

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

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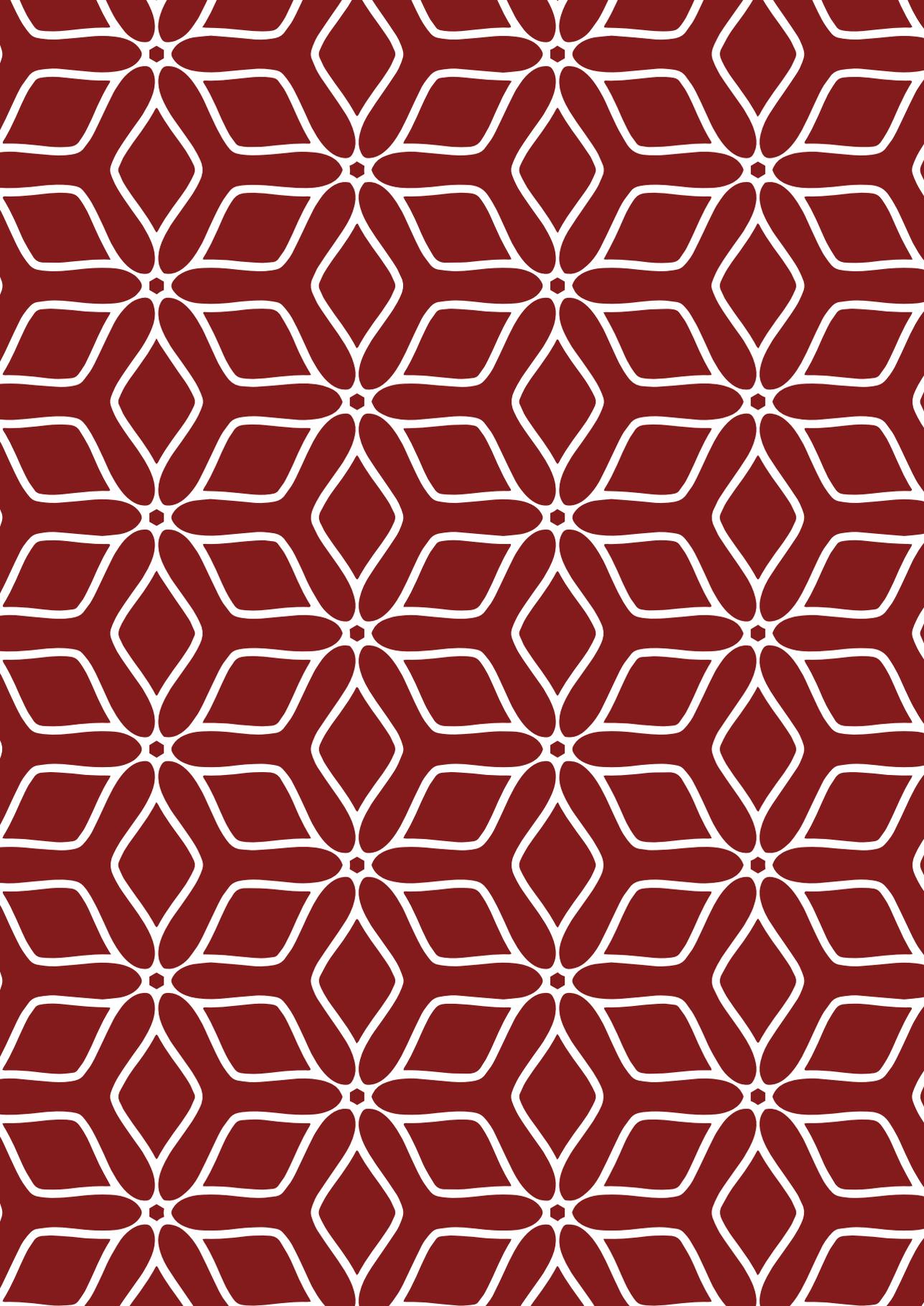
THE CHALLENGE OF FRATERNITY  
A REFLECTION AND  
A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

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La  Salle

MEL BULLETIN

56



# The Challenge of Fraternity a Reflection and a Personal Testimony

*By Brother Leon Lauraire, FSC*

Caluire, France  
(on the occasion of the tercentenary of the death  
of Saint Jean Baptiste de La Salle:  
30 April 1651 - 7 April 1719)



**Brothers of  
the Christian  
Schools**

MEL BULLETIN N. 56 - March 2021  
Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools  
Secretariat for Association and Mission

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# FOREWORD

**T**he Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools has recently published a *"Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission"*. This step is not a new one. It has been repeated several times over the past 300 years by various General Chapters, and it found its concrete expression in the successive editions of *The Conduct of Schools* from 1720 to 1916.

In today's cultural, social and scientific context, such a declaration appears necessary and even urgent, and the act of publishing it will itself be of great importance for the future, just as the contents will be. Various groups of teachers and educators of the Lasallian network have been working on different topics. The reports of these groups will be submitted to the International Assembly on the Lasallian Educational Mission (AIMEL) and then to the next General Chapter of the Brothers. The final text of the Declaration, therefore, will be endorsed by the two supreme decision-making bodies of the Lasallian network. This has been the tradition of the Institute since its origins.

From the beginning, the Brothers in dialogue with John Baptist de La Salle did not limit themselves to describing contents and teaching methods. They wanted to give those things a particular finality and mentality, namely that of FRATERNITY. It is therefore opportune here to give a brief survey of the history of the Institute in order to recall how this spirit of fraternity was born, and how it continues to manifest itself in the Lasallian network. In addition to giving an historical survey, I shall add some elements of personal testimony concerning the effects of this fraternity throughout the world.

At the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our world of today has a great need for educators who will commit themselves to promoting universal fraternity. The forces of division and violence are still operating in present day societies, and the education of young people can help to mitigate and overcome them.

Experiencing fraternity in school so as to become builders of it in society: such is the educational dream of all Lasallians.

Caluire, 15 August 2019  
Brother Léon Lauraire.

# A. THE CHOICE OF FRATERNITY

## A1. 1682: The Founding Event.

The first three biographers of Saint John Baptist de La Salle (Bernard, Maillefer and Blain) attach great importance to the first Assembly of the Brothers which was called by the Founder. There were three aspects of the Brothers' life that were meant to be resolved in that Assembly.

- a. To establish regulations for organising the common life of the schoolmasters who were going to live together like religious;
- b. To adopt a special habit and adapt it to the practical needs of teaching so that it would identify the Brothers in the framework of the society of the period;
- c. To choose a name for the new Institute, (which at the time was still frequently called the "Community").

It is the third of the above points which interests us here, and first we should recall what the biographers say about this part of the Assembly:

"Consequently, the title of "Brothers", which nature gives to children of the same blood and having the same earthly father, properly belonged to them as being adopted in charity and having the same spirit and the same Father in heaven. In this way, the name Brothers of the Christian and Gratuitous Schools became the title for the children of Monsieur de La Salle, and henceforth we shall give them no other name. This nomenclature is the right one, because it includes a definition of their state of life and indicates the service that goes with their vocation. The name teaches them that the charity which gave birth to their Institute must remain its life and soul; that it should govern all their deliberations and shape all their plans; that it should be what moves them to action, controls all their steps and inspires all their words and works. The name teaches them the excellence of their service, the dignity of their state and the holiness of their profession. It tells them that, as Brothers among themselves, they should show tender but spiritual friendship to each other and look upon themselves as the older brothers of those who come to their classes, carrying out their ministry of charity with charitable hearts." (CL 7 p. 241).

Canon Blain was able to observe the educational work done in Saint Yon by the Brothers for the benefit of young people in situations of difficulty. Since he was chaplain to the house, he was able to talk with both Brothers and young people. He was able to converse with John Baptist during the closing years of the Founder's life. Nevertheless, it is surprising to note in the above quote the extent to which he was able to perceive the spirit and soul of the Lasallian school. In the first three lines, he brings out the essential nature of this "pedagogy of fraternity".

### 1. