

81. INSTRUCTION(S), INSTRUCTING (CHILDREN)

Summary

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(CL 23,430 = GA 0,32).

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1. THE BROTHER INSTRUCTS HIMSELF OR IS INSTRUCTED

In the *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer*, "to instruct" and "instruction(s)" are used in reference to the **relationship between God and the Brother** in prayer. God instructs, he gives his instructions. This enables the Brother to discover the virtues he needs to practise and to achieve holiness. The verb "to instruct" is used twice also in a comparison between the explanations of an artist and the method of mental prayer.

"To instruct" and "instruction(s)" are used also with reference to the **professional training of the Brother**. Here the sense is clearly apostolic : the Brother instructs himself in order to be able to instruct the children. The material in which he has to instruct himself constitutes the subject matter of his instructions to the children, and determines the methods he uses.

Instruction takes place in **mental prayer** (MR 200,1,2; MF 108,1,2; MF 116,2,2; MF 164,1,2) at times fixed by the Rule (MR 206,1,2). This draws down God's grace on his studies and mission (MR 200,1,2). These studies consist essentially in **reading**

and meditating on the Scriptures, in particular on the Gospel, on the sayings and example of the Apostles (MR 200,1,2; MF 84,3,2; MF 116,1,2; MF 116,2,2; MF 153,1,2). The Brother instructs himself "in the truths and holy maxims" (MR 200,1,2; MF 116,1,2; MF 116,2,2), in the things he has to teach (MR 206,1,2), in the truths of the faith (MF 84,3,2; MF 153,1,2; MF 164,1,2) and in Christian doctrine (MF 120,1,2).

In MR 200,1,1 De La Salle describes **the apostolic work of Jesus and his disciples** so that it can serve as a model for the Brothers. They must study it in order to imitate it : "You must fulfil your ministry as the Apostles fulfilled theirs, following in this their example, which is that of Jesus Christ himself : day after day they went about without ceasing, teaching and announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ". Jesus himself "taught every day in the temple [...] leaving at night to go and pray". In MF 116,1,2 the model proposed to the Brother is the apostolic work of St

Peter and St Mark. MR 206 states that he must study in order to instruct young people: "How to assist at Holy Mass and to confess their sins properly, [...] the things that contribute to the support of religion [...] without neglecting reading, writing and arithmetic [...] the catechism that has to be taught every day at the

prescribed time, [...] what is suited to their age and ability to know".

These studies are solely to prepare for the mission: "To teach those entrusted to your care" (MR 206,1,2), "to teach others" (MF 108,1,2), "to inspire those entrusted to you" (MF 116,2,2).

2. THE SUBJECT MATTER OF INSTRUCTIONS: WHAT CHILDREN ARE INSTRUCTED IN

2.1. Instructing in secular subjects

The terms "to instruct" and "instructions" can refer, but only very rarely, exclusively and explicitly to secular subjects.

When the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* speaks of parents who neglect to send their children to school, "instructing" is clearly used with reference to the skill of reading and the future employment of their children: "Make them aware of the obligation they are under to have their children instructed, and the wrong they do them by not having them taught how to read and write. Tell them how much this can harm them, and that they will never be able to do any job if they cannot read or write. Next you must tell them about the harm that can be done to their children by the lack of instructions regarding their salvation, something that the poor rarely come into contact with" (CL 24,186 = CE 16,2,18; Cf. CL 24,36 = CE 3,7,1).

We see that the verb "to instruct" refers to "learning how to read and write", and "instructions" refer to "things to do with salvation". If either is lacking, the children are wronged.

"Instruction" refers to reading and writing in the following fine passage from the *Conduct of Schools*: "Parents need to be told that when they withdraw their children from school at too early an age and before they are sufficiently instructed, to send them off to work, they harm them greatly. For the sake of making them earn very little they make them forego an advantage that is much greater. To make them understand this, you must show them how important it is for an artisan to know how to read and write, since, even if he is not very intelligent, but knows how to read and write, he is capable of doing everything" (CL 24,187 = CE 16,2,21).

"Being instructed" was used here with reference to professional employment and reading and writing. "Being instructed" opens up new horizons for the children of artisans.

In the *Conduct of Schools*, it is clear that the school has to satisfy parents regarding secular subjects. In this connection De La Salle insists on the professional competence of the young teachers: "It may happen that parents will complain that their children are learning nothing, or very little, and want to withdraw their children from the school for this reason. To avoid such an unfortunate event, Brother Directors and the Inspectors should supervise very carefully all the teachers for whom they are responsible, especially those with less ability, and ensure that they instruct with the greatest possible attention all the pupils in their charge, without neglecting any, and that the attention they give to all the pupils is equal, and even greater to the most ignorant and negligent" (CL 24,188 = CE 16,2,22).

In the *Memoir on the Habit*, the student teachers for country schools "are instructed so that they sing, read and write perfectly" (MH 0,0,6), while "the young children, who are inclined and disposed towards piety [...] are instructed in all the subjects in the catechism, and are taught to read and write perfectly" (MH 0,0,7).

