

**A READING GUIDE TO THE
"COMPLETE WORKS"
N° 2:
The COLLECTION (2/2)**

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The frequent use of the same texts

1. Regarding the lists, it will be noticed that the 10 commandments (R 3) and the supports of the Institute (R 4) are included also in the *Common Rules* (RC 16,8), the latter being listed in a different order. We know that the list of the 12 virtues of a good teacher (R 5) was reproduced in the 1720 printed edition of the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*. This latter work, beginning with the manuscript edition of 1705 (CE 15,3), develops the 10 characteristics that corrections should have (R 6).

2. *The obligations of the vows* (R 2), replaced in 1783 by the text of chapter XVIII of the 1726 Rule, remained unchanged in subsequent editions up to 1886, even though the text included the expression "to beg for alms and live on bread alone" which by 1717, at least, was no longer part of the formula of vows (Cf. CL 2,44).

It should be noted that the "*Reflection...on the means to become interior*" does not include "revealing one's conscience to one's superior or Director" (R 13,3-5). The letter to Brother Hubert (LA 33,3), dated 1702, uses the same quotation from St. Bernard as R 13,13,3. In all subsequent editions, the text should read that recollection "**disposes and facilitates applying oneself to the presence of God**" (R 13,24,3). Likewise in several other editions the text should read "*that interior recollection imposes a sort of necessity* (met dans une espèce de nécessité)... *to occupy oneself with God and the things of God*" (R 13,26,3).

3. The *Directories* for *giving an account* of one's conscience (R 8) or of one's conduct (RD 1), are "two successive versions of the same text": it is possible that the second "is not the work of M. de La Salle but of a disciple" (CL 16,7,8). Subsequent editions continue to

include RD 1 as an appendix to the Collection and not as part of the body of the work. CL 16,16,20 shows what these directories owe to a Jesuit text ("*Instructio ad reddendam conscientiae rationem*" contained in the "*Regulae Societas Jesu*"). Brother Félix Paul, in his critical edition of the Letters of the Founder, shows that answers to Brothers' letters generally followed the plan used in RD 1, since the Brothers used it as a reference point.

The *Collection of topics on which the Brothers will converse during recreation* (R 10) has come down to us in 3 forms (see the study in CL 16,21-39), which would seem to reflect a similar number of reworkings: R1, followed by the 1705 Rules, and finally the 1711 text, it too based on a Jesuit text (*Quibus de rebus des Instructiones ad Provinciales s.j.*). Blain himself (II, 143) recognises the debt of the Founder of the Brothers to the practice of the Jesuits with regard to recreation. We should perhaps add a final line to R. 10,2,30: "*the Brothers will take care...that the things they speak about...do not remain simply speculative, but that they all lead to the practice of the virtues which are proper to them*".

The *Things Brothers should consider from time to time, and especially during their retreat* (R 16) owes a lot to the "*Meditations*" by the Jesuit Julien Hayneufve (1645 and 1685 editions). De La Salle applied these "considerations" to himself when writing his "*Rules which I have imposed upon myself*" (Blain II,318-319). Useful works to consult on this question are those by Br. Jose Arturo Gareis (CL 16,52-104) and Br. Miguel Campos (CL 45,250-287). We should perhaps correct the text of R.16,1,2 to read: "*if harm has been done (s'il y a eu du mal...), retract it*". It is worth noting what Blain (II,486-487) says about the "considerations" regarding Holy Communion (R 16,9,4-6). We can still draw profit from what we read in them: "*If we do not resist the grace which is received in this sacrament, it satisfies our hunger without taking away our appetite and desire for communion*" (R 16,9,4). "*You have the happiness to speak to Jesus face to face and heart to heart. But if you are not careful, you will find that you have not drawn the benefit you should from this holy conversation. Seek to discover why. Is it not because you wish to speak all the time and you do not listen to Our Lord who also would like to speak to you?*" (R 16,9,6).

4. The *Method of Mental Prayer* (R 7) was followed by an "*Explanation*" published by the Brothers in 1739. This latter text sought to be more precise by defining, for example, that mental prayer is "*an interior occupation, that is to say, an application of the soul to God*" (EM 1,1). R 7,0,1 gives "and" instead of "that is to say" (see CL 50,189). The Lasallian method of mental prayer owes much to that of St. Sulpice, with its insistence on faith and the presence of God: "*The first thing one should do during mental prayer is to penetrate oneself deeply with the presence of God, through a sentiment of faith. For this purpose, one can consider God as being present in three different ways: 1. in the*

place where one is; 2. in oneself; 3. in the church" (R 7,0,4). And even if nowadays we are aware more of God's action in our own lives than in a "place", we can consider "that when two or three are gathered somewhere in his name, he is there in their midst" (R 7,0,5).

