

**NICOLAS ROLAND,
SOURCE FOR THE COLLECTION
OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE
(1/3)**

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In article 26-3-A-114, I presented Nicolas Roland, among many others, as one of the sources used by John Baptist de La Salle for certain sections of the Collection. In article 25-3-A-105, I compared the section of the Collection entitled "Meals" with a similar piece by Nicolas Roland, "On Eating" (Positio, p. 286, N 10). Now I would like to compare the section in the Collection on "Rising" (CL 15, pp. 66-67) with the article by Nicolas Roland, "For rising and the first exercise of the day" (Positio, p. 281).

To facilitate the comparison, it will be useful to present the text and its source side by side, with the passages used by De La Salle in **bold type** and the related parts in Roland's original text underlined.

Collection, p. 126

As soon as **you awake**, keep your spirit applied to God, and from the first sound of the bell, **imagine** that it is Jesus Christ who is **addressing you** in these words: Awake, you who sleep, **rise up** and hasten, **my Spouse**, my beloved, **my dove**. **Comply with** these sentiments and **answer from the bottom of your heart**: Now **I will arise and search for him whom** I love with all my soul. **Rise promptly, therefore, and with fervour, at the exact moment prescribed by the Rule, without hesitating a single instant**. Dress quickly, thinking of God. **While dressing**, pray him to **clothe you with the Holy Spirit**, saying from the bottom of your heart: Clothe me with the new self which is created according to God and in holiness.

Positio, p. 281

At the moment you awake, consider yourself as a nothing before God and realise that he is the sovereign Creator of your being, he who bestows and preserves life so that you can employ it in his service. With these sentiments, acknowledge his goodness, adore him with all your heart, offer yourself to him by consecrating yourself entirely to his service, ask for his help, abandon yourself to his guidance to do and suffer whatever will happen to you by his will. Rise promptly and with fervour, at the exact moment prescribed by the Rule, without talking to your pillow for a single instant. Imagine that God is addressing to you what is in Scripture: Rise up, my Spouse, my love, my dove. Comply with his words and answer from

When completely dressed, remain before God like a **nothing, acknowledging your Creator** and Sovereign Lord, **who gives you life and preserves it only that you may use it in his service**.

Observe silence faithfully until the time for mental prayer. Long for the moment when it will begin. **Resolve from this moment to be very exact and punctual in the performance of all the community exercises, for fidelity in performing well all these actions throughout the day often depends on this first action and resolution**.

the bottom of your heart: I will arise and search for him whom my heart loves. Rise promptly, therefore, and ready yourself for his service: Make it your task to progress in his holy love, saying to him that he clothe you in his Spirit. While dressing, resolve from this time on to be punctual at all the community exercises, for fidelity often depends on this good resolution.

Reading these two texts gives evidence of borrowing, if not actual paternity. It might be interesting to study the differences with greater attention. This will show to advantage the originality of De La Salle and the manner in which he made use of his sources.

The method used consists in following the text from the Collection while comparing it with Roland's version each time the possibility exists. The order of the sentences is not exactly the same in each case.

We can divide the source text into 9 elements that De La Salle extracted as such or with more or less important modifications.

A At the moment you awake,

B consider yourself as a newborn before God and realise that he is the sovereign Creator of your being, he who bestows and preserves life so that you can employ it in his service.

C With these sentiments, acknowledge his goodness, adore him with all your heart, offer yourself to him by consecrating yourself entirely to his service, ask for his help, abandon yourself to his guidance to do and suffer whatever will happen to you by his will.

D Rise promptly and with fervour, at the exact moment prescribed by the Rule, without talking to your pillow for a single instant.

E Imagine that God is addressing to you what is in Scripture: Rise up, my Spouse, my love, my dove.

F Comply with his words and answer from the bottom of your heart: I will arise and search for him whom my heart loves.

G Rise promptly, therefore, and ready yourself for his service: Make it your task to progress in his holy love,

H saying to him that he clothe you in his Spirit. While dressing,

I resolve from this time on to be punctual at all the community exercises, for fidelity often depends on this good resolution.

This text is of whole cloth. We do not know how the original was presented, but it would seem that it was never printed at the time. The style is not at all polished.

As it is, however, the text inspired the Founder, who probably had it at hand when he composed the article for the Collection. He presents it in three paragraphs and uses the various retained passages in the following order:

- A
- E which he splices within a new citation
- F
- D
- G extensively modified
- H this citation is complete
- B
- I

Now let us proceed to a more detailed analysis by following the text of John Baptist de La Salle.

The words which have a commentary are shown in bold type; the texts of Nicolas Roland are indicated by italics.

As soon as you awake... *At the moment you awake...*

As soon as (Aussitôt) expresses urgency. It already shows here the impatient attention which will be the case later on. There is no time to lose. The Founder is very miserly with time: "In a word, have you not lost time?" he asks in Meditation 92, 3, where he invites the Brothers to examine themselves on the way they have behaved during the year with respect to their work.

At the moment doesn't come close to expressing this sense of urgency.

keep your spirit applied to *consider yourself before God*

consider yourself is a more intellectual expression. The Founder is not much in favour of this approach: "Give more time to expressions of feelings and resolutions than to reasons and considerations" (Collection). For the Brother, the decision to be conscious of God is an essential part of the option of life; it is in effect 24 hours a day. Here again there is no time to lose: "Keep yourself conscious..."

The expression **consider yourself**, which the Founder did not retain in this instance, is also set aside several lines further on, when he uses almost literally a passage from Roland. He again replaces the verb with "**keep yourself**", a more contemplative (more passive would not be the word) attitude, far removed from prolonged reflexions and more suitable.

your spirit **applied** to God *before God*

De La Salle likes to use the words **apply yourself** and **application**. It is worthwhile to cite here what Miguel Campos and Michel Sauvage say in CL 50, page 553, N 13 with respect to "an interior occupation, that is to say, an application of the soul to God."

"131. The effort of interiorisation that he recommends is inseparably connected with the awareness of the relationship with God, insofar as it is constitutive of the person. I cannot truly encounter God in prayer unless I

place myself "before him" in spirit and in truth. But the truth of what I am implies a vital relationship with God."

Is there anything more important or more urgent to do at the moment we awake?

This requires an effort as important as that in "**consider**", in spite of the apparent passivity that marks the verb **keep**.

and from the first sound of **the bell**

We often read about this bell in the schools and in the house, and each time De La Salle refers to it, the words are "immediately", "as soon as", "at the first sound" - 22 times out of 31 citations.

"Be very faithful to present yourself, at the first sound of the bell, in the place where you must pray, and do not consider yourself exempt from fault when you are the slightest bit late, even one moment." (Collection)

Carrying out the will of God must be done without delay. With Roland, there is no reference to the clock.

imagine that it is **Jesus Christ** *Imagine that God*

The Founder retains the word "**imagine**". He invites us a number of times in his writings to "represent to ourselves", even though he is not very imaginative and rarely has recourse to the word "imagine", which occurs only 12 times in the Lasallian vocabulary. The word "represent" is more frequent, 94 times, but it often signifies "present" (present their needs to him). The dictionary of Trévoux, 1701, defines "imagine" as "represent in the spirit".

The word here in no way refers to the equivalent of "say to yourselves".

that it is **Jesus Christ** *that God*

The same representation is contained in both texts, but here it is Jesus Christ and there it is God.

The Lasallian vocabulary often uses the name Jesus Christ or Our Lord Jesus Christ, 1,974 times and 389 times, respectively, not counting the name Jesus, 384 times, as compared with God, which is used 6,477 times. Jesus Christ is ninth in order of words and third in order of nouns in frequency of use. John Baptist de La Salle is Christocentric; he belongs to the French School of the 17th century. We are not astonished, then, to be invited to meditate on the mysteries of Christ. Also, the use of the name Jesus Christ here, even though it is abbreviated as J.C., is a better introduction to the citation of Ephesians 5, 14.

is addressing you **these words** *is addressing to you what is in Scripture*

John Baptist de La Salle likes to remind the Brothers often that the words of Scripture are words of God addressed to each one of them. Therefore, the use of the term "words" rather than "what is in Scripture" is of interest. Following his usual practice, the Founder doesn't give the reference here. He does frequently name the author, however.