

**La Salle?
de La Salle?
de De La Salle?**

As a result of an article which appeared in "Vita Nostra" a Rome District publication, I was asked to comment on the French use of the preposition "de", a topic of some importance when it comes to speaking about our Founder. Should we say La Salle? de La Salle? or De La Salle?

My apologies first of all to French-speaking Brothers especially to the philologists, for daring to invade their territory, but allow me to say with Dante:

"Vagliami 'l lungo studio e 'l grande amore" (1)

which I have always had for the French language and which has encouraged me to involve myself in this discussion.

Experience and learned studies show that the particle "de" denoting nobility is always placed between the title and the surname, and that in a large number of cases, the actual title of nobility is left out:

Le Prince DE Ligne
Madame DE Maintenon
Madame (la comtesse) DE Grignon
Henri (marquis) DE Seigne.

These examples prove, therefore, that the particle "de" is used as a link between a Christian name and a surname, between such nouns as **Monsieur, Madame, Monseigneur** and the surname, and between noble titles and the surname. For example, it is correct to say:

It is **Alfred de Musset** who says so.
Le comte de **Vigny** was elected.
Monsieur de Pourceaugnac often gets angry.
Le **Cardinal de Retz** gave a malicious description of le duc de **La Rochefoucauld**.

However, when these titles are left out, one should say:

It is **Musset** who says so.
Vigny was elected.
Pourceaugnac often gets angry.
Retz gave a malicious description of **La Rochefoucauld**.

To complete the picture, I would add that, according to Littre, the particle "de" should be kept in two cases only when the Christian name, noble title or any other title are omitted:

1. before a monosyllabic name, or before a disyllabic name ending in a mute final "e":

De Thou wrote well.
I saw de Seze.

2. before names beginning by a vowel or a mute "h":

The son of d'Orleans.
The armorial of l'Hozier.

That is what Littre says, and he wrote the famous "*Dictionnaire de la langue française*" in 7 volumes. Writers, however, and they create the language, do not always agree with him.

Proust, for example, was inclined to keep the particle under all circumstances. This is clear from one of his letters to his friend Prince Antoine de Bibesco. After some clever banter the latter agrees with his point of view:

«Mr. Cosmo Gordon Lennox is related to the Duke of Richmond whose portrait, a work by van Dick (sic) – according to him, one should perhaps say, a portrait by Dick – was once upon a time the object of my greatest admiration...»

Princess Marthe de Bibesco, Antoine's cousin, makes the following remarks about the letter in her fine book "*Au bal avec Marcel Proust*" (Paris, Gallimard, 1928):

«It was from Antoine that Marcel learned that you should not say the "de" Rohan, the "de" Noailles and the "de" Guermantes. Proust did not understand this suppression of the particle. At the beginning of their great friendship, it is Antoine who advises and Marcel who makes fun of current usage, but he ends up by accepting it...»

Finally, he gives in to his friend for the sake of friendship.

There remains one last thing for me to say: if the particle is joined to a definite article (du, des, etc.), it can never be omitted:

«I used to read to myself some nice poetry **de** du Bellay» (A. Daudet).

«The land **de** des Lourdines» (A. de Chateaubriand).

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Let us now turn to the name of our Saint. Taking into account what has been said above, we should say and write:

It is La Salle who says so.
La Salle is the patron of all teachers.
La Salle is the true friend of the poor.
La Salle has always been an example of piety.

The real name of our Saint is **La Salle**. "de" is only a particle, and that is why it should always be written with a small letter.

That is why it is wrong to write, and why it sounds wrong to say:

It is de La Salle who says so.
De La Salle is the patron
Le de La Salle has always been...
Let us have recourse au de La Salle.
Let us admire the spirituality of De La Salle.

I know that Americans always say and write **DE LA SALLE**, but it is not correct – non è giusto! to use my own language.

So, are we going to follow these simple rules once and for all?

It is not difficult. You simply have to take a little care!

Bro. Serafino Barbaglia

(1) Inferno I, 83.