and refined. This is reflected in De La Salle's various writings. In the *Memoir on the Habit*, written in about 1690, we read: "In this community, the Brothers are committed to keeping schools gratuitously [...] and to teaching catechism every day, even on Sundays and feasts" (CL 11,349 = MH 0,0,3).

The 1694 vows formula summarises the purpose

of the Institute when it says: "to keep together and by association gratuitous schools" (CL 2,42 = EP 2,0,3).

The *Collection of various short treatises* (1711) includes a section entitled: "Ten commandments which the Brothers of the Christian Schools must always have in their minds to meditate on, and in their hearts to practise" (CL 15,4 = R 3). The third of these commandments reads as follows:

"You will teach the children very well and gratuitously".

3. WHY GRATUITY ?

The biographer Blain can help us (CL 8,36f) to understand the reasons which led De La Salle to opt for gratuitous teaching and to insist on it.

By resuming Blain's main points and, especially, by referring to the Founder's writings, we find that the choice of gratuity seems to be based on three sets of reasons.

3.1. Human and social reasons

De La Salle wanted gratuitous schools to make it possible for poor young people to obtain instruction. This was a priority for him and he made it a reality. Among the few documents that have been discovered in archives, there are some which record the investigations made in response to complaints raised by the teachers of the Little Schools. These documents show that about 90 % of the Brothers' pupils in Dijon, for example, came from poor families. The priority given to the poor did not mean that the few pupils who could pay were excluded. The Founder did not want "to impose limits on the charity" of the founders and benefactors.

The refusal to make a distinction between the poor and the less poor made it possible to avoid constant disputes and dishonest quibbling. The cyclic nature of the economy caused fluctuation in the situation of families. Unscrupulous persons could have taken advantage of this to contest decisions, and this would have disturbed the schools and prevented the Brothers from working in peace and efficiently. No sure

and permanent criteria existed to distinguish between rich and poor.

Blain insists also on De La Salle's and the Brothers' refusal to investigate: "Who would have had the right to make an inventory of the possessions of a child's parents, to prove they were poor or rich?" (CL 8,36). Because the Brothers did not exclude anyone, this sensitive question did not arise.

And in any case, what good would it have done for competent and non fee-charging teachers to have sent off their better-off pupils to fee-charging and, what is more, less competent teachers?

The reasons given above are quite understandable if they are seen against the background of the socio-economic and cultural situation of the poor of those days. De La Salle, however, was driven by motives which, in his eyes, were much more powerful and of a theological, pastoral and spiritual nature.

3.2. Theological and pastoral reasons

In his catechetical writings (DA & DB), De La Salle recalls that both grace and salvation are gratuitous. The preface of the second part of DA, entitled: On the means to acquit oneself well of one's duties to God, teaches that "grace in general is a supernatural quality, which God puts in our soul, and which he gives us gratuitously, to help us attain our salvation" (CL 20,194 = DA 300,0,2). We find also: "It is God alone who justifies us gratuitously and solely because of his goodness" (CL 20,195 = DA 300,0,4; cf. CL 21,140f = DB 3,0,3f).

An interesting comparison can be made between the thinking of the Founder and the closely-argued article on *Gratuité* in the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* by Paul Agaesse, 1967. As the whole article is too long to be included here, we give simply its plan :

1. The gratuity of God
 - The mystery of gratuity.
 - The scope of gratuity
2. The gratuity of a person's love
 - For God
 - For others

To this theocentric view De La Salle adds a pastoral dimension the basis for which, as is often the case, he finds in St Paul. A very explicit text in this connection is in the 15th MR : "With joy, then, say as he does, that the greatest cause of your consolation in this life is to announce the Gospel free of charge, without having it cost anything to those who hear it" (MR 207,2 quoting 1 Cor 9,18).

It is, in fact, this obligation to teach the Gospel gratuitously to everyone that inspires De La Salle and which is the basis of the gratuity of his schools whose essential aim is "to announce the Gospel to the poor". Hence the words of the second MR : "God has had the goodness to remedy so great a misfortune by the establishment of the Christian Schools, where the teaching is offered free of charge and entirely for the glory of God. [...] Thank God that he has had the goodness to call upon you to procure such an important advantage for children. Be faithful and exact to do this without any payment, so that you can say with St Paul : 'The source of my consolation is to announce the Gospel free of charge, without having it cost anything to those who hear me'" (MR 194,1 quoting 1 Cor 9,18).

3.3. Interior or spiritual dimensions of gratuity

When the Founder speaks to the Brothers of gratuity, he does not restrict himself to its financial aspect. In any case, the Brothers received no personal payment for their work. The founders of the various schools paid the agreed sum directly to the *Society* or its representatives. In this way, the Brothers, both individually and as a community, lived in poverty without making the vow. De La Salle would urge them to look beyond the level of material and financial gratuity and discover

spiritual motives. This is what we call "interior gratuity", which has at least four aspects.

1. **Personal material gratuity**, mentioned in the *Common Rules* and in various passages in the *Meditations*. For example, the Brothers were not to take anything from the pupils (RC 7,12), nor accept anything from their parents (RC 7,11). "Have you received anything from your pupils ? You know that this is by no means allowed. If you fell into such faults your school would no longer be a free (gratuite) school, even were you only to receive some snuff. Snuff is not allowed [...] and your teaching must be gratuitous; this is essential to your Institute" (MF 92,3). "You know, moreover, that you are vowed to teach schools gratuitously, and to live on bread alone rather than receive any remuneration" (MF 153,3).

2. **Gratuity in relationships**. Various texts of the Founder invite the Brothers to love all their pupils without preferring any particular one, but also to have a preferential love for the poor, who are less attractive and sometimes repulsive. They are to act towards them disinterestedly, like "elder brothers", in imitation of Christ (Cf. CL 7,241; MF 86,2f and the article in the present volume by A. Botana entitled *Imitation of Christ*).

3. **Affective gratuity**. The love the Brothers have for their pupils must be disinterested. They are encouraged not to expect signs of gratitude from them. Theirs is the gratuity of the true educator who does not work for his own satisfaction, but always has the interests of the child at the forefront of his mind, and makes them the inspiration of his efforts (RC 7,13f).

4. **Spiritual gratuity**. We could quote here many instances in the writings of De La Salle where he invites the Brothers "to win over the hearts" of the pupils, not for their own personal satisfaction, but as a means of leading them to God in Jesus Christ, so that they can be "touched" by the Holy Spirit. Such is the disinterestedness of the apostle and his gratuitous ministry. Finance does not come into this : it is a call to exercise gratuitously the ministry of evangelisation through the education of young people.

While De La Salle was still alive, it was possible to associate spiritual freedom and financial gratuity. PPin the course of the history of the Institute, this coherence, born of a Christian climate, proved untenable in modern liberalised societies.

4. THE FOUNDER'S STRUGGLE FOR GRATUITY (1683-1705)

We know what a personal crisis it was for the Founder to be challenged by the teachers who were worried about their future, and how, in 1683, he sought the advice of Fr Nicolas Barré, who also had started up some schools for poor children. Among other things, he asked whether he should use his personal fortune to endow his schools: at the time, this was the usual way of ensuring the continued existence of charitable institutions.

The answer given by the Minim, based on a quotation from the Gospel, was to refuse all material security and to put himself entirely into the hands of divine Providence. This incident seems to show that, even at this date, De La Salle had already opted for gratuity in schools. He had not yet found, however, the means to guarantee their future and that of the teachers.

He decided, therefore, that where future foundations were concerned, he would rely on the persons who asked him to open schools, making the Brothers strictly dependent on the founders, whether these were individuals or local institutions. A change of attitude on their part could compromise the future of the school, something that happened in Paris, Chartres and Marseilles in the lifetime of the Founder, and in various other towns in the 18th century.

By not respecting the normal way charity schools

were run, the first Brothers, objectively speaking, harmed the interests of the "writing masters" and the teachers of the "little schools", who earned their living by their teaching, and were paid by the parents of the pupils. Their protests against the Brothers' schools in Dijon, Chartres and especially in Paris, were understandable. In Paris, the teachers of the "little schools" had the support of the Precentor, who was appointed by the archbishop. The writing masters were backed by their guild which jealously protected its interests.

All this, then, was at the root of the problems encountered by the Brothers and reported by De La Salle's biographers. In Paris, the first problems arose in 1690 and came to a head in 1704 and 1705 with a series of complaints, confiscations, court cases and sentences. The subsequent Clément Affair was of a different nature. It is not our intention to describe these events: we wish simply to highlight the attitude of De La Salle and the Brothers in these difficult circumstances. What is particularly striking is their conviction that "gratuity is essential" for their Institute. It is a conviction that leads them to leave themselves open to all these troubles and to suffer them, without ever changing their minds. These events were only the prelude to a struggle to maintain gratuity in schools which would occupy the Institute for two centuries.

5. GRATUITY THROUGHOUT THREE HUNDRED YEARS OF HISTORY

5.1. The petition, the Bull of Approbation and the Rules of 1726

After the death of the Founder, Brothers Barthélemy and Timothée, the first superior generals, set the process in motion to obtain the recognition of the Brothers' Institute by the Holy See.¹

According to Br Maurice Auguste (CL 11), the Brothers sent at least two "petitions" to Rome, requesting the recognition of their Institute. The first was sent in 1721, but the text has not come down to us.² It was only with the second letter, which was sent the following year, that the process in Rome really began. What was said about gratuity in the "Rouen Memoir", on which the first petition was possibly based, added

nothing to what had always appeared in previous documents of the young Institute, namely, its desire to teach the poor gratuitously, and the Brothers' commitment not to accept any remuneration from the parents of their pupils. The memoir describes also the modest and strictly communal lifestyle of the Brothers. The desire to teach without receiving remuneration from parents is linked with the personal commitment by vow that the Brothers are invited to pronounce. At the time this included a vow of association.³

The inclusion of the vow "to teach gratuitously" in the 1722 petition, on which Pope Benedict XIII's Bull of Approbation was based, was not the work of the Holy See. It was the Brothers who chose to in-

clude it, believing that their association had its main *raison d'être* in teaching gratuitously. The formula may have changed, but the intention remained the same.⁴

But the Bull *In Apostolicæ*, while approving what the Brothers had done, unwittingly introduced an ambiguity which becomes clear when we compare paragraphs 5 & 9.

“Fifthly : that the said Brothers **teach children gratuitously** and do not accept either money or presents offered by the pupils or their parents.”

“Ninthly : that the Brothers should take the vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, stability in the said Institute, and **to teach the poor gratuitously**”.

This shift from children in general to only poor children was the cause of much dispute and wrangling in the 18th century between the Institute of the Brothers and the teachers of the Little Schools and certain municipalities. It is clear that the Brothers continued to do what they had done in De La Salle's lifetime, and that they understood the Bull in terms of their established practice. Moreover, the formula of vows, modified in 1726, read as follows : “That is why, I promise and vow poverty, chastity, obedience, stability in the said Society, and to teach gratuitously, conformably to the Bull of Approbation of our Holy Father the Pope Benedict XIII” (RC, 1726, ch. XVII).

We find the following explanation in chapter XVIII of the 1726 Common Rules, entitled “The Obligation of the Vows” : “By the vow of teaching gratuitously and keeping schools by association, the Brother promises to take the greatest care to instruct the children well and give them a Christian education; to use the time well that is set aside for this; not to demand or receive anything from the pupils or their parents as remuneration, either as a present or for whatever other reason; not to use the parents of the pupils to do some work, in the hope that they will do it without asking for payment”.

5.2. Gradual evolution (1726-1848)

Throughout these centuries, the Brothers showed their determination to remain faithful to gratuitous

teaching. However, there were some adaptations, especially towards the end of this period.

The 1787 and 1822 General Chapters reaffirmed the obligation not to receive anything from the pupils or their parents, as well as the obligation to provide ink free, as indicated in the *Common Rules*.⁵

At the end of the 18th century, the Institute, attacked on all sides, asked some canon lawyers from the Sorbonne for an interpretation of the meaning of paragraphs 5 and 9 of the Bull of Approbation. Their question was : Must the Brothers teach all their pupils gratuitously, or can they restrict gratuitous teaching to only poor pupils ? The canon lawyers were mostly of the opinion that gratuity applied to all the pupils.

After the Revolution, primary schools became the monopoly of town councils. Many towns entrusted their schools to the Brothers, who accepted on the express condition that the schools were to be gratuitous. Then, after 1830, a liberal-based anticlericalism spread through French society. It was clear that the intention was to limit the role of the Church in education in favour of non-denominational schools. Apart from a few exceptions, the bishops, who wanted their seminaries to be left out of the dispute, did not involve themselves in the question of gratuity in State primary schools.

The law of June 28th 1833, drawn up by François Guizot, the Minister of Education, opened up a new era.⁶ Primary schools were the responsibility of town councils, but part of the teachers' pay came from a monthly contribution from parents. The amount of this payment was fixed by the town council. Only the poor were exempt.⁷ The Superior General, Brother Anaclet, tried to interpret and apply this law in a way that was compatible with the vow of gratuity. His approach was to negotiate with town councils, and threaten to withdraw the Brothers from places where gratuity was not maintained. He refused to consider any increase in the salaries of the Brothers based on the monthly contribution, and obliged the parents of pupils to obtain a certificate of poverty. This attitude on the part of the Institute, which was very much criticised, made it possible to maintain almost everywhere a parity of treatment for the Brothers' pupils.

5.3. The Institute's conflict with centralised government (1848-1901)

After the 1848 Revolution, the law of March 15th 1850 and the decree dated December 31st 1853 reaffirmed the obligation of non-poor parents to pay, saying it was a means necessary for the expansion of public education. The Institute was obliged to revise its traditional position on gratuity. It was the task of the 1854 General Chapter to examine the situation of the 395 Brothers' schools in France that were affected by these laws.

After deciding to set aside 120,000 francs to help the communities whose income was insufficient to enable the Brothers to live with some dignity, the chapter suggested a possible compromise, saying, for example, that the Brothers should be allowed to take in pupils as paying boarders or day boarders, so that tuition fees need not be paid. The chapter finally considered asking the Holy See for a dispensation from the vow of gratuity for 3 years in France and 10 years in America, as a way of regularising the de facto situation of numerous schools. As regards America, the chapter advocated teaching the poor in separate classrooms, where this was possible.⁸

The next General Chapter, in 1858, was unable to make any progress regarding this question, and disguised its embarrassment by leaving the matter, couched in general terms, to the care of the Superior General, Brother Philippe, and his council.⁹

The dispute between the Institute and the French Government came to a head in 1861. On May 27th, a circular from the Ministry of Education sent to all prefects, recalled the obligation to enforce the following legal requirements: gratuity of primary education for children from poor families, and the obligation of all the others to pay, unless the town council voted to include a corresponding amount in the town budget. A few days later, on June 10th 1861, the Superior General of the Brothers received a letter from the Minister, Gustave Rouland, asking him to comply. In the case of non-compliance, the Brothers would be excluded from State schools.

The fight to maintain gratuity had now moved from the town council level to that of the State. It was no longer possible to maintain an intransigent attitude if the Institute wished to pursue its apostolate among the working classes in France. Three months later, a

General Chapter was held in Paris. It agreed, given the approbation of the Holy See,¹⁰ to limit gratuitous teaching solely to poor pupils for as long as the current situation persisted. While waiting for this approbation, the Superior General was asked to maintain a passive attitude. By a rescript dated November 15th 1861, Rome approved the decision of the recent chapter.¹¹

While the rescript solved a specific problem, it was not the Holy See's intention to give a general interpretation of the "vow of teaching gratuitously", which continued to be considered by the Institute as requiring total gratuity. The rescript endorsed the passive attitude of the Brothers' congregation towards the public authorities so long as the circumstances described persisted.

5.4. The Institute receives no State help (1901-1966)

In 1901, the French parliament was on the point of passing a new and more restrictive law regarding religious congregations. It was in this context that the Superior General, Br Gabriel Marie, asked the Holy See for a more explicit interpretation of the "vow of teaching the poor gratuitously". He suggested that two interpretations were possible. The first involved making a distinction between two aspects of the vow: it obliged the Brothers to teach only the poor, and the teaching given had to be absolutely gratuitous. This would mean returning to complete gratuity, in schools teaching only poor children. The second interpretation would mean that the vow obliged the Brothers to give free teaching to the poor, but did not prevent them from accepting paying pupils.

The Holy See responded to the Superior's request by a rescript dated February 12th 1901. The second interpretation was endorsed. The Brothers made the "vow of teaching the poor gratuitously", but for the individual Brother, the vow of gratuity was subordinated to the vow of obedience. The vow of teaching the poor gratuitously affected the Institute as a body, but it did not apply in the case of Brothers ordered by obedience to teach children from well-off backgrounds.¹²

This rescript made it possible to generalise the practice of remuneration which had started in the Institute in 1861, and which involved accepting fees in Brothers' schools except in the case of the poorest pupils.

This became general practice in France (except in schools under the control of private donors) as well in countries where the Brothers had recently arrived and ran only private schools.

5.5. After Vatican II.

In 1966, the General Chapter, determined to adapt the Institute to the modern world and to root it firmly in the charism of St John Baptist de La Salle, considered once again the question: How can we serve the poor?

The Rules were completely rewritten for the first time since the beginning of the Institute.¹³ The General Chapter replaced the vow of "teaching the poor gratuitously" by that of the "educational service of the poor".

From then onwards, the *Rules and Constitutions*

and the *Declaration* also would consider the educational service of the poor as an integral part of the purpose of the Institute and, consequently, of the personal vocation of each Brother.¹⁴

This chapter had a much broader understanding of the educational service of the poor than revealed simply by an analysis of material conditions: it took into account historical and sociological factors as well. It called upon local bodies as well as individual Brothers to take steps that would enable the Institute to go to the poor.

The 1986 General Chapter, in its turn, incorporated the idea of association into the educational service of the poor,¹⁵ by identifying it closely with the spirit that inspired the Founder when he established the society, that is, a school for the service of the poor, for the purpose of ensuring their human and Christian development.¹⁶

The preferential option for the poor was one of the points insisted upon by the General Chapters of 1966 and 1986, whose task it was to rewrite the Brothers' Rule after the Vatican II Council. While complete gratuity in schools can be justified in certain specific cases, the implications of this questions have changed considerably and can no longer be understood in the form they had in the early days of the Institute.

It is less important to know whether the parents pay or not a part of the school fees, than to adapt schools to the needs of the very poor, to prepare young people for useful jobs, to enable everyone to have access to learning, to teach rich and poor to promote justice. The preferential option for the poor stimulates the Brothers and like-minded persons who work with them to develop the spiritual and community dimensions of gratuity, so as to be, with the help of God, the kind of educators the poor need.

¹ Mgr de Rohan, son of the Prince de Soubise, and his co-worker, the Abbé Jean Vivant, who were both familiar with the Roman correspondence, were the intermediaries. It seems that personal influence produced no results. On advice from Jean Vivant, normal procedures were followed, and contact was made with the Dataria in Rome, through the services of a French representative at the Holy See.

² That year, Jean Vivant was in Rome. It is presumed that this petition was similar to the *Rouen Memoir* written the same year and thanks to which State recognition was obtained.

³ For more information see CL 11,191-193, and especially note 5, p. 191.

⁴ In its 5th point, the petition says: "Quod ipsi Fratres

pueros educant neque pecuniam aut munera a discipulis vel eorum parentibus oblata accipiant".

The 9th point says: "Quod vota fratrum sint castitatis, paupertatis, obedientiae et permanentiae in dicto Instituto necnon pauperes gratis edocendi eaque simplicia".

The text of the Bull which corresponds to the last point reads as follows: "Nono. Quod vota Fratrum sint castitatis, paupertatis, obedientiae et permanentiae in dicto Instituto nec non pauperes gratis edocendi cum hoc tamen quod eosdem Fratres a votis simplicibus".

⁵ The 1787 Chapter reaffirms the obligation to refuse presents and free services from the parents of pupils. The 1822 Chapter repeats that remuneration for teaching cannot be accepted nor, *a fortiori*, demanded.

⁶ G. RIGAULT, *Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes*, vol. V, p. 81.

⁷ *Idem*, vol. V, pp. 93-94.

⁸ AMG, 1854 General Chapter Report, p. 261-266.

⁹ AMG, 1858 General chapter Report, p. 312.

¹⁰ AMG, 1861 General Chapter Report, p. 350f. Here is an extract from the decisions (p. 385) :

“Article 1. The Brothers will conform to the decisions of the Minister’s circular of May 27th 1861 concerning school fees [...]. They will therefore submit a list of pupils to the authorities requiring it; but they will refrain from any direct and personal intervention in the imposition and levying of the said school fees [...].

Article 2. The following dubia will be submitted to our Holy Father the Pope, begging him to be pleased to define them by his apostolic authority : Firstly. May the Brothers of our Institute, without violating their vow of teaching the poor free of charge, continue to run public schools in which the local authorities will demand and levy to their profit the school fees of children who are not poor ? Secondly. May the Superior General accept, in the name of the Institute, the running of new schools offered to him by the local authorities and in which, while the poor were admitted free of charge, school fees would be levied on those children considered rich [...] ?

¹¹ The rescript of 1861 simply says : “His Holiness deigns to approve and confirm the above-stated resolution of the General Chapter”. (The French translation in the General Chapter report, AMG,1861, p. 393 runs : “Sa Sainteté a daigné approuver et confirmer la résolution sus-énoncée du chapitre général”).

¹² This is the very concisely written text of the rescript signed on February 12th 1901 by Cardinal Gotti, the Prefect : “Sacra Congregatio [...] Cardinalium negotiis et consultationibus Episcoporum et Regularium præposita, omnibus mature perpensis, super præmissis respondendum censuit prout respondet : ad primum negative, ad secundum affirmative” (Quoted in Circular 109, December 25th 1901, p. 99).

¹³ “The Brothers make simple and perpetual vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, educational service of the poor and fidelity to the Institute” (RC 1967, 4,1). “They will often examine themselves individually and as a community regarding their effective fidelity to the spirit and practice of the educational service of the poor” (RC, 1967,

8,2).

¹⁴ “The vocation of the Brothers consists in a total gift to God, directed towards the educational service of the poor. The Brothers make it their personal responsibility to pursue the aims of their congregation” (RC 1967, 8,a).

“In his educational work, he always has in view the service of the poor. He goes by preference to those who lack possessions, talents and affection, because they represent the essential reason for his mission. When obedience calls for it, he goes also to the children of well-off families, going to them also because everyone is poor in the sight of God, and he who recognises this wins the Kingdom” (RC 1967, 8,c).

“By vowing themselves to the educational service of the poor, the Brothers declare that they are all co-responsible for pursuing the purpose of the Institute by the choice and character of their establishments” (RC 1967, 8,1).

The text of the Declaration has thought-provoking things to say about the educational service of the poor : “The General Chapter emphasises that the apostolate with the poor is an integral part of the finality of the Institute. This orientation should be kept in mind whenever there is question of a new foundation, or the evaluation of an institution already in existence, or the planning of the formation that will be provided for the young Brothers” (Declaration 28,2).

¹⁵ “Religious consecration establishes an intimate communion between the person of each Brother and that of Jesus Christ. This consecration is expressed by vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, association for the service of the poor through education, and stability in the Institute” (Rule, 1986, 24).

¹⁶ “By the vow of association for the service of the poor through education, the Brothers commit themselves, as the Founder did, to conduct schools or other centres of Christian education that are accessible to the poor. At the same time, they strive to develop educational methods that promote above all the social betterment of ordinary classes of people” (Rule, 1986, 39).

“Their preferential option in favour of the poor, continually enlightened by a view of faith, helps the Brothers to recognise the inequalities to which society gives rise. In their desire to make it possible for poor people to live with dignity and to be open to the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Brothers show genuine creativity in responding to these new needs” (Rule 1986, 41).

Complementary themes

Artisans	Incarnation	Poor
God's work	Justice	Pupil-teacher relationship
Hearts (to touch)	Ministry	Renunciation - Detachment
Imitation of Christ	Mortification	Reward of the Teacher
		School

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