In MR 206,1,2, we read that "instruction in secular subjects, such as reading, writing and arithmetic", even if it is not the most important function of the Brother, "is a serious obligation". And in MF 91,3,2, the Founder writes: "Have you taught your pupils all the other subjects, such as reading, writing and the rest, with all possible earnestness?"

MF 92,3,1 includes points of teaching methodology which form part of the Brothers' special examination of conscience or annual end-of-year

evaluation: "Have you been careful during the past year to follow the timetable" (Cf. CL 24,16f = CE 3,1f), "to use the hand signal always" (Cf. CL 24,124 = CE 12,0,1f), "and always to correct the pupils when they make a mistake?" (Cf. CL 24,35 = CE 3,6,6).

Margaret, Queen of Scotland, "herself performed the function of tutor to her children, giving them reading lessons" (MF 133,2,1).

From what has been said, therefore, it should be remembered that "to instruct" and "instruction" can sometimes, and above all in the *Conduct of Schools*, refer to secular subjects. When they are specified, these subjects are reading, writing, arithmetic, training for a profession, or preparation for an employment.

2.2. Instructing in matters to do with salvation

In practice, however, De La Salle uses the verb "to instruct" almost exclusively in a religious context: morality, catechesis, Gospel, Christian life. The instruction of children involves "things a Christian is obliged to know concerning both doctrine and practice" (CL 24,104 = CE 9,3,10), or Christian life as a whole (CL 20,124 = DA 206,0,4).

2.2.1. INSTRUCTION AND THE WORD OF GOD

Instruction is rooted in the word of God, in particular in the New Testament (MF 170,1,2), "in order to receive Jesus Christ and his holy maxims" (MD 2, title). The Brothers bring up their pupils "in piety and in a true Christian spirit, that is, according to the rules and maxims of the Gospel" (RC 2,10; CL 15,75 = R 11,1,6). It is the means of giving them "the true spirit of Christianity" (MF 159,1,2). To make up for a lack of instruction, they need to be given "the spirit of Christianity" and brought up according to "the maxims of the Gospel". Instruction understood in this sense brings about a change of behaviour in children and helps them to give up their dissolute ways: "You have an easy way of showing it in the instruction you give your pupils, by teaching them the truths and maxims of the Gospel, and by strongly opposing all that savours of wildness in their conduct" (MF 140,1,2).

It offers an opportunity to instruct, reprove, correct and lead to piety children who are confided to you (MF 192,1,2), to make them practise the Christian virtues (MR 194,3,2). It brings about a change of life (MR 207,2,2; MR 207,3,1). This is the science of

the saints (MF 167,2,2), linked to catechism, a function similar to that of the Apostles: "It is your privilege to share in the Apostolic mission by giving religious instruction every day to the boys entrusted to you, and by explaining the truths of the Gospel to them" (MF 159,2,2).

In MD 44,1, the Founder puts the beatitudes at the heart of this instruction. He does not hesitate to offer as a model to the children of the artisans and the poor the Gospel in all its radicality, because he believes that they, like all baptised Christians, are capable of understanding and responding to the message of Jesus Christ, inspired as they are by the Holy Spirit of God. In "secular matters" (See 2,1 above) as in "matters related to God", De La Salle believes in the potential of young people.

"The truths that the Holy Spirit teaches those who receive him are the maxims of the Gospel. These he makes us understand and relish, and take as the guiding principle of our life and actions. It is the Holy Spirit alone who can make us understand them, and who can lead us efficaciously to practise them, for they are above the human intellect. Indeed, how could we possibly know, for instance, that 'Blessed are the poor', that we must 'love our enemies', that we should 'be glad and lighthearted when people revile us, persecute us, and speak all manner of evil against us', that we must 'do good to them that hate us', and a great number of similar truths completely contrary to what nature suggests, unless the Spirit of God taught us himself? It is your duty to teach these truths to the children confided to your care"¹ (MD 44,2). "Being instructed in the Gospel" is always with a view to adopting a new type of behaviour and way of acting.²

2.2.2. INSTRUCTION

AND THE PRINCIPAL MYSTERIES OF THE FAITH

The theoretical aspect of intellectual knowledge to be learned and memorised has its place in De La Salle's presentation of instruction. In this he shares in the thinking of his day regarding pastoral care: one cannot be saved without knowing in a detailed and explicit manner the principal mysteries of religion, the commandments of God and of the Church, the sacraments with their chief characteristics and implications, the way to pray, etc. This instruction is necessary and even indispensable for the reception of the sacraments (see 2.2.5 below).

Profession of the ten articles of faith a Christian is obliged to believe and to know

1. I believe that there is only one God and that there cannot be several.
2. I believe that there are three persons in God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that these three persons are only one God and not three Gods, because they have the same nature and the same divinity.
3. I believe that the Son of God, the second person of the most Holy Trinity, became man for the love of us, and died on a cross to atone to God for our sins, to deliver us from the sufferings of hell, and to make us deserve eternal life.
4. I believe that those who lead a good life in this world and who die in God's grace will be rewarded after their death, and that their reward will be to be eternally happy in heaven, seeing God as he is.
5. I believe that those who lead a bad life and die in a state of mortal sin will be damned, that is, they will never see God and that they will burn for eternity in hell.
6. I believe that there are ten commandments of God and that we are obliged to observe them all, and that we are obliged to obey the Church also, whose commandments for us are normally six in number.
7. I believe that it is enough to commit a single mortal sin and to die in this state to be damned.
8. I believe that it is necessary to have frequent recourse to prayer and that we cannot be saved without praying to God.
9. I believe that there are seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, extreme unction, holy orders and marriage.
10. I believe that baptism wipes out original sin and all actual sins, and makes us Christians; that the eucharist contains the body, blood, soul and divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine; and that penance forgives all the sins we have committed since baptism.

