

ST. LA SALLE'S
RETREAT RESOLUTIONS
or «Rules which I have imposed
upon myself»

(2/3)

This consideration does not seem to have led to a resolution. Later, in point 8, Hayneufve says the following: «What motives and how much interior freedom do you have when you do business?»

La Salle began thinking about the various measures he had to take. There was business he had to deal with and, according to Hayneufve, he needed to assess the extent of his interior freedom and preserve it. It is possible to see a connection also between this Consideration and **Rule 4** of his programme, which runs as follows: «*When I go to see someone, I shall be careful to say no more than what is necessary, not indulge in social gossip or idle conversation, and not stay more than half an hour.*» Such a resolution must surely have been made to preserve "interior freedom".

The second part of point 8 of this Consideration also offers a challenge to La Salle. It says: «How do you unite them (business affairs) with the actions and intentions of Jesus Christ?»

Having thought about this, La Salle writes down **resolution 5**: «*I shall unite my actions with those of Jesus Christ at least twenty times a day, and I shall try to perform them only from a point of view and for reasons which conform with his. For this purpose I shall have a small piece of paper which I shall prick as many times as I do so; and for every time I fail to do so each day, I shall say an Our Father and kiss the floor when I do so, before going to bed.*»

One can see that La Salle took this recommendation seriously to unite all one's actions (business affairs) with the intentions and actions of Jesus Christ.

The next point, the 9th, reads:

9. «How do you behave towards the persons you have dealings with, be they superior, equals or inferiors? This is a very extensive point».

For La Salle, the «persons he has dealings with» are the Brothers, and it is with them in view that he writes **resolution 6**: «*When my Brothers come to ask me for my advice, I shall pray to Our Lord to give it to them. If the matter is of some importance, I shall take a little time to pray about it; and at least I shall be careful to remain recollected at this time and to raise my heart to God for some time.*»

Next, Hayneufve asks the retreatant to think about the Rules (if he is a religious or lives in a community).

«If you have Rules or regulations concerning your position, how do you observe them? Check on this now a little and make sure you read them in a more leisurely way during these exercises».

In the *Rules that I have imposed upon myself*, La Salle refers to community rules. His first reaction to Hayneufve's question is to consider the reference to the Rule in a community context. He considers the occasions when the Brothers will come to see him about their failings, at the Accusation first of all or in other circumstances. However, aware that he is himself a sinner and fallible, the following is the line of conduct he traces out for himself in **resolution 7**:

7. «*When they (the Brothers) tell me their faults, I shall consider myself guilty before God for failing to warn them, either by giving them advice or watching over them. If I impose a penance on them, I shall impose a greater one on myself. If the failing is a considerable one, apart from performing the penance, I shall set aside some time in private, half an hour or even an hour, several days running, especially in the evening, to ask God's forgiveness for it. If I consider that I am taking the place of Our Lord in their regard, then I must accept that I must carry their sins just as Our Lord carried ours, and that this is a duty in their regard that God imposes upon me.*»

One can see, then, than in this resolution La Salle assumes responsibility for infringements of the Rule. Not only does he implicitly promise to be faithful to it, but he resolves to punish himself in expiation of his community's failings.

This idea of expiation may have been present in his mind also when he stopped at point 12, having read point 11 without making a resolution. Points 11 and 12 read as follows: 11. To what extent do you show equanimity in the face of various successes and events? 12. Are you able to make virtue of necessity, accepting willingly as coming from God all that willy-nilly you have to endure?

Next La Salle stops at point 13 of the Consideration:

13. «In your meetings, do you have the discernment to recognise what depends on you and what does not, so as to be able to act effectively with regard to the former and to suffer the latter?»

Recognising what depended on him and what did not must have led La Salle to ask himself questions about his role as the teacher of a community and about the share of work that this function entailed for him. This must have led to his wondering to what extent the work of his salvation depended on himself, for the question of salvation is of paramount importance in Lasallian thinking. He summarises this line of thought in **resolution 8** which is so full of wisdom:

8. «*I shall always consider the work of my salvation and that of the establishment and running of our community as the work of God: that is why I shall abandon the care of it to him so as not to do anything in it that concerns me except by his order. I shall seek much advice about what I have to do with regard to the first or to the second (the community), and I shall often repeat the words of Habakkuk: "Domine, Opus tuum!"*»

It can be seen that La Salle seems to have decided that all (?) depends on God: he abandons it all to his care. As for his own role, it is to respond faithfully to God's call. This is what **resolution 9** says:

9. «*I must often look upon myself as an instrument which is of no use except in the hands of the craftsman: I must therefore*

await the orders of God's Providence in order to act (Hayneufve says "effectively"), and yet not let them pass once they are known».

La Salle's discernment cannot be improved upon in the resolutions he made in the light of Consideration 13 and 14: «When you act, do you not follow your natural inclinations rather than reason and the light of God?» In the Collection, this becomes: «In the exercises proper to your state and employment, do you not follow rather your natural inclinations and preferences than the orders and spirit of God?» (17).

La Salle does not seem to have written any other resolutions inspired by the Consideration for this first day. He must have read, thought and prayed about the last 5 points of the Consideration. We come now to day 2 of the retreat.

DAY 2 OF THE RETREAT

As is the case for all the others, the Consideration for day 2 offers 20 points for consideration by the retreatant. On this second day, the subject for reflection is «the daily timetable that you can now establish in your position, and putting time to good use».

It is obvious that not every point led La Salle to make a resolution. Here, first of all, are some points suggested by Hayneufve:

1. Put yourself in the presence of God, and ask him for the light to know his will with regard to your daily timetable.
2. Recognise how important it is to use one's time well; and that to achieve this there must be order in one's life. In order to put order into one's external actions, it is necessary to put order into one's interior dispositions and resolve to live only by reason.
3. If your position entails some order, how do you preserve it? Are you not more concerned for your own convenience than for the community? And in the common things that you do, do you do them in a very special way, a way that is spiritual and is concerned only for God and his good pleasure; or do you do them in an ordinary way, as a matter of form or through human respect?
4. Do you not still have many hours in the day which depend on you and which are not put to good use because you do not follow strictly the order you should bring to them?

There is no need to continue quoting Hayneufve. These first 4 points seem to have been sufficient to inspire La Salle to make 2 resolutions, N^{os}. 10 and 11:

10. «Whatever my position, I shall always follow an order, a daily timetable, and this by the grace of Our Lord. In this matter, I put my trust in it alone, because it is something I have never been able to constrain myself to (18); and the first thing I shall do when I change my position will be to draw up a new one (timetable), and in order to do this I shall always make a day's retreat».

Resolution 11 also refers to this need to organise his time but it possibly encroaches also on a point which comes on the 3rd day which deals with prayer. The resolution reads as follows:

11. «When I have to go to the country (19), I shall make a day's retreat to prepare myself, and I shall try to make it possible for me to make at least three hours of prayer per day when I am on the road».

In the same way, resolution 12 could result from a return to the Consideration for day 1. This may sound complicated, but it is not all that unlikely, especially as the regulations for the retreat recommend the re-reading of notes. As he did so, La Salle would have seen that he could add something with regard to his attitude to people in the light of point 9 of the previous Consideration. And so he says the following in resolution 12:

12. «When people, a superior or anybody else, cause me pain and, naturally speaking, shock me by something, I shall be careful not to speak about it; and if someone else mentions it to me, I shall make excuses for them and say they were right».

The Founder then concentrated again on the Consideration for day 2 concerning the use of time and determined to practise what it said. Hayneufve's point 6 reads as follows:

6. Model your conduct on the order that is given you in these exercises. Would you not be happy to live always in the order in which you now find yourself?

Our retreatant does in fact write that he wants to live as suggested by Hayneufve: «I must be very careful about the time I have lost and never waste any. Only a long retreat can obtain for me such vigilance» (Rules I have imposed upon myself, N^o 13).

La Salle continues thinking about the use of time, and pauses at a point of Hayneufve's which, once again, he copies almost word for word. The point in question is N^o. 18 of the Consideration for day 2:

18. Do not let your primary concern be to know how to do what you have to do perfectly, but rather to do it as perfectly as you know how; because by faithfully doing what you know, you deserve to learn and understand more than you do at present.

La Salle is enthusiastic about this point. He shortens it a little and makes it his resolution N^o. 14:

«A good rule not to be so much concerned about knowing what to do as to do perfectly what one knows».

We have here a fervent retreatant who furnishes himself with good principles by which to guide his "new life".

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(17) Cahier Lasallien 25, p. 96 XI.

(18) This is an extraordinary admission on the part of the Founder about his own personality. At one and the same time he confirms the need to make this kind of resolution so as to organise his day and life better, and he makes it quite clear that this resolution is the result of reading an inspirational text on the same subject.