

INTRODUCTION

The present publication of *Lasallian Themes 3* in English brings to a conclusion the original plan launched some 8 years ago to invite selected authors to contribute articles to a collection of 100 Lasallian topics. Each theme, presented within a limited framework as regarded its length, was to offer those indispensable elements of the topic which needed to be taken into consideration in order to do justice to the thinking of John Baptist de La Salle as expressed in his writings.

The very nature of the enterprise assumed that there had to be a broadly historical approach to each theme. It was important, for example, that words and expressions be understood in their late 17th century French context and that some indication be given of any substantial change in usage for today's readers. What the original project had not anticipated, however, was the great diversity of approaches of the invited authors in relation to a particular culture and education as members of an international Institute. This, in itself, has been one of the most enriching aspects of the overall project. At the same time, this variety of approaches has meant that the translation of all the themes into the three different languages most widely used in the Institute has had its own difficulties where the theme does not appear to resonate with the culture in which it is being read.

This difficulty has also had its benefits. The choice of the 100 Themes was not intended to leave the reader in the comparative security of the historical past. The correlation with other themes, presented at the end of each topic and the indication of a basic bibliography, meant that the last word on the theme has not yet been written. What the theme offered was the challenge to consider its importance in relation to the world, the society, the many and diversified cultures, where members of the Lasallian Family continue to work today for the Lasallian Mission of human and Christian education. In his preface to *Lasallian Themes 1*, Brother Léon Lauraire pointed out that "they [the Themes] offer opportunities for reflection and act as an invitation to pursue still further the work of research and interpretation".

It is in the same spirit of inviting readers to further *reflection* and *action* on these foundations of thinking from the Lasallian heritage that this present volume is added. Our special thanks go to the authors and the editorial committee. Readers of this English edition owe a special debt to the indefatigable translator, Brother Allen Geppert, who is responsible for all translations into English in this volume.

Rome, June 23rd 1997

Br Gerard Rummery

General Councillor

FOREWORD TO THE FRENCH ÉDITION

When Brother Léon Lauraire introduced the first volume of *Lasallian Themes* on November 6th 1992, he spoke in terms of “a good hundred articles based on the writings of De La Salle”. With this volume we reach article 99, but not the end of the series.

What characterises this third volume more than the preceding ones is the difference in approach adopted in the various articles. Some limit themselves strictly to describing the use of a term; others are so broad in their approach that at one time we considered publishing them separately. These latter include *Chastity* by Br Jaume Pujol, the *Conduct of Christian Schools* by Br Léon Lauraire and the *Imitation of Christ* by Br Antonio Botana. Our selection committee, however, thought that the contribution of these articles was so valuable that they ought to be included in the present volume.

A certain number of readers have shown their interest in the *Lasallian Themes* by expressing their surprise at the delay in the publication of this third volume. The reason for this delay is simple: as a way of lowering the price of their publications, the Lasallian Studies team have decided, where possible, to compose them on computer without using outside facilities. This decision delayed the publication date of this volume by a year – a year spent in acquiring the necessary equipment, the necessary expertise to use it, and in doing the work. We hope that our readers will be amply rewarded by the quality of the work for the delay we have imposed on them.

Volume 3 of *Lasallian Themes* is the fruit of much collaboration by those who wrote the articles, those who checked them, those who translated them and those who composed the texts for printing. I am most grateful to all of them for their contribution to this joint undertaking. Some readers have already contacted us, offering to write articles for volume 4. No doubt they feel there is a need at the present time for a Lasallian analysis of some of the topics envisaged when the series was launched, and which have not yet been treated.

In the case of some of these topics, no volunteers have come forward. The reason for this is probably because no Brothers have so far published research on them: it would not be enough to improvise, even in summary form, on such topics as soul-body or the direction of conscience. In the case of other topics, articles have been written but have been rejected by the selection committee, because it was thought they did not do complete justice to the dynamism of St La Salle’s thinking, or because they did not fit in with the aims of the *Lasallian Themes* series. It is not enough to begin with present-day ideas and then look for support for them in the writings of the Founder. It is better to bring to the surface patiently areas of research worth pursuing in the life and writings of the Founder as a whole and then let them challenge the needs of our times.