(CL 23,430 = GA 0,32)

Instruction is a necessary condition for belonging to the Church: "There are those who sin against faith and who are considered to belong only to the body of the Church: these are those who profess [...] certain heretical notions, [...] who willingly doubt some article of faith, [...] who are ignorant of the principal mysteries of our religion and of the commandments of God and of the Church, and who do not have themselves instructed in them"³ (CL 20,113 = DA 203,0,16).

Sometimes the language is such that one could conclude that faith consisted in simply understanding the faith — a series of formulas. The *Long Summary* (GA), a large abridged catechism, includes a "Profession of the ten articles of faith a Christian is obliged to believe and to know". What is immediately obvious is the connection that is made between **believing and knowing**. The text concludes by saying that this instruction is linked also to eternal salvation: "It is necessary to become instructed in all these things in order to be in a state to deserve and to obtain eternal salvation" (CL 23,431 = GA 0,32,5).

The fact that certain things are mentioned and others are not gives an insight into the contents of instruction:

- art. 1 & 2: on the nature of God.
- art. 3: on the role of Jesus: the mysteries of the incarnation and redemption, but no mention of the resurrection.
- art. 4: on salvation (begins in art. 3).
- art. 5 and 7: on hell, damnation, mortal sin (also begins in art. 3).
- art. 6: the commandments of God and the Church (simply referred to, but not listed).
- art. 8: prayer and salvation.
- art. 9 & 10: the sacraments.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned only in 2, as a member of the Trinity, and the Church in 6, in connection with its commandments. Confirmation is mentioned as one of the seven sacraments. On the other hand, such concepts as salvation, sin and hell are referred to much more frequently (art. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10). There is no mention of the Word of God. Doctrine is based on knowledge which is beyond the grasp of the faithful: the nature of God (art. 1 & 2). The notion of obligation is invoked (art. 6) as well as that of fear — of sin, hell and damnation.

On the other hand, this Christian faith is presented as the cause and fruit of a conversion of heart, inspired by the Spirit. It is founded on the Word of God,

as the *Duties of a Christian* explains at some length. This faith manifests itself in a whole series of practices and ways of acting which show that there really has been a change in a person's life: prayer, sacraments (MR 200,2,2), good works, piety, modesty, simplicity, humility, respect for parents (MR 200,3,2; MF 134,3,2; MR 207,2,2). For De La Salle, knowledge is expressed in practice.⁴

2.2.3. INSTRUCTION AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The knowledge of God is one of the elements on which Lasallian education focuses.

The Holy Trinity: the knowledge of it brings teachers and pupils together because both are consecrated to the Trinity in baptism: "By baptism, these children are, like you, consecrated to the Most Blessed Trinity. They bear the marks of this consecration in their soul" (MD 46,3,1). "This divine mystery [...] is the mystery above all others, and the source and principle of all the rest" (MD 46,1,2); also "It is only right, therefore, that you, whose duty it is to unfold this mystery to them as far as the light of faith permits, should acknowledge it as the source of all light, the mainstay of our faith, the very foundation of our religion" (MD 46,3,1).

The mystery of the Trinity which is placed at the beginning (art. 1 & 2) of the *credo* presented above, is the basic theme of all instruction: "The knowledge of the three Divine Persons. If you obtain this from God you will have ample provision wherewith to satisfy those who apply to you in their need of instruction" (MD 37,2,2).

The Trinity is the foundation on which the Church is built: "For you lay the foundation for the building of the Church when you instruct children in the mystery of the most Holy Trinity and the mysteries accomplished by Jesus Christ when he was on earth" (MR 199,1,2).

God: Instructing makes God known. The Apostles were instructed in his ways on Tabor (MD 18,2,2). The teacher, for his part, reveals to children that God is love; he instils this love into their heart (MD 39,1,2). To love God and to know him go together: "You sometimes have to instruct children who know nothing about God, [...] to make him known to others and loved by all those to whom you have made him known" (MD 41,3,2).

To do this, the teacher must be "competent in the

art of speaking to God, of God, and for God" (MD 64,2,2). He acquires this competence first of all by prayer (MF 189,1,2). He makes God reign in hearts (MD 67,2,2), discovering the truth about God and obtaining salvation (MR 197,1,2).

Jesus Christ is revealed as the Good Shepherd (MD 33), who is the teacher's model (see 3.3 below). He gave himself to his Apostles to whom he entrusted "the mission of founding and establishing the Church through the preaching of the Gospel" (CL 22,92 = DC 30,8,3). Hearts must be prepared for his coming, to receive him (MD 2, title; MD 2,2,2; MD 3,1,2). This knowledge comes about through love, which is communicated through the holy name of Jesus (MF 102,2,2). To be instructed about Jesus Christ means also to adore him and the mysteries which he accomplished for our salvation (MF 182,3,2).

