

**NICOLAS ROLAND,  
SOURCE FOR THE COLLECTION  
OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE  
(2/3)**

**Brother Joseph Le Bars**

**Wake up, you who sleep;  
arise from the dead and J.C.  
will enlighten you.**

This passage is not found in Roland. It is taken from Ephesians 5, 14. This is one more citation such as the Founder likes to make, using brief texts from the Bible and in particular the New Testament books of the Gospel and St. Paul, which he knows quite well. He comments in the explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer:

"One of the easiest means to center oneself in the presence of God is to place into consciousness a passage from holy Scripture."

This is also the method he advises for living and acting in the spirit of faith. He prepared an entire repertoire of brief passages that he introduced to this effect into the Collection: "to help the Brothers perform their actions in the spirit of faith." The Brothers carried the New Testament with them and were invited to read it daily and also to study it. It is not unreasonable to conclude that many of them knew it by heart.

or these others from **the** *in Scripture*  
**Song of Songs**

De La Salle offers a small point here about the origin of this text which perhaps will be surprising to the less initiated. Did the Brothers have in their possession the entire Bible? We notice that the Founder explains certain allusions and references, for example:

the day of Pentecost, which was a feast that the Jews celebrated in memory of the reception of the ancient law by Moses on Mount Sinai. (M. 43, 1)

and again:

holocausts, which were the most excellent sacrifices of the ancient law... (M. 112, 2)

**Awake, rise up and hasten,** *Rise up, my Spouse, my love,*  
**my Spouse, my beloved, my** *my dove.*  
**dove.**

It would be interesting to know for sure which translation of the Bible the Founder consulted. The Saci Bible, approved by Cardinal Noailles on 3rd March 1701, gives Song of Songs, 2, 10 as "arise, hasten, my beloved, my dove..." The word "spouse" in Latin does not occur in this place. From where did the Founder, and Roland, take this word?

The Latin Vulgate reads: "Surge, propera amica mea, columba mea, formosa mea, et veni". "Columba mea" was added in the Septuagint and repeated in the Vulgate.

We can ask why De La Salle did not purely and simply copy Roland? The expression "hasten" is not found in the present translations, where we find simply: **arise** or **stand up**. However, we note "hasten" in several translations contemporaneous with the Founder. The word expresses well the impatience already underlined with the phrase "as soon as" at the beginning of this study. It also fits the mood of this passage from Roland: "promptly", "precisely on time"...

**my beloved** *my love*

What difference is there from the perspective of 300 years? Perhaps in the translation used?

Did the two authors introduce the word "spouse" in order to justify the word "beloved" or "love"?

**comply with these sentiments** *comply with his words...*

"these" and "his". The grammar commands our attention. The beginning of the phrase, with "Or these others from the Song of Songs" has for effect to distance the reference to "it is Jesus Christ who addresses these words to you..." Similarly, the phrase, "God is addressing to you what is in Scripture" is a natural accompaniment to the word "his". This is a minor distinction, but one which shows how the Founder, although he copies a text, does not do so without reflection.

**and answer from the bottom of your heart:** Now I will arise and search for him whom I love with all my soul.  
*and answer from the bottom of your heart: I will arise and search for him whom my heart loves.*

Here we find the text transcribed from Roland, but with a replacement of the words "heart" and "soul". Should we look here for a deliberate choice or rather a more or less conscious selection of a different translation? The Saci Bible referred to above translates the Song of Songs, Chapter 3, verse 1 as "I look for ... the one who loves my soul", and verse 2 as "I will arise .. and I will look for ... the one who is the beloved of my soul." Perhaps this is the reason for the use of the word "soul" here. How else can we explain this modification, when we note the word-for-word fidelity in certain cases?

The dictionary of that era shows that the two words "soul" and "heart" were often used interchangeably. Nevertheless, "heart" is the locale of the passions and also signifies courage, whereas the soul is the

internal principle of the functions of living bodies, designating the spiritual part of man, the sense of life itself.

Perhaps it will be useful here to cite Meditation 70, for the 17th Sunday after Pentecost: "We must love God with our whole heart, that is to say, with all our affection, not reserving the least little part,... wishing to love God alone...;" (1st point)

and: "It is not possible to love God with our whole heart without loving Him also with our whole soul, that is to say, without being disposed to lose ... even life itself, which is what the word SOUL signifies, rather than be deprived of God's love." (2nd point) There is a nearly similar text in the Duties of a Christian (Da, pp. 94 and 95).

