

**JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE,
CATECHIST**

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The sources of De La Salle's catechetical doctrine were very varied and are well known. We have for example "L'Ecole Paroissiale", the teachings of bishops in their own catechisms, and the practical experiences of the "Petites Ecoles", but it was especially the seminary of St. Sulpice which kindled and gave its stamp to De La Salle as catechist.

The author of the "Histoire des Catéchismes de Saint Sulpice" confirms this statement when he writes "Baüyn gave a

talk every week to catechists. This man who was so keen to have young students remain virtuous, tried to pass on the same enthusiasm to the seminarians under his care. His most famous followers were Messrs John Baptist de La Salle and Grignon de Montfort"

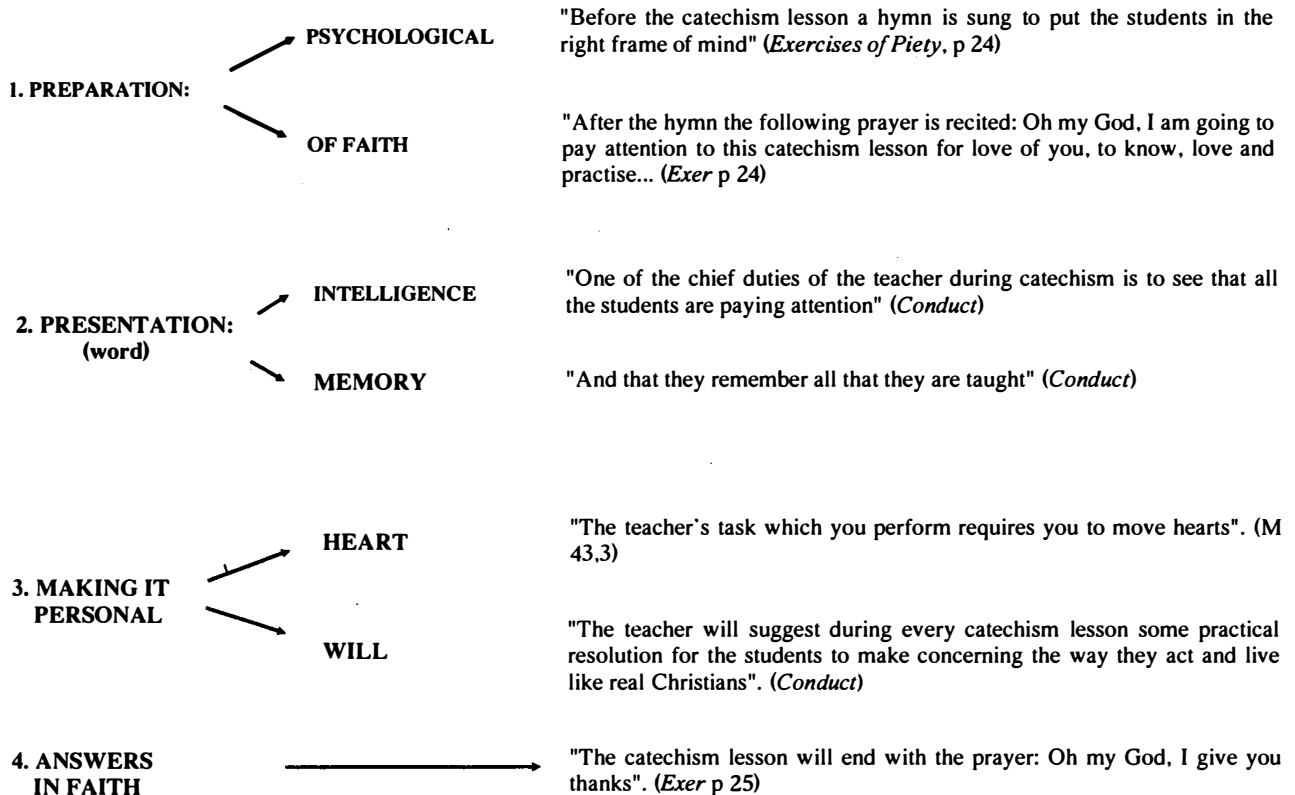
Chapter IX of the "Conduct of schools" gives a faithful summary of the St. Sulpice method, which had spread throughout France, thanks to men of such stature as Messrs Olier, de La Chétardye, Tronson and Baüyn.

In this article we point out in the first instance the plan of the "catechism lesson", according to the "Conduct" in order later to find out how De La Salle was inspired by the St. Sulpice method.

When I was doing research in the library of St. Sulpice, I came across a manuscript which outlines how the catechist should behave during the catechism lesson.

Comparing this manuscript with chapter IX of the "Conduct of Schools" and with De La Salle's meditations shows an almost word for word similarity in the way of going about things. We could quote many other of De La Salle's works to confirm his indebtedness.

Master and students - Respect and courtesy - Master and students - Respect and courtesy



NB. Whether we summarise the catechism lesson according to the "Conduct" as above or in another way, it makes no difference. What is always a hallmark is that:

- a) God takes the initiative, that is why we pray to him at the beginning and the end.
- b) Man must follow up the lesson by his agreement (prayer) and his behaviour (life of Faith)

Master and students - Respect and courtesy - Master and students - Respect and courtesy

THE CATECHIST ACCORDING TO THE METHOD

OF SAINT SULPICE

OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE

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| <p>1. The catechist must have enough knowledge.</p> | <p>The more you apply yourself (to the study of the Gospels), the more versed you will become in the knowledge of the Saints, and the more you will be in a position to instruct others. (MF 167,2)</p> |
| <p>2. He needs to have talent to teach catechism successfully.</p> | <p>One of the principal concerns of a teacher during a catechism lesson must be to make sure the pupils are very attentive and that they remember easily what they are told (Cond 102)</p> |
| <p>3. He must prepare questions and answers very carefully.</p> | <p>The teacher must spend almost all his time questioning his pupils by means of questions and sub-questions, so that they can understand what he is teaching them. Teachers will submit all their sub-questions (PREPARATION) to the Brother Director before using them in school. (Cond pp. 99 & 102)</p> |
| <p>4. He must always have God in view.</p> | <p>Having only God in view when performing actions. (MF. p.87,1)</p> |
| <p>5. He must follow the timetable faithfully.</p> | <p>Cf. pp. 96 & 97 of the Conduct where it speaks of the time to be allocated to the explanation of the catechism.</p> |
| <p>6. He must not change subject without the permission of the Director.</p> | <p>On Sunday, the Director will indicate the subject to be started during the Monday catechism lesson and to be taught throughout the rest of the week. (Cond p.98)</p> |
| <p>7. He must avoid questioning always the clever children.</p> | <p>He will always be careful to question the most ignorant children frequently, and much more frequently than the others. (Cond p. 100)</p> |
| <p>8. He must avoid speaking too long.</p> | <p>He will take care to ask a lot of questions and to speak little. (Cond 101)</p> |
| <p>9. He must make the children learn about their religion for motives of faith.</p> | <p>About which (the knowledge of the truth) God wants all people to be instructed, so that their minds may be enlightened by the light of faith. (MR p.8)</p> |
| <p>10. He must not tire of saying the same things over and over again in order to make them understand.</p> | <p>The teacher will ask several pupils the same question - 7 or 8, or 10 or 12, or even more. (Cond p.99)</p> |
| <p>11. He must not say anything that is not in accordance with the Gospel and the teachings of the Church.</p> | <p>The teacher will not say anything during his catechism lessons that he has not read in well-approved books or of which he is not very sure. (Cond p.103)</p> |
| <p>12. He must not say what is a mortal or venial sin unless he is sure.</p> | <p>He will never say what is a mortal or venial sin: all that he should say is that something offends God very much, that it's a sin one should fear to commit. (Cond p.103)</p> |
| <p>13. In order not to bore the children, he should use new stories and comparisons.</p> | <p>On Sundays and feasts, he will choose a story the pupils will enjoy, and will tell it in a way that they like and which will keep their attention, adding details that will prevent them from becoming bored. (Cond p.103)</p> |
| <p>14. He will not use his cane during catechism lessons. He must put it away.</p> | <p>He will take care not to disturb catechism lessons by making reprimands or punishing pupils at an inappropriate time. If some pupils deserve to be reprimanded or punished, he should see to it at an other time. (Cond p.101)</p> |

Material found personally by the author in manuscripts at the Seminary of Saint Sulpice.