The Holy Spirit: He himself instructs the faithful after instructing the Apostles (CL 22,231 = DC 44,6,6).

2.2.4. INSTRUCTION AND PRACTICE

Instructing is closely linked to practice: the teacher knows that knowing is not enough: "In each of his catechism lessons he will not fail to suggest some practices to his pupils, and to instruct them as thoroughly as possible about morals and the way they must behave in order to live as true Christians" (CL 24,102 = CE 9,3,4).

"In order to make the children you teach adopt the spirit of Christianity, you must teach them the practical truths of faith in Jesus Christ and the maxims of the Gospel with at least as much care as you teach the truths that are purely doctrinal" (MR 194,3,2).

"Is your main concern, then, to instruct your disciples in the maxims of the Holy Gospel and the practice of Christian virtues? Have you anything more at heart than helping them to find happiness in their practice?" (MR 194,3,2).

It is clear that what is important here is not intelligence, but the heart and affection. The duty of parents is involved here. In the *Duties of a Christian*, instruction heads the list and "making them live as good Christians" comes in third place as one of their duties (CL 21,241 = DB 2,23,8).

"Q. What must fathers and mothers do in order to bring up their children in the fear and love of God?

A. They must do three things: 1° instruct them, 2° correct them, 3° make them live as good Christians".

De La Salle insists on the quality of Christian life, because instruction and learning, etc., are not to do initially with theoretical knowledge, but with ways of living: Children need teachers so that “these teachers can teach them to lead good lives by instructing them in the mysteries of our holy religion, inspiring them with Christian maxims, and thus giving them the education suited to their needs” (RC 1,3).⁵

Teach them “the rules of a Christian life, and the means by which they may secure their eternal salvation” (MF 87,2,2). This instruction takes place by winning over hearts: this is what leads young people to God (MF 115,3,2). Matters to do with morals and the way one should behave in order to lead a truly Christian life are things that are learnt.

To lead a Christian life means:

- to show charity to one’s companions (MD 69,1,2; MR 198,3,2).
- to have good morals (MD 60,3,1 & 2; MR 196,2,1 & 2; MR 200,3).
- to be modest (MD 60,3,2; MR 200,3,2).
- to avoid bad companions and to choose good ones (MD 33,3,1; MD 37,2,1; MD 56,2,2; MD 60,3,1; MF 111,3,2; MF 114,2,2; MF 126,1,2; MR 194,1,1; MR 205,3,1; MR 206,2,2).
- to love and practise piety (MD 60,3,2; MD 69,1,2; MR 200,3,2).
- to become converted: “If you want to fulfil your ministry as guardian angels for the children you teach, making them holy and perfect, building up by them the body of Christ and **to make them holy and perfect**, you must work to inspire them with the same sentiments and to put them in the same dispositions which St Paul tried to achieve in the Ephesians through the letter he wrote to them.

“1. That they do not sadden the Holy Spirit of God with whom they have been sealed in baptism and confirmation against the day of redemption.

“2. You would be deserving of blame if you did not encourage them to lay aside their former way of life. You must, therefore, be equally zealous in making them give up lying and, instead, always saying the truth when speaking with their neighbour.

“3. They should be gentle with one another, showing compassion and mutual forgiveness, just as God pardoned them through Jesus Christ. They should love one another in the same way as Jesus Christ has loved them. Is this the way you have taught your disciples up to the present? Are these the maxims with which you have inspired them? Have you had enough vigilance over them, and has your zeal been ardent enough to induce

them to practise these maxims? Put all your effort in the future into being faithful in these matters” (MR 198,3).

Conduct is Christian when it conforms to what Jesus Christ and the Apostles taught and practised.⁶

2.2.5. INSTRUCTION AND THE SACRAMENTS

There is great insistence on the sacraments in the various catechisms written by De La Salle, as well as in the *Instructions and Prayers for Holy Mass, Confession and Communion*. The reception of the sacraments in the Catholic religion calls for detailed and precise instruction. De La Salle includes even liturgical aspects in his treatment of this topic. The sacraments are an important element in leading the type of Christian life described earlier. They are also one of the explicit ways of showing one’s membership of the Church and one’s identity as a Christian.

“The chief care, then, of the Apostles, after teaching the first faithful, was to have them receive the sacraments, assemble for prayer together, and live according to the Christian spirit” (MR 200,2,1).

The sacraments serve also to draw a person away from sin and bad habits and to protect him against them (MD 56,3,2; MR 198,2,1; MR 200,2,2; RC 1,6). The ceremonies need to be made comprehensible to the children and explained to them (CL 20,209 = DA 301,2,12f). This is the role of De La Salle’s catechisms: the *Duties of a Christian*, the *Abridged Catechisms* and the *Instructions for Holy Mass and Confession*.

Baptism is not dealt with at great length, relatively speaking. Adult or adolescent baptisms were exceptional at the time, and children would hear about them only from textbooks. Being baptised implied evangelising others, even where children were concerned. In their case, this dimension was shown to be part of their Christian identity (DA 105,2,5; DA 302; DA 309,1,13; DB 3,3).

