La Salle Connection – Episode 9: “The Heroic Vow”

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

In today’s episode of *La Salle Connection*, we’re going to talk about the Heroic Vow.

It is 1690, and De La Salle is facing the first of the trials brought against him by the teachers’ guilds for accepting, free of charge, pupils who could pay. Furthermore, he is short of Brothers to take charge of the classes at his eight schools. No new Brothers have joined for some time, Several have died, others have left, and De La Salle himself has fallen ill.

For this reason, he decides to take some time out on retreat to discover what God wants. And he realises it: what God wants is for this Community to grow from within. Consequently, he decided not to open any new schools, to set aside time for an annual retreat with all the Brothers, to visit the communities, and to write monthly letters to the Brothers. Furthermore, he planned to establish a novitiate period for when new vocations arrived.

In September 1691, he summoned all the Brothers to a month-long retreat. Once that retreat was over, he continued to discuss with two of them – Nicolas Vuyart and Gabriel Drolin, who were directors in Paris – how to give this nascent Community a solid foundation. Together, they discovered the value of the Association: a stable Association that would remain committed to the task of founding the Community, regardless of the consequences.

And so, they decided to take a secret vow: to remain together to establish this Community, even if they had to live on alms and eat nothing but bread. That vow would remain a secret forever. The other Brothers would only learn of it when Gabriel Drolin returned from Rome, long after the Founder’s death. But that is another story.