We can also read in this same context pages 178 to 182 in CL 50, where Brothers Miguel Campos and Michel Sauvage study at length the expressions "depths of the soul" and "depths of the heart", which are used in the Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer.

De La Salle employs the personal pronoun "I" three times, whereas Roland uses it but once. The biblical text uses the same pronoun twice. De La Salle's more frequent use makes the text clearer, more personal and more engaging.

Rise promptly, **therefore**, *Rise promptly*,

The Founder often uses the word "therefore", common to his way of thinking and to the logic of faith. Here we must respond to the repeated invitations – "Awake... arise... hasten..." – that Jesus Christ addresses to us. There must not be the least hesitation. (Cf. M. 10, 2: "Because you cannot dispense yourself from obeying God...").

The word "therefore" also occurs in the second instance that Roland uses the expression, "Rise promptly", further on in his text.

and **with fervour, at the exact moment** prescribed by the Rule, without hesitating a single instant. *and with fervour, at the exact moment prescribed by the Rule, without talking to your pillow a single instant*

"**with fervour**": from the moment he wakes up, the Brother applies himself to God, with no desire other than to live in God's presence, and he yearns for the time when he can begin mental prayer. (Cf. later in the text, a paragraph unique to De La Salle: "longing (sighing) for the hour...")

"**at the exact moment**"

The two Founders were extremely fervent with respect to exact, even blind, obedience. It is necessary to relate this phrase "at the exact moment" with this curious passage from Meditation 8, 3, "if you rise earlier than is prescribed, you do not practise exact obedience".

"**without hesitating**" These words immediately evoke, at least for us today, a different sense than "without talking to your pillow". This proverbial expression, according to the dictionary, signifies: "letting the night pass without taking action, or giving oneself more time to think."

We seldom find proverbial turns of phrase in John Baptist de La Salle. Roland is often more picturesque from this point of view.

**Dress promptly too**, *Rise promptly, therefore*

We find here in Roland's text the "therefore" that occurs earlier in De La Salle's version.

The Founder distinguishes between rising and dressing,

while making it clear that both must be done promptly. The Rule of 1705, in the Chapter on the daily exercises, is quite precise in article 5:

"The Brothers shall have a quarter of an hour to dress themselves and to make their bed."

and in article 6:

"At 4.45 the Brothers shall go to the room where the exercises are held, but they shall not do so until they are completely dressed..."

Roland is content to repeat the word "rise", which he does three times, counting the citation where he adds "therefore".

**thinking of God**

*and ready yourself for his service: Make it your task to progress in his holy love,*

The Founder here repeats the initial invitation of the text: "think of God". This is a continuation of the action that began with the moment of waking up.

Roland seems to be making reference to the specific activities of the Sisters at this moment. De La Salle himself inserts prayer at this point. He also schedules an examination of foresight during morning prayer.

While dressing, **pray him to clothe you with the Holy Spirit** *saying to him that he clothe you in his Spirit*

John Baptist has turned upside down the order of phrases and has introduced several modifications. Thus, he writes "pray him", while Roland says "saying to him". It is interesting to see the Founder's approach, for he does not reject "saying to him", but his choice of words is more solid and logical. We have the progression, "pray him ... saying", giving the intention of the prayer: to be clothed in the spirit of Jesus Christ, and the method of the prayer: saying the verse from the Epistle to the Ephesians (4: 24). We see here a practical teaching, clearly set forth; Roland is more general.

"**Pray him**", "saying to him", the same action but with a different vocabulary; perhaps "praying" seems more insistent, more religious. "Saying to him" seems more familiar. Familiarity with God is rather exceptional with De La Salle. From this point of view, we could compare his attitudes towards God and towards Jesus Christ.

**while dressing, pray him** *while dressing, resolve*

Should we not think here of the ceremonial vesting by the priest who is preparing to celebrate Mass? It was the custom to say a prayer for each item of vestiture.

The Founder uses the word "pray", a more direct invitation to address oneself to God and a call to grace, rather than just the invitation: "resolve", which in the thinking of Roland certainly implies prayer. But here again De La Salle manifests more the role of teacher. Perhaps his experience with the schoolmasters and the pupils shows itself in this case. "He observed much in silence", Blain tells us.

**saying from the bottom of your heart**

This, again, is the Founder's customary use of an expression that signifies "with all possible fervour".