Confirmation was received quite young, on reaching the age of reason and, in any case, before first communion (CL 20,233f = DA 303; CL 21,166f = DB 3,6).

“Q. Can all children who have reached the age of reason be confirmed?

A. Yes, providing they are sufficiently instructed and have the will to become perfect Christians, and enough discernment to take the means to become so” (CL 21,169 = DB 3,6,6).

One has to be sufficiently instructed and perform all the actions of a true Christian without human respect (Cf. MR 198,3,1 et MR 200,2,2 which associate confirmation with baptism).

The Eucharist. The *Long Summary* advocates the age of 12 for first communion (CL 23,373 = GA 0,17,6; CL 21,116 = DB 2,12,2; Cf. CL 17,5f = I 1,2).

“You must dispose them to receive their first communion with holy dispositions and to go to communion frequently thereafter in order to preserve the grace they received the first time they performed this action” (MR 200,2,2. Cf. MR 206,1,2).

The period between the ages of 7 and 12, that is, between confirmation and communion, was more or less the age range catered for by the “Christian and Gratuitous Schools”. By the age of 12, the young Christian had received all the sacraments of Christian initiation and was considered to be an adult. It was the age also when the children of artisans began their working life by becoming apprentices to one or other master craftsman.

Penance. The way in which a person was envisaged in those days, the insistence on his sinful nature, the important role of sin in salvation (see GA 0,32 and the credo it proposes) give this sacrament an excessively dominant role in pastoral thinking and Lasallian catechisms. Penance is also often linked with communion and seen as preceding it. See the *Instructions and Prayers* as well as the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, which link them as a matter of course (MR 200,2,2; MR 206,1,2; Cf. CL 17,102f = I,2).

Matrimony and the conditions for marrying: “Another disposition required by the Church is that those who wish to marry should be instructed in the principal mysteries of our religion, and know the following: the three prayers, *Our Father*, *Hail Mary* and *I believe*, the commandments of God and the Church, the seven sacraments, especially what concerns the sacrament of baptism, and the words one must pronounce when one gives it, the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, and what relates to the sacrament of marriage and the duties of this state” (CL 20,388 = DA 310,3,7; Cf. CL 21,239 = DB 3,23,4).⁷

Holy Orders: “There was a need to have in the Church officers and ministers of Jesus Christ to offer to God the sacrifice of the Eucharist, to administer the sacraments to the faithful, and instruct them in their

religion and their duties” (CL 20,365 = DA 309,1,1; cf. all of chap. IX).⁸

2.2.6. INSTRUCTION, PRAYER AND PIETY

Prayer is a Christian practice which is necessary in order to achieve salvation:

“8. I believe that it is necessary to have frequent recourse to prayer and that one cannot be saved without praying to God” (CL 23,431 = GA 0,32,3).

The *Instructions and Prayers* contain model prayers, which serve also as a means of instruction (I 1,1,4), the *Duties of a Christian* treat prayer at some length, while the *Conduct of Schools* punctuates the day (and even the school year) with prayers. Praying was organised with a view to preparing pupils for a life of prayer. One has to be instructed in order to know what to ask in prayer, to whom to address one’s prayer (CL 20,442f = DA 403). Prayer for the needs of the Church is explicit (CL 22,36 = DC 20,4,3). Prayer enables a person to turn away from sin, to preserve grace (RC 2,9; MD 56,3,1; MD 60,3,2). It is associated with the sacraments (MR 200,2,1), with piety, devotion, modesty (MD 60,3,2) and, in MF 155,1,1, prayer is associated with the fear of God. Prayer is also an activity characteristic of a Christian (MF 134,3,2). It is an indication that he is really living according to the Gospel (RC 2,10) and that he has been affected by the Christian education he received: “The children whom you instruct are well behaved, know their religion well, and are pious” (MR 207,2,2).⁹

2.2.7. INSTRUCTION AND SIN

Instruction takes on a practical character when it deals with faults to avoid. There are ordinary sins and sins against the Holy Spirit: “As these sins (the seven capital sins) are quite common in the world, it is proper that the faithful should be instructed about them in order to either preserve themselves from them or, if there are some they already commit, to turn away from them” (CL 20,168 = DA 214,0,1).

“Apart from capital sins or vices, there are also three other sorts of sins they should be instructed about: these are the sins said to be against the Holy Spirit, those that are seen as crying to God for vengeance, and those one commits by sharing in the sins of others” (CL 20,180 = DA 215,0,1).

Instruction should give a horror for sin, vice, gambling, dissipation and dissoluteness. Instruction turns

a person away from sin and preserves innocence (MD 56,3,2; MD 60,3).¹⁰

Children need to be warned about the danger of bad company, taught to choose good companions who are modest, reserved, well-behaved and pious (MF 126,1,2). Instruction helps to fight against distractions in church, an obstacle to true prayer (Cf. 2,2,7). Children who lead a disordered life are encouraged to change their ways by instruction (RC 2,9; CL 15,75 = R 11,1,6).

2.2.8 INSTRUCTION AND CATECHISM

Catechism is the activity by which the Brother instructs, in the most positive sense of the term: "Of the obligation the Brothers of this Society have to acquit themselves well of their duties in school, to instruct well the children there, to teach them catechism well and to induce them to be pious and show them the way to be so" (CL 15,69 = R 10,2,28).

Catechism is the principal activity of the school day. It is given at the end of the afternoon or morning, as the need arises, so as to ensure that it takes place. No pupil can be dispensed from it, and those who come to school for only half the school day must

come in the afternoon so as to attend the catechism lesson (CL 24,97f = CE 9). Catechism must take place each day (MF 159,2,2).

Catechism has a role in the life of the Church which entrusts this task to the Brothers: "Not one of your boys should be ignorant of his faith. This is the chief reason why the Church has confided them to you. You should consider yourself as a depository of the faith which you have to impart to those confided to your care. Such is the treasure which God places in your hands, and of which you are the steward" (MD 61,2,1; Cf. MR 199,2,1 & 2; MR 199,3,2).

Catechism has a role to play in the lives of the children: it adapts itself to their needs, proposes a way of life to them which involves turning away from sin, modesty, piety and practices suited to their age and situation (MR 200). Catechism means imparting knowledge: of the Gospel, mysteries, commandments, sacraments (MD 61,2,1 & 2; MF 79,3,2). A good book can still serve as a means of Christian instruction (CL 20,121 = DA 205,0,6). Primary responsibility for catechising rests with parents, or by default, with godfathers, godmothers and guardians (CL 20,125 = DA 206,0,5; CL 20,127 = DA 206,0,12-13; CL 20,225 = DA 302,3,8).

3. INSTRUCTING: THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

3.1. The ministry of brotherhood

Attention is drawn a number of times to the importance of the personal example of the teacher in the process of instruction. Instruction cannot be reduced to imparting knowledge by talking about it. Christian life is something to be shared, to be given through human relationships. This is where the "ministry of brotherhood" comes in: being an elder Brother to the pupils, which is one of the characteristics of Lasallian education. (See present *Rule* 53 & MR 202,3).

Care must be taken that all children are instructed, that the school is well run, that there are many children there to hear the message of salvation (LA 58,20). These children are the object of the Brothers' prayer, in particular of their community prayer (MR 198,1,2).

Thus we read in EM 2,37:

- "By your presence in our midst, gathered to pray to you. [...]"

- "To have an intimate union of mind and heart with my Brothers. [...]"

- "Having received your divine Spirit. [...] May I allow myself to be guided by him in order to fulfil the duties of my state and that he may make me participate in your zeal for the instruction of those whom you will wish to entrust to my care" (CL 14,11f).

By his regular life, the Brother edifies the children, encourages them to live piously and to be modest and well-behaved (MF 153,2,2). He learns regularly through mental prayer (MF 78,2,2) and demonstrates it by his attachment to poverty (MF 86,3,2). As a teacher, he prepares his lessons (MF 91,3,1) in response to God's call to this holy work (MF 93,3,2).

He needs also to have a solid piety and to withdraw from the world (MF 120,2,2), giving himself to God, "as it were, soul for soul", in his ministry, in the place of those whom he teaches, offering his life in witness to the absolute (MF 137,3,2). Instructing

involves showing kindness and affection for the children (MF 134,2,2) as part of a process which involves mental prayer and mortification (MF 153,1,2) and self-control regarding anger, violent emotions, bad temper (MF 155,2,2). In this way the Brother becomes the spiritual father of these children whom he begets in Jesus Christ (MF 157,1,2).

The Brother is guided by faith (MF 178,1,2). Faith is the light that guides teachers and pupils along the path to heaven. What is essential is to give suitable attention to each individual child, according as he is dissolute, inclined to be good or evil, or is naturally good (MF 186,3,2).

3.2. Discerning, accompanying, teaching : meditation 33

The texts from Holy Scripture describe the Brother's ministry to children :

1st point. "For those in charge of souls, taking great care of the sheep means knowing each one individually". **Discerning and guiding.**

2nd point. "So that the sheep know their shepherd and therefore can follow him". The task of those "employed to instruct others" is to **accompany** them, to walk with the sheep. To be able to do this, the teacher must be **virtuous and tender** towards the children he teaches.

3rd point. "It is an obligation on the part of the sheep of Jesus Christ to listen to the voice of their shepherd, [...] it is your daily duty, therefore, to teach the children confided to your care".

This educational process is not envisaged in vague terms : prayer is complemented by the practical approach of the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* :

- "Some require greater mildness, while others need to be directed with firmness.
- "Some require much patience; others need to be goaded on.
- "It is necessary to punish and reprehend some, in order to correct their defects.
- "Others need to be continually watched lest they should wander and perish" (MD 33,1,1).

The face of God which is revealed to the children through the Brother is that of a God who is close to them, who accompanies them, who loves them and takes care of them: "This is one of the most important characteristics you must have in order to accompany the children entrusted to you" (MD 33,1,2).

The great tenderness of the teacher is the central theme of MD 33,2 and therefore of the whole of meditation 33 : "They should manifest great tenderness for the souls confided to them. [...] In this manner, the sheep will love their shepherd and take pleasure in his company" (MD 33,2,1).