The selection committee has decided therefore to publish a fourth volume of the *Lasallian Themes*, which will also be the last of the series. It believes that, since some key issues of our Lasallian lives would be covered in it, the thinking and effort involved in producing this volume would be worthwhile. We believe that in this way the *Lasallian Themes* series will achieve the aim it set itself and meet the expectations of its readers.

Rome, October 9th 1996.

Br Alain Houry

Director of Lasallian Studies

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PRINCIPAL ABBREVIATIONS

Writings of St John Baptist de La Salle

- CE Conduct of the Christian Schools (*Conduite des Écoles chrétiennes*, CL 24, 1706 ms)
- DA The Duties of a Christian, in continuous prose (*Les Devoirs d'un chrétien*, CL 20, 1703 edition)
- DB The Duties of a Christian, in question and answer form (*Les Devoirs d'un chrétien*, CL 21, 1703 edition)
- DC External and Public worship, part 3 of the Duties of a Christian (*Du culte extérieur, Troisième partie des Devoirs d'un chrétien*, CL 22, 1703 edition)
- E Exercices of piety (*Exercices de piété*, CL 18, 1760 edition)
- EM Explanation of the Method of Mental prayer (*Explication de la méthode d'oraison*, CL 14, 1739 edition)
- EP Personal writings (*Écrits personnels*, CL 2,42 & CL 10,114f)
- FD Rule of the Brother Director (*Règle du Frère Directeur*, CL 25, 1718 ms)
- GA The Duties of a Christian, Long Summary (*Les Devoirs du chrétien, Grand abrégé*, CL 23, 1727 edition)
- I Instructions and prayers (*Instructions et prières*, CL 17, 1734 edition)
- LA Original letters (*Lettres autographes*, ms edited in 1954)
- LC Copied letters (*Lettres copiées*, ms edited in 1954)
- LI Printed letters (*Lettres imprimées*, CL 8 mainly, edited in 1954)
- MD Meditations for all the Sundays (*Méditations pour tous les dimanches*, CL 12, 1731 edition)
- MF Meditations for the principal feasts (*Méditations pour les principales fêtes*, CL 12, 1731 edition)
- MH Memoir on the Habit (*Mémoire sur l'habit*, CL 11, 1690 ms)
- MR Meditations for the Time of Retreat (*Méditations pour le temps de la retraite*, CL 13, 1730 edition)
- P Daily Prayers of the Brothers (*Prières quotidiennes des Frères*, 1738 ms)
- PA The Duties of a Christian, Short Summary (*Les Devoirs d'un chrétien, Petit abrégé*, CL 23, 1727 edition)
- R Collection of various short treatises (*Recueil de différents petits traités*, CL 15, 1711 edition)
- RB Rules of propriety and Christian politeness (*Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne*, (CL 19, 1703 edition)
- RC Common Rules of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (*Règles communes*, CL 25, 1718 ms)
- RD Directories (*Directoires*, CL 15, 1711 edition)

Page references are usually made to Cahiers lasalliens (CL) and to the complete works (Oeuvres complètes) in French (1993). For cross-reference to the English translation of the letters, see The Letters... p.287f.

Various

- AEP SAUVAGE, M., and CAMPOS, M., *JBS, Annoncer l'Évangile aux Pauvres*, Paris, 1977 - partly translated by Matthew J. O'Connell, *St. John Baptist de La Salle, Announcing the Gospel to the Poor*. Romeville, 1981
- AMG Archives of the FSC Generalate in Rome
- BJ *The Jerusalem Bible* (French edition, Paris, 1955)
- CL *Cahiers lasalliens*, series founded in Rome in 1959 (e.g.: CL 38,18 = vol. 38, p. 18)
- DS *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Paris, 1937-1995
- TOB *Bible*, ecumenical translation in French, Paris, 1976
- VTB *Vocabulaire de Théologie biblique*, Paris, 1988

For the abbreviations of the books of the Bible, see Lasallian Themes 1, p. 9.