

★ *lasalliana*

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**In memory of the
Brothers of the Christian Schools
who were victims
of the French Revolution**

**A RECENTLY
DISCOVERED LETTER OF
BLESSED BROTHER SALOMON
(1/2)**

Brother Bernard-Jean Simon

Seven Brothers of the Christian Schools, according to reliable witnesses, died a violent death in France between 1791 and 1794. Some were victims of armed bands operating outside the law, while others were condemned by tribunals or administrative authorities at the end of legal proceedings. All were condemned for their refusal to renounce their religious consecration and for their unity with the Pope.

In recalling their names, we are also aware that they were not the only Lasallian victims of the French Revolution, but that their histories are the best known to us: Br. Raphael (Jacques Pataillot) died at Uzès in June 1791; Br. Salomon (Nicolas Leclercq) died in Paris on September 2nd 1792 and was beatified by Pope Pius XI; Br. Léon (Jean Mopinot) died near Rochefort on May 21st 1794; Br. Uldaric (Jean-Baptiste Guillaume) died near Rochefort on August 27th 1794; Br. Pierre-Christophe (Christophe Scheck) died near Rochefort on September 6th 1794; Br. Roger (Pierre Faverge) died near Rochefort on September 12th 1794; Br. Moniteur (Maurice Martinet) died in Rennes on October 6th 1794. (1)

During these current years of the bicentennial of these events and at the same time as a temporary exhibition in Paris, (2) we are publishing a letter written by Blessed Brother **Salomon Leclercq**. Inasmuch as the writings and letters of the other six martyrs are rare, those of Brother Salomon are numerous, thanks to the care taken by the Leclercq family to preserve more than 200 documents from this period when the family was involved in such historic events. All of these papers, with one exception, are available for consultation in various archival collections. (3)

The present letter was not chosen for its content. It is a very ordinary family letter. Our attention is drawn to it because, until recently, it was considered to have been lost. In the 19th century, prior to the dispersal of the collection, this letter had been labelled as number 92; the mark is still visible in the upper left corner of the front side. But this letter was not among those placed in the archives of the motherhouse (today in the Generalate in Rome) nor in the Delie collection given in 1957 to the District of Lille. It was rediscovered in the Lasallian community of Villeneuve d'Ascq, near Lille, where it had been sent from the recently closed community of Boulogne-sur-Mer. We know that the author was born in Boulogne, the native city of his family, where, until 1980, Leclercq descendants lived who were likely to possess written relics of their illustrious relative.

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**Letter of Blessed Brother Salomon Leclercq
to his niece Robertine Ricart**

Melun, February 4th 1789

J.M.J.

For Robertine Ricart

You didn't write to me at the beginning of this year, my dearest niece. Despite that, I don't doubt that you wished me well interiorly, and that you prayed to God that He grant me the good things that you desire for me. Know also that I have not at all forgotten you, and that every day I pray the Lord to lavish you with his grace and blessing, so that you may behave in a manner conformable to the obligations you contracted in holy baptism. So, you will soon be in your 18th year, for I believe that you will be 17 on the 27th of February. I have every reason to think that with the years, your virtue is also growing and becoming more and more perfect. In effect, it is quite proper that in becoming more rational, you also become more Christian and virtuous. Every day you receive God's blessings, as you deserve, but it is also a strict obligation to express your gratitude to him. But in what should this gratitude towards God consist? In a more ardent love for his divine majesty, in a more profound respect for everything pertaining to his worship. In other words, you must pray with more devotion and attention, whether in your private prayers, in assisting at Mass and the divine office, or in frequenting the sacraments with more fervour and in applying yourself to derive more fruit from them.

Now, the principal effect that you should gain from the sacrament of penance is to develop a greater horror of sin, to correct yourself of those of which you are accused, to foresee the occasions for avoiding the commission of new sins. For if, because of human weakness, it happens that you offend God after having obtained pardon for past sins, you must have recourse as soon as possible to the salutary remedy which must heal us, and ask God for more abundant grace to distance you from sin with more care.

The sacrament of the Eucharist also produces marvelous effects when you approach it with the necessary dispositions. It unites us with Jesus Christ by the real presence of his sacred body and his precious [blood]. It weakens our inclination towards evil. It increases in us the spiritual life of grace and is for us a guarantee of eternal life and a glorious resurrection. A long time ago, my dearest niece, you learned in your catechism what are the great advantages of a good communion. I have reason to believe that you think about that each time you have the happiness to receive communion, and that you pray Our Lord to produce these happy results in your soul.

When you have religion and piety, as you must if you have profited from the instruction you have had the good fortune to receive and which you continue to receive daily, you will find more satisfaction in the practice of the exercises of our holy religion than in all the distractions of the world, which can certainly be amusing for awhile, dazzling the mind and supplying an apparent but short-lived joy. But you pay dearly for the remorse that remains after these worldly pleasures, which are most difficult to indulge without wounding your conscience. Believe me, my dearest niece, one day spent in the house of the Lord is better than a thousand lost in the frivolous amusements of the world and in the company of sinners. Test your experience and you will find more happiness in one feast day or Sunday when you have assisted with piety at the divine office than if you had participated in the most brilliant feasts of the world. What of the day when you have had the happiness of receiving Our Lord in holy communion? Then you do not regret missing the

supposed earthly festivities, but you will disdain them and be horrified by them.

For the rest, in speaking this way to you, I don't pretend to say that you will also taste a sensible satisfaction when frequenting the sacraments and acquitting yourself of the other duties of Christianity. This satisfaction consists more in peace of soul, in the testimony of a good conscience, which could be called a continuous feast, than in pleasure of the senses. It is by faith that we are pleasing to God; therefore it is by faith also that he must be served. All recreation is not opposed to Christian piety. When you go walking with your mother, your brothers and your sisters, when you spend some time at home in innocent diversions, there is nothing better. But you must not spend too much time, nor involve the passions. You must always be ready to stop playing in order to read, for example, or to do what obedience requires of you.

By behaving in a Christian manner, you draw down on yourself the blessing of Heaven for making good use of this present life in whatever state you might be. And you will have the consolation of your beloved father and mother, whose minds you must put at ease as much as you can. And you will also merit a brilliant crown in heaven, where no one arrives without having carried his cross here below with patience and for the love of Jesus Christ.

It is in the love of this divine savior that I greet you, my dearest niece, and that I am

Your dear uncle,

Brother Salomon

I truly hope that you will not be content merely to read this letter, but that you will reread it and keep it, if you judge it *à propos*. Even that you will reply a bit later on. You will have time during the stay of dear Brother Visitor in Boulogne. ●

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