

## How many Brothers were in the Institute on April 7, 1719?

### Brother Augustine Loes

It is usually said that at the time of the Founder's death there were 100 Brothers in the Institute. Often this is based on the number of names signed on the records of the visits made by Brother Bartholomew to the 22 communities from December 1716 to May 1717. These records are preserved in the archives in Rome; they actually have only 98 different names; one name (Alexis) is on twice, once in Grenoble in January, again in Guise in March, confirmed by an examination of the signatures. In addition to these 98, Gabriel in Rome and Bartholomew himself make a total of 100 Brothers.

Curiously, there are two Brothers among these 100 about whom there seems to be no certain information other than their names: Nicholas and Macaire (CL 3:30). Their names do not appear in the Register of the Brothers (*Catalogue des Frères*, CL 3) which was started around 1714, and which gives basic facts about those who are registered. These two are counted in the total of 100.

Also a Brother René was present in community when Brother Bartholomew made his visits, and only his name is in the Register, but it has been struck out. Felix Paul (*Les Lettres*: 207) notes that there was a Brother René who was the founding Director of the community in Les Vans in 1711, and who left the Institute in 1720 after attempting a bizarre career practicing medicine on the side. Felix Paul wonders if his name was crossed out of the Register because of the scandal of his behavior and departure.

The 100 Brothers on the record of Bartholomew's visits in 1716 and 1717 (plus Gabriel and Bartholomew) did not include all the novices. There is also a two-year period between the visits of Bartholomew and the death of the Founder on 7 April 1719.

The Register gives certain evidence that one of the 100 Brothers left the Institute in 1717. Brother Vincent Titeux, who entered around 1700 at the age of 26; he was thus a Brother for 17 years (*Cahiers* 3:28, note 5). Documentary data concerning the perseverance of all the other 100 Brothers is unfortunately incomplete. There is evidence, however, that 78 of the 100 were in the Institute on April 7, 1719.

In addition, there is some documentary data about 28 novices who entered from 1716 to April 1717, of whom 8 are listed among those in community when Bartholomew's visits were made. Of the other 20 novices there is evidence that nine were in the Institute when the Founder died. This would then be a verified total of 87 Brothers in the Institute on April 7, 1719.

There are, then, an additional 21 Brothers of the 100, and 11 of the 28 novices, about whom for this study of Brothers in the Institute when the Founder died there is no sure evidence. Of these 32 there is this evidence: 9 died in the Institute, 15 left the Institute, 4 were sent away, and about the remaining 4 there is no evidence at all of what happened to them. Since we do not know whether any of these events occurred before April 7, 1719, it is possible that all 32 were still in the Institute on April 7, 1719, making 119 the total possibly present.

Some additional facts: there is documentary evidence about the age of 73 of the Brothers (in the total of 128, novices included) at the time of their death; the average age was 62.9 years. Yet another study of the available data indicates that the average age of all those entering the Institute at that time was 24.

Regarding the rate of perseverance, of the 39 who entered the Institute during the five years prior to the death of the Founder 24 persevered to death, 61 percent. This agrees well with three other similar studies made of different groups of the Brothers who lived and worked with De La Salle: one by Maurice Hermans (CL 3:29) gives a rate of 61 percent (109 out of 178) for the period 1705 to 1724; another study of the same period by Rigault (*Histoire* I:409) gives a rate of 73 percent, though this study seems to include those persevering in the Institute when the register was started, but not those who had previously left; another study by Felix Paul based on the names in the letters of the Founder gives a rate of 60 percent perseverance (28 out of 47), and he adds that another 12 Brothers could possibly have persevered though certain evidence is lacking (*Circulaires Instructives et Administratives* 335:235). •