La Salle Connection – Episode 4: The birth of Saint John Baptist de La Salle

"La Salle Connection" is a multimedia series designed to connect the Lasallian Family with historical events that continue to inspire Lasallians today.

In this episode of *La Salle Connection*, we are going to discuss the birth of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

This took place in the city of Reims. At that time, the city was characterised by a structure of broad civic participation in the city's governance; the establishment of significant charitable institutions to support the protection of the most impoverished; and a drive to create religious communities dedicated to serving the poor, which was also very important.

The social conditions in which John Baptist de La Salle was born clearly shaped his life. He lived during a period of crisis in the European consciousness; that is to say, the period in which European society was transforming from a Medieval society, based on a set of evangelical values, into a complex capitalist society.

In that society, in 1650, Louis de La Salle and Nicole Moët were married. Both came from families connected to the city government, the city's judiciary, and also the administration of these institutions for the protection of the poor.

They signed a contract between the two families in August 1650 and were married within a few days.

Eight months later, John Baptist was born. This premature birth would have consequences for his health throughout his life. He was born in the so-called 'Hotel de la Clôche', a small mansion situated in the city centre which had been purchased by the La Salle family not long before.

The baptism, which took place on the same day, was held at the godparents' parish, Saint Hilary, in accordance with the custom of the time.

His family lived in this ‘Hotel de la Clôche’ for a few years as tenants of his eldest brother, Louis’s eldest brother, because the eldest son was the one who inherited the property. There they would have 11 more children, of whom 6 would survive.

It was in this house that his early years and his Christian life would unfold, a subject we shall discuss on another occasion.

In the next episodes, we will continue to share other significant moments in the life and work of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. You can find them at www.lasalle.org and on our social media.