

**SOME DECISIVE MOMENTS  
IN THE LIFE OF  
ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE**

**Br. Pierre Bloyer**

There are decisive moments in everyone's life. For example,

- there is when a person dares to say "I" for the first time;
- or when he has to make a **CHOICE** that affects his life;
- or when he meets a person **WHO POINTS HIM** in a particular direction;
- or when he is called **TO POINT OTHERS** in a particular direction.

\* \* \*

In order to really understand a person it is useful to try to discover under what circumstances he first became aware of his own identity and said "I", thus risking asserting his autonomy. This normally happens during adolescence in any meaningful way. Sometimes it is occasioned by breaking some outmoded regulation or in connection with a social setting, and often it involves taking a up stance which brooks no compromise.

An essential element of being young is a concern about what one will do in the future. Jesus at the age of 12 follows his interior voice and announces his intention of consecrating his whole life to his Father: "Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs?". Mary is astonished and meditates about this first "I" that will affect what Jesus will do during the whole of his life.

At an age when people form great attachments and show strong disapproval, St. La Salle was sufficiently strong-willed to make decisions on which his life would depend. He took up a stand against certain customs of his day when, for example, he invited some teachers to take their meals with him, in spite of the strong opposition of his family. This decision reflected his daring and courage, and marked the first step in the creation of his new family.

\* \* \*

When a person becomes an adult there always comes an important moment when he realises he cannot do everything. This is the time when important choices have to be made which will affect his whole life. It is also when he tries to give meaning to his life and when he espouses a cause or an ideal.

Confronted by Satan with the illusion of riches, rank and power, Jesus chooses to follow his own personal call to justice, fidelity to God and men, especially to those who are poor.

Unlike the "young rich man" of the Gospel, St. La Salle made the choice offered him by Jesus: "Go, sell what you have and give it to the poor, and come follow me". He gave his goods to the poor, resigned his canonry, and decided to devote his whole life to the education of poor children through schools.

\* \* \*

When a young man grows up it is an important moment in his life. What can change his life is meeting someone who makes him aware of the ideal he has within himself.

When Jesus grew up he met John the Baptist. This prophet made a great impression on him. He made him guess what he was: a desert-dweller, a nomad, a man who refused to compromise and who revealed to him the mission to which he had been called.

Throughout his life, St. La Salle was always ready to listen with great humility to men and women like Adrien Nyel, Fr. Barré, Nicolas Rolland, and Sister Louise, who showed him the means he should take to further his work, especially at those times in his life when important choices had to be made.

When a person has followers or children, he has to accept also to give a lead. He must have the courage to dare to say to someone: "Come, follow me". When he does so, it is a very important moment in his life; it is a sign of maturity; it is to become a fully responsible person.

This is what Christ did when, after a night spent in prayer, he invited his apostles to follow him. At a moment like this, a person has to be sure of what he is and of what he stands for.

This is the gamble that founders make through faith when, feeling they have God's backing, they dare to make this call. This is what St. La Salle did when he called men to follow him and found together with him the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

\* \* \*

A person cannot say his mission is complete if he has not found a successor, if he cannot pass on the torch to his followers.

"When the time came", Jesus would often go away far from the crowds to devote all his time to training the disciples who would follow him, and it is against this background that he appoints Peter to be head of the Church: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my Church".

Once his work is completed, a founder has to withdraw into the background so that it can continue to grow healthily. When this happens, the work instead of failing grows stronger. When St. La Salle reached this stage in his life, he gave much thought and time to this question, and he was overjoyed when Brother Barthelemy was elected to succeed him.

When we look at the life of St. La Salle and that of other saints, in the light of Christ's life, we can con-

clude that they are past masters of human life. They show us how to live with Faith, Hope and Charity at all the various stages of our lives, and especially at those decisive moments that come our way some time or other.

There is a saying that goes that, for a man to be able to say that his life has been a complete success, he must have planted a tree, written a book and had children. In the light of this we can say that St. La Salle's life was a complete success:

- He planted a tree, that is, he left his mark in this world;
- He wrote a book, that is, he left a message for his disciples;
- He had children, that is, he lives on, a fact borne out by the presence of Brothers and Lasallian lay people in more than 70 countries in the world. and more especially, by our presence here in this chapel.

Let us ask St. John Baptist de La Salle to have enough courage and Faith to answer God's call - he who alone is totally holy - who invites each one of us to share his holiness and the true happiness of which he is the source.