"The duty to teach the children confided to your care", involves giving them "instructions suited to their capacity" (MD 33,3,1), otherwise this work would serve no purpose. Instruction is at the service of the word of God (the reference to the Good Shepherd) :

- "Make your questions and answers easily understandable during catechism.
- "Explain them clearly [...]
- "Use words that are easy to understand [...]
- "Point out their faults simply.
- "Give them the means to correct them.
- "Teach them about the virtues suited to their age and show them how easy they are.
- "Inspire them with great horror for sin, and teach them to avoid bad company [...]
- "Speak to them of everything that can induce them to be pious" (MD 33,3,1).

The teacher needs to be trained to make himself understood by the children : "You must study". "To teach the children, [...] give them instructions suited to their capacity" means, quite clearly, to teach them catechism, to explain it, give exhortations, point out, give the means, teach, inspire, speak... It is a list that encompasses the whole life of a Christian, and this is the life that De La Salle means when he speaks of instructing. Children are made to learn their catechism in order to lead Christian lives in a way that fits in with the reality of the world in which they live : "The virtues suited to their age, [...] the bad company, [...] everything that can induce them to be pious" (MD 33,3,1).

Meditation 33 highlights the main characteristics of the spirituality of a teacher in the exercise of his ministry. It shows how his teaching work is the object of his prayers. These characteristics are as follows :

Knowing individually all those confided to your care, **and discerning** the way you should act towards them, in order to make them know themselves, and realise how much God loves them.

Accompanying young people by the personal example of your virtue and of the good you do. **Showing great tenderness** towards them and being sensi-

tive to what they need for salvation, so that they can become true disciples of Jesus Christ, loving the teacher who leads them to him, and taking pleasure in his company.

Teaching them to lead a Christian life with all its practices, respecting their situation, and taking into account the social background, relationships and specific characteristics of the children.

4. CONCLUSION : INSTRUCTING BUILDS UP THE CHURCH, OBTAINS SALVATION AND GOD'S GLORY

Instructing children is God's will, desire and call: "It is God who called you to this ministry" (MR 193,2,2); the teachers that "are given them for their instruction" (MR 194,2,1). Associated with God's work, the Brothers become "cooperators of Jesus Christ (MR 195, title); it is "a holy employment" (MR 201, title). The purpose of this employment and this work is **the salvation of children**. Instructing them puts them "on the path to heaven" (MR 200,3,2), makes them become "the heirs of the kingdom of Jesus Christ Our Lord" (MR 201,2,2). "You have undertaken to watch over their conduct and to instruct them [...] and to work for the salvation of their souls" (MR 201,3,2). De La Salle speaks also of "the zeal that you have for the salvation of the souls of those you have to instruct" (MR 201,3,2) and of "the burning zeal for the salvation of those you are called upon to instruct" (MR 205,2,2). This salvation is described as "the life of grace in this world, and eternal life in the next" (MR 201,3,2).

This work is not useless: on the contrary, it serves to save "those they were called upon to instruct" (MR 207,2,1). The children you instruct will be "won over to God"; in fact, you will procure glory both for them and for yourselves (MR 208,1,2). These teachers will be "the means of salvation" for the children they instruct (MR 208,2,1), because instructing young people with zeal and application obtains "salvation for children" (MR 208,3,2). Those who taught them the way to heaven will be blessed (MR 208,3,2).

Instructing obtains salvation for children and in this way **the glory of God** is manifested. God reveals him-

self in this concrete salvific process. When he reveals himself in this way, he is seen in all his glory, because he reveals himself as God, as God doing God's work, the salvation of the poor.

Salvation and glory are the activities proper to the God of all goodness mentioned in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*. The humble action of instructing leads directly to this divine glory experienced by children and their teachers, glory in the presence of all the elect in heaven (MR 208).

"Instructing them solely for the love and glory of God" (MR 201,2,1). Procuring glory for God by giving children "the spirit of wisdom, the insight to know him clearly and light for the eyes of their hearts" (MR 206,1,1). In this way, "on the day of judgment they will be your glory, if you have taught them well" (MR 208,1,2).

Instructing children means "laying the foundation of the Church" (MR 199,1,2), working on "the building of the Church" (MR 200,1,1), "making them a true part of the structure of this building" (MR 201,2,2), because they are "a part of the building that is the Church" (MR 205,3,2).

The Church chooses some of its members for this ministry (MR 199,1,2, MR 199,2,2). It is for the Church that "you work" (MR 201,2,2). Catechising and instructing the poor (MR 200,1,2) is of great use to the Church, and is "a way of showing tangible proof that you love those whom God has entrusted to you just as Jesus Christ has loved his Church" (MR 201,2,2).

5. APPENDICES

5.1. Use of the words “instruction” and “to instruct” in 17th century French

5.1.1. INSTRUCTION

- Richelet’s Dictionary (Amsterdam, 1709).

Teachings, instructive memoirs. The instruction is very good. He gave his instructions regarding the embassies.

- The *Dictionnaire Universel* (Trévoux, 1721).

Precept, teaching (academic studies or morality).