The material in *The 9 conditions of obedience* (R 7) is treated also in the *Meditations* for the Sundays after the Epiphany (MD 7 to 15). Blain refers to it often, and sometimes mistakenly (see CL 10,81-83). This material contains ascetical doctrine expressed in a way which is off-putting for us. Br. Agathon was led for the same reason to rewrite the beginning of R 9,2,6: Obedience "must be blind, that is to say that, providing that something is not in any way contrary to the Law of God or of the Church, one must submit to what is commanded" (1783). The title of R 9,2,8 could perhaps be corrected to read: "Obedience must be humble and respectful". However, it is difficult to accept a view of obedience in a community context without reference to association or the apostolic ministry.

Both the *Common Rules* (RC 2) and the *Collection* (R 11,1) include a short treatise, entitled "*The spirit of the Institute of the Brothers, which is the spirit of faith*". Only article 1 is different. The text of the *Collection* is especially interesting because it links the finality of the Institute and its spirit. The passage that follows includes one small correction: "Faith must serve as a light and a guide for all Christians in order to lead them and direct them along the path of their salvation. It is what makes St. Paul say that the just person, that is to say, the true Christian, lives by faith, because he behaves and acts through views and motives inspired by faith. This is why it is very important for the Brothers of the Christian Schools, whose Institute has as its aim to educate the children entrusted to their care in the spirit of Christianity, and to take the means to procure it for them, to be so penetrated and so abundantly filled with the spirit of faith that they look upon sentiments and maxims of faith as a rule for their actions, and the spirit of faith as the spirit of their Institute" (R 11,1,1).

The *Means that the Brothers should take to do their actions well* (R 14) is strikingly similar to the "Advice given by the late M. Roland regarding the conduct of regular persons". Rigault (I,20) suggests it may have been De La Salle who gathered the various pieces of advice together. Br. Joseph Le Bars has undertaken to make a comparative study of these two works for Lasalliana. The sections on *Meals* (25-3-A-105) and on *Rising* (29-3-A-126 to 128) have already been published. Further studies will follow on mental prayer, Holy Mass, spiritual reading, recreation, silence and renewal, in which dependence is particularly clear. While waiting for these to be published, the reader can refer to the comparative study already made by Br. Yves Poutet in his thesis (I,612-619).

There are also some corrections that can be made in this part of the *Collection*. "If we wish to do our

actions with the perfection that God asks of us, we must take great care above all [add "de" in the French text] not to do anything with thoughtlessness and precipitation" (Foreword R 14,1). "The priest begins the Holy Mass...by humbling himself at the sight and consideration of the sins with which he is entrusted: 1. his own...4. [add "de" in the French text] even of those who do not belong to the Church" (R 14,6). "8. From the consecration to the Our Father, one will adore Jesus Christ truly present on the holy altar and one will unite oneself with him interiorly in order to enter into his dispositions as a victim, as an adorer of his Father, as a mediator and as a reconciler of men with him" (*Method for assisting well at Holy Mass* R 14,6,8). "Keep also [add "un" in the French text] very strict silence during meals, pay attention to the reading at table" (*Meals* R 14,9,2). "Look upon this relaxation as something that Our Lord sometimes gave his apostles, when he said to them: 'Come and rest for a while'" (*Recreation* R 14,10,1). "Avoid speaking even of necessary things, when they can be postponed till later. This mortification is very beneficial and serves greatly to make a soul advance in perfection" (*Silence* R 14,11,2).

The principal virtues which the Brothers should practise (R 15) is a treatise which owes less to Roland. There are parallels only between his "*Little Treatise on the Virtues*" and the sections on **obedience** (R 15,2), **humility** (R 15,8) and **poverty** (R 15,10). Blain (II,226 & 232) quotes frequently what is said about **faith** (R 15,1). It is interesting to note the changes introduced by Br. Agathon in 1783: "let your first care be to conduct yourself through a spirit of faith and not through whim...nor according to the ways of men or of the world, nor even for reason alone, but through faith and according to the words of Jesus Christ...follow the tradition of the Church....condemn what it condemns, approve what it approves, either by its councils, either by its sovereign pontiffs and the body of its first pastors". Corrections can help to give us a better understanding of other characteristic passages: "Regularity is what establishes and maintains good order, peace and union in a community, because it is the source of a uniformity of sentiments and conduct in those who are its members...Be very regular regarding all the observances of the community, with the view that this is the will of God" (*Regularity* R 15,3,1 & 2). "Adore Our Lord Jesus Christ in his state as a penitent (état de pénitent). Let your principal care be to make this spirit of penance your own through him" (*Penance* R 15,6,1). "In honour of and in union with Our Lord Jesus Christ your penitent Son here before you because of my sins and because of the sins of the whole world..." (*Profession of a penitent* R 15,17,1). "Remember and be convinced that you are the weakest and most imperfect of all people, and that only your pride can make you think otherwise. And [add "de" in the French text] whenever you hear some bad person being spoken about, consider him as superior to you" (*Humility* R 15,8,2). ●