

SOURCES OF THE COLLECTION
(continued)

SILENCE (2/2)

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qui n'est pas retenu en paroles

This expression makes you think immediately of making efforts to restrain oneself. It shows the need for setting limits, showing discernment and exercising self-control, none of which is always easy to achieve. De La Salle was aware of this. "The Rules I have imposed upon myself", make it clear that De La Salle experienced some difficulties in this matter. He prays for "the graces I need in order ...to correct my faults" (EMO CL 14,69).

ne peut pas devenir spirituel *ne peut devenir spirituel*

The two writers come to the same conclusion. Dissipation through speech is an obstacle to spiritual life and a source of sin. Both go into details:

et qu'un moyen sûr pour être celui qui ne pêche pas *par la*
bientôt **parfait** est de **ne pas** *langue* est un homme *parfait*, dit
pécher **par la langue** le St Esprit.

This is exactly the same idea expressed in a different way. It is surprising to see that the Founder, who normally uses many quotations, is not more specific about this one from the Epistle of St James II,2, and does not give it in full. This is how it appears in Amelotte 1685: "And he who does not sin by his words is a perfect man". It can be seen that Nicolas Roland quotes it more closely

Both writers are as insistent as to their source.

By using the adverb "bientôt", De La Salle stresses the importance of time and, therefore, of persistent effort. This is the second instance in the paragraph in which effort is mentioned as a factor in the search for perfection.

Ne parlez pas sans nécessité Quand vous serez obligé de parler

The same idea, but expressed differently. Is this significant? De La Salle is negative, he stresses the prohibition. Roland stresses the obligation. Obligation arises either as the result of an order, and then it is clear, or from need, in which case there is a need for discernment. Once again the "Rules I have imposed upon myself" can help us here. "I shall spend a quarter of an hour (if time is short, at least the time of a Miserere) to examine before God whether the need is real or only imaginary."

hors le temps de récréations *hors les récréations*

The same idea again, but with a stress again on time. One cannot help being reminded of the detailed daily timetable

punctuated all day long by the ringing of the bell. The expression is identical with the one in the Rule, ch. 22. Du Silence: "Les Frères de cet Institut garderont un silence très exact hors le temps des récréations..."

et quand vous y serez obligés

This is the expression used by Roland in an earlier extract. Chapter 22 of the Rule expresses this idea very clearly in a number of places: "for some pressing need", "when it is so urgent that it cannot be postponed", "unless it is absolutely necessary", "one will not speak...without an indispensable need".

Faites-le toujours avec permission et avec retenue

Two imperatives which are not found in Roland. De La Salle is a firm believer in obedience. Asking for permission is a sign of this dependence. The Rule speaks of asking permission: "they will not speak to one another for whatever reason without permission". "When a Brother needs permission to speak". In chapter 13 we read: "They will not speak to any of the Brothers...without an order or permission".

And with moderation. This is the second time the word "retenue" occurs in the text. There is always this idea of moderation, discretion, self-control, which comes also from good manners. What is the meaning of "retenue" here? Is it moderation in asking for permission, or in using the permission granted?

à voix basse et en peu de mots que ce soit toujours *à voix basse et en peu de mots*

The same words exactly. The word "toujours" is used earlier by De La Salle. Apart from that, there is insistence on the need for silence, and the call once again to be discreet, not to disturb others, to be brief, not to waste time with useless words.

évitez même de parler des choses nécessaires *évitez même les choses nécessaires*

The use of the word "même" is a further encouragement to practise silence. Brothers and Sisters are invited to examine their consciences. Examinations of all kinds were a recommended part of spiritual life at the time. This explains the remark made earlier by the Founder when he said: "ne parlez pas sans nécessité".

The addition of the word "parler" in De La Salle makes for greater clarity. Its absence in Roland's text could be a copyist's error.

lorsqu'elles se peuvent remettre à un autre temps *lorsqu'elles ne sont point de saison et qu'elles se peuvent remettre à un autre temps*

Both writers use identical terms. Roland adds a rather picturesque expression. It would be interesting to know if it is a local expression.

There are quite a few in Roland, but not many in De La Salle.

cette mortification est d'un très grand profit *cette mortification et suspension est d'un très grand profit*

The terms used are identical, with Roland adding "suspension". What does it mean? The fact that De La Salle has kept

the word "mortification" does not surprise us: we know he had a reputation for being mortified, and this is borne out by his life and his writings. He uses the word 97 times, and includes a self-examination regarding this in the Collection. This is to be found under the heading: "Directory according to which every Brother has to render an account of his conduct to the Brother Superior of the Institute", article 6: "If he has a love for mortifications and how is this evident..."

The word "suspension" is not used by De La Salle. The 1701 Universal Dictionary defines the term as: "Action by which one stops the effect or course of something for some time". It would be better if the word were qualified. Roland did not seem to think this important.

et sert beaucoup à avancer une âme dans la perfection et avance la perfection d'une âme en peu de temps

The idea is identical. Roland, however, seems to point almost to an automatic effect, while De La Salle speaks more in terms of a means. He does not repeat the expression "en peu de temps". For De La Salle, the work of God and spiritual progress are a gradual process and take much time. (cf. Memoir on the Beginnings, ref. CL 10, p.106: "God who directs all things with wisdom and gentleness...did so in an imperceptible manner and over a long period of time..." (Blain I, p.169), a more likely version than that of Bernard and Maillefer: "and in a short time".

d'autant que les grâces et les communications de Dieu d'autant que les grâces et communications de Dieu

As we have already noticed, Roland is satisfied with using one article for several words. De La Salle likes to repeat them, and often the sentence is clearer and more elegant as a result.

De La Salle uses the word "communication" in this sense 7 times in all. Often he uses "inspiration" (33 times in all).

sont semblables à une liqueur qui s'évente sont semblables à une liqueur qui s'épanche

The word "éventer" presupposes a loss of quality, a deterioration due to exposure to air. It is a negative expression. "Epancher" means "to pour", and "s'épancher" to be poured or spilled with a more positive meaning.

This is an interesting distinction to note. It would seem that De La Salle's word suits the situation better because both writers subsequently use "se perdre".

et se perd par la superfluité des paroles et se perd par la superfluité des paroles

The two passages are identical. The word "superfluité" is found only 3 times in the Vocabulaire Lasallien. It would seem that De La Salle borrowed it from Roland. It goes well with the word "éventer" used earlier in the sentence.

De La Salle often warns about an abundance of words, including in mental prayer.

The ending of the two texts is quite different as regards ideas and words. It would be interesting to consider the reason for this passage in De La Salle. Could not the text have ended with the previous paragraph? Does he want to stay close to Roland's text?

While Roland speaks of fraternal correction, De La Salle turns to another aspect. In fact he is not in favour of this type of correction. For him, it takes place always through the intermediary of the Director or during the community exercise of mutual fraternal correction.

Is this a character trait on his part or the fruit of experience?

The Rule says:

"On one day of the week, the Brothers will charitably point out their defects to one another in the presence of Brother Director..." (Chap. 5, art.9: CL 25,p.26).

"no Brother will ever contradict or disapprove...only the Director..." (Chap. 6, art.12).

"he will not speak to any Brother except about what the Brother Director has ordered or allowed him to".

De La Salle's text is an invitation not to be satisfied with external silence. This idea of not being satisfied with what is external returns often in his writings. The latter type of behaviour is often found among people of the world:

"There are many who...content themselves with accomplishing what is external and apparent...you should do everything in a religious spirit. You should not be satisfied with doing only what is exterior..." (Med. 58,1).

This is perhaps a somewhat pessimistic view of people of the world. We read, after all, of de Renty, "one of the greatest examples of piety to have appeared for a long time" (Fr. St Jure, quoted by Poutet in Positio Nicolas Roland, p.83), of the Earl of Charmel, M. de Pontcarré, all of whom De La Salle knew well.

It is useful to quote the two passages again:

Tâchez de joindre toujours le silence intérieur avec le silence extérieur de votre langue oubliant ce qui est créé pour vous souvenir de Dieu et de sa sainte présence, dont vous tâcherez de vous entretenir toujours intérieurement.

Try always to combine interior silence with the exterior silence of your tongue, forgetting what is created in order to be aware of God and of his holy presence, which you will always try to maintain interiorly.

S'il arrive que quelqu'une de vos soeurs se dissipe ou s'oublie en cet article, vous devez par un esprit de charité l'avertir avec respect et civilité en mettant le doigt sur votre bouche, pour luy donner à entendre qu'il n'est pas tems de parler, se sera à elle de s'humilier.

If it so happens that one of your sisters behaves frivolously or is remiss regarding this point, you should bring it to her attention politely and with respect, through a spirit of charity, by placing your finger on your mouth, so as to let her understand that it is not the time to speak. It will be up to her to accept this with humility.

It is worth reading article N° 60 on Silence in Thèmes lasalliens, by Brother Mario Presciuttini. ●