

## THE CLIENTELE OF THE LASALLIAN SCHOOLS AT THEIR BEGINNINGS (2)

### THE SECOND CATEGORY OF PUPILS IN DE LA SALLE'S SCHOOLS

Children from the more prosperous social classes

★ To begin with it was only the poor, the sons of uneducated people, of the ill-clad, who filled the gratuitous classes of the *Brothers*. It was primarily for them that the Lasallian community had been established (Cf. Med. for Christmas).

★ To begin with, their lice, bad smell, their rough manners, vulgar language, kept the children of the so called "decent" families away.

★ La Salle changed this situation with their training in good manners, in politeness. All were attracted to the classrooms, lice disappeared, repulsion gave way to a kind of astonishment and then to curiosity.

### DISAPPEARANCE OF SOCIAL SEGREGATION

★ The better off families (craftsmen, small business people) began to prefer the Lasallian schools to those of the Writing Masters and the Teachers of the Little Schools. They there found an efficient training to:

- self control and obedience to parents;
- render service and to assume responsibility (participation of pupils in classroom offices, visits to the sick and to be absentees);
- a speedy and conscientious apprenticeship to reading, writing, arithmetic, the duties of a Christian towards God, towards oneself, towards others...

★ The results were a series of court cases, acts of vandalism by the Masters of the Little Schools and the Writing Masters who wanted to keep in their paying schools all the children who could afford it.

★ Court inquiries did indeed show that there were pupils with the *Brothers* whose parents were well able to pay fees: two doctors, a master wheel-wright, a master locksmith, a wine merchant, a grocer, a goldsmith, restaurateurs.

★ La Salle, however, never gives way and will never give way when it is question of the gratuity of the schools and a gratuity which refuses to close its doors to those who are in a position to pay. His schools remain open to all... even the rich because he refuses to humiliate the parents who are poor by asking them to furnish proof of their poverty, because he sees that the poor need to mix with those who are less poor while still at school to enable them to acquire a more cultured vocabulary and more elegant manners than those in the milieu from which they come. He therefore leaves the control of resources to the parish priests, when he cannot avoid the pressures of laws with which he does not agree.

★ This pressure by professional groups hostile to the free access to gratuitous teaching of rich and poor of whatever social class for fear of competition and a comparison of their results was to pursue the Institute of the *Brothers* of the Christian schools during the whole of the 18th century and to be continued in the 19th to arrive at its zenith in 1886 when they were forbidden to run communal state schools and in 1904 when they were forbidden to run any school in France. It is still this pressure by certain unions which leads the French government to refuse financial assistance for the poor which they need if they are to choose for their children a Christian school rather than a non-paying secular school.

## **CREATION OF COURSES FOR ADULTS**

★ The general rule at the time of St. John Baptist de La Salle and his successors in the 18th and 19th centuries was for the children of the lower classes to learn in a short while at school the indispensable elements required to enter an apprenticeship.

It quickly became evident that further study was needed if one wishes to advance in his profession: bookkeeping, technical drawing, arithmetic, the elements of science, intelligent spelling.

Hence adult courses were inaugurated from the very beginning during the workers' leisure hours and sometimes on a Sunday, always with plenty of time available for the Christian training of adults whose short period at school had prevented them from acquiring it, and always in such a way that those who wished could express their Christian faith in prayer.

★ Courses for adults have never been completely abandoned by the Institute.

## **CREATION OF SCHOOLS FOR YOUNG DELINQUENTS**

★ The science of amendment is given in the "Conduite des Ecoles" and in the counsels to a new teacher. Brother Othmar Wurth's study is an admirable testimony.

★ The boarding school of St. Yon was a detention centre, in other words a psychological centre for the correction of young delinquents. La Salle agreed to it because it was destined for the morally most disadvantaged.

★ Later on similar establishments were accepted by the Institute in different parts of the world. The young people are received in them after a court order. In order to follow in St. J.B. de La Salle's footsteps, the Brothers must be able to organize the regulations, create a brotherly atmosphere between the Brothers and the prisoners, let them share in the responsibilities as one can begin to trust them more, bring them gradually into contact with other people and follow them up when they have left the establishment.

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ST. YON BOARDING SCHOOL FOR FAMILIES OF MEANS**

★ The success of the schools for the working classes led the well off families who lived at a distance from the town to ask St. J.B. de La Salle to open a boarding school for their children. The saint agreed pointing out that it seemed that God allowed such a request to furnish the financial solution for meeting the urgent need of a Training Centre for the Brothers. There were thus two conditions required if such a boarding school was to come within the normal activities of the Institute:

— there must be only a small number to prevent too many Brothers from being assigned to them to the detriment of the schools for the working classes;

— the school itself must be gratuitous, with only the boarding being paid for.

★ It is obvious that the studies could and should be more extensive in such a boarding school since the children remained there longer and the professions for which they were destined exacted a greater degree of knowledge and culture.

★ The different general chapters have continually ratified this outlook and it was only in 1904, as far as France is concerned... that the legal suppression entailed the closing or abandoning of the small schools which were not so well supported by the "power of money", while the bigger boarding schools continued by virtue of those same powers which were capable of maintaining them in spite of the laws which ended up by disinheriting only the poor.

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