

**FEMALE PRESENCE
IN THE LIFE OF
SAINT JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE
IV
Relationships with benefactors
of the ministries of John Baptist de La Salle
(2/2)**

Brother Carlos José Láinez Paz

MARGUERITE BACHELIER

The widow of Francis Lespagnol and niece of grandmother Pietra.

She had no children and her substantial goods (valued at 40,000 livres) were divided among 27 inheritors, one of whom was John Baptist along with his other siblings.

John Baptist is told the news and he delegates his interest to Jean Louis on February 11, 1703 (Gallego, I, p. 418, note 5).

FRANCES DE LA FAGE

The wife of Mr. de La Fage, the sister of Louis Martineau, treasurer of the Mende hospital.

She wrote to Father La Sayette, asking him for information about selecting dedicated school teachers. La Sayette in turn went to De La Salle for advice.

Ms. de La Fage came to Paris personally at the beginning of February, 1707. She was not successful in seeing De La Salle but she did see La Sayette who ended up speaking with De La Salle.

On June 21, 1707 the Brothers opened the school in Mende.

NICOLE LEFEVRE

The three inheritors Charlotte, Philippe Gaumont and Nicholas Roland were opposed to the donation saying that it entailed too much money.

De La Salle stated that “the process does not speak well of his character and I am pleased to cede all their rights to them...” In his house in Saint Honorius during the afternoon of January 26, 1707 Lemerçié, a notary public, drew up minutes of the transaction. De La Salle gave up everything; the claimants would receive 4,000 livres, furniture and the free use of the Brodart house where they would live and offer classes; they paid for all prior expenditures and offered 500 livres for rent that was not foreseen (Gallego, I, p. 431).

CHARLOTTE POIGNANT

This woman offered a house and funding to the school of St. Denis beginning in 1705 (Gallego, I, p. 432).

The second school that was established in St. Denis was in Ms. De Lage’s house (Gallego, I, Chapter 17, note 75).

MRS. THEODON

Wife of Mr. Theodon, the sculptor in whose house in Rome Gabriel Drolin spent a few months.

After being widowed, she founded an institution that was called the Sisters of St. Martha and their purpose was to educate young girls.

De La Salle states in his letter of August 13, 1704 to Gabriel Drolin: “I know that M. Théodon is remaining there and that his wife is leaving at once. She is quite happy to buy material and have a robe made for you” (Letter 13, 8). “Mlle Théodon says that she will take you a New Testament in the vernacular. You can just as easily get one as she can” (Letter 13, 10).

ANNE LESCURE DE SAINT DENIS

She was born around 1667.

During her stay at Mende, De La Salle gratefully offered lodging to Ms. Ana Lescure de Saint-Denis.

This fervent and worthy woman had joined together with other women and formed a group called the Christian Union. This had been founded in 1696 and received Letters Patent in 1724. The group was devoted to prayer and exercises of charity.

The group sought De La Salle’s advice for help in organizing their community and drawing up appropriate rules.

De La Salle was happy to help them out. This was about the only activity that interrupted his prayer and works of penance.

The woman was very grateful and De La Salle’s work was so sound that even today these rules are still in use.

In addition, Ms. Lescure promised that she would endow the Brothers' schools so that there could always be at least three Brothers. It appears that this wish was not entirely fulfilled (Gallego, I, p. 492).

As the founder left Mende, returning to Grenoble on the way back to Paris, Ms. Lescure de Saint-Denis gave him a very appropriate gift: a horse for the journey.

Anne Lescure de Saint-Denis died in 1737 (Gallego, I, p.520).

MADAME DE MAINTENON

The entire Institute knew the friendliness of Madame de Maintenon, that of her confessor Father Le Tellier and of the court in general, thanks to the school in Versailles (Gallego I, p. 503).

TWO WOMEN INVOLVED IN THE VOCATIONAL DECISION OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE.

Madame de Maillefer or Madame L'Evêque and Sister Louise of Parmenie.

In the "Memoir on the Beginnings" De La Salle writes: ... "Two circumstances motivated my interest for the schools: the meeting with Mr. Nyel and the proposal that this woman made to me. Before that time I had not thought about it at all and not because it had not been suggested..." (Blain 1, p. 169).

For Blain this woman was Madame Maillefer.

For Bernard this woman was Madame L'Evêque: "This is how God valued these two persons, namely, Mr. Nyel and Madame L'Evêque, to induce De La Salle to take charge of the schools which he had not

thought about at all..." (Bernard, p. 30).

SISTER LOUISE HOURS

Sister Louise was born in Thouret, next to Grenoble in 1646.

She felt called by God to redo the shrine and the traditional cult of a chapel that was located on a hill in Parmenie.

Sister Louise was known for her mysticism and people came to listen to her advice. De La Salle also set out for this place after some days of retreat. When De La Salle met Sister Louise she was 68 years old. The two of them understood each other very well from the very beginning. A reverent affection was born between them that continued to grow by means of various conversations. Together they discovered the journeys for which God had destined them.

When John Baptist told her of his desire to remain in hiding for the rest of his life, Louise told him: "This is not God's will. You should not abandon the family of which God made you the father. Your patrimony is in this work; you must persevere in it until the end, uniting together like you did until now the roles of both Magdalene and Martha".

"This heavenly adventure was recounted by both of them as one of the principal graces of God, whose memory was immortal and for whom thanksgiving was a daily event" (Blain 2, 105).

Returning to Grenoble, John Baptist was rejuvenated and the community soon caught his evident fervor which transpired in the Founder. De La Salle sent her a copy of all his books at her request, even though she was unable to read.

From Paris, John Baptist wrote to her on the occasion of the publication of the Bull Unigenitus (Gallego, S., I, pp. 507-508). •