- They write catechisms for the instruction of young people in Christianity.
- You can find good instruction in the morals of fables, in satires and plays.
- The example of a good life is an instruction for the human race (Bossuet).

It means also the education of young people :

- Princes are given tutors who are responsible for their instruction and education.
- It is used also of information we wish to communicate to someone:
- Prefaces serve as an instruction regarding the good use of a book.
- I have sent you this memoir for your instruction, so that you may know what this business is about.

5.1.2. TO INSTRUCT

- *Dictionnaire Universel* (Trévoux, 1721)

To teach young people, to bring up

- Colleges are founded to instruct young people in the sciences, seminaries to instruct young clerics.
- The Court, that fine society, is a good school for instructing and teaching how to live as one should.
- I shall instruct him myself to avenge the Trojans (Racine).

It means also to inform someone, let him know something.

- This prince is well-informed about his interests and foreign affairs. By “a badly instructed child” is meant one that is uncouth, unpolished, ill-mannered. A well-instructed one is well-behaved and behaves as he should.

- *Grand Vocabulaire français* (Paris, 1770)

Differences between teaching (*enseigner*), teaching (*apprendre*) and instructing.

Teaching (*enseigner*) : means only giving lessons.

Teaching (*apprendre*) : giving lessons for profit.

Instructing : explaining things by means of detailed memoirs.

Teaching (*enseigner* and *apprendre*) has more to do with cultivating the mind and giving a fine education. It is used, therefore, when there is question of arts or sciences.

Instructing has more to do with what is useful for a particular situation in life and with success in business. It is appropriate, therefore, when our duties or our interests are involved.

5.2. Instruction(s) and to instruct : titles of manuals or chapter headings in De La Salle’s writings

“Instruction” in the singular or plural can be used in a title for a manual, such as, “Instructions and Prayers”, or within the manual in a chapter heading, or even in a heading for specific lesson, such as “Preliminary Instructions” (DB). Used in the singular, instruction can mean a sermon or homily : “The sermon is an instruction which the priest...” (CL 22,36 = DC 20,4,1).

The number of times “Instruction(s)” is used in titles of books, or headings in chapters and lessons :

- Conduct of Schools	1
- Duties of a Christian (DA)	3
- Duties of a Christian (DB) (all chapters)	76
- Of External and Public Worship (DC)	3
- Instructions and Prayers	17
- Rules of Propriety	1

The number of times “Instruction” is used in the sense of sermon, homily, lesson :

- Duties of a Christian (DA)	1
- Of External and Public Worship	4
- Instructions and Prayers	2
- Exercises of Piety	6

¹ See also MF 84,1,1; MR 196,2,1 & 2; MR 198,3,1 & 2; MR 202,2,1 & 2.

² See also CL 20,476 = DA 405,2,3; MD 37,2,1 & 2; MD 61,2,1; MF 81,2,2; MF 175,2,2; MF 175,3,2; MR 193,1,1; MR 198,1,2; MR 201,1,2.

³ See also CL 22,39 = DC 20,4,9; MD 60,3,1; MD 61,2,1; MF 79,3,2; MF 109,3,2; MF 145,2,2; MF 175,3,2; MR 200,1,1 & 2.

⁴ See also CL 20,476 = DA 405,2,3; CL 22,36 = DC 20,4,3; MD 3,1,1 & 2; MD 7,1,2; MF 80,2,2; MF 92,3,1; MF 111,3,2; MF 115,3,2; MF 131,1,2; MF 155,1,1; MF 186,2,2; MR 193,1,2; MR 194,2 & 3; MR 197,2; MR 201,1,2; MR 208,1 & 2; RC 30,1.

⁵ See also RC 2,10 & CL 15,75 = R 11,1,6.

⁶ See MR 196,2 & 3; MR 200,1 & 2; MF 79,2,2; MF 86,3,2; MR194,3,1; CL 19, preface = RB 0,0,1-3.

⁷ Regarding the duties of married people towards their children, see CL 20,121 = DA 205,0,6; CL 20,122 = DA 205,0,8; CL 20,125f = DA 206,0,4-6; CL 21,241 = DB 3,23,8-9.

⁸ Conditions for receiving the tonsure (CL 20,374 = DA 309,2,7) reflect the personal experience of De La Salle as a child.

⁹ See also MD 37,2,2; MF 98,3,1; MF 99,1,2; MF 11,3,2; MF 115,1,2; MF 192,1,2; MR 205,3,1 & 2; MR 206,2,1; MR 207,3,1 & 2; MR 208,1,1 & 2.

¹⁰ See CL 19,131 = RB 205,0,349: Of Entertainments. In particular CL 19,142 = RB 205,3,377: Of Gambling, and CL 19,153 = RB 205,5,405: Of Entertainments which are not permitted.

Complementary themes

Apostle	Education	Imitation of Christ
Catechism	God's role	Mission
Celebrating	God's work	Poor
Child - pupil - disciple	Goodness	Sacraments
Christian	Guardian angels	Salvation
Christian teacher	Hearts (to touch)	School
		Teacher-pupil relation

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(See pp. 599-600, a note on the word "instruire" in the meditations of De La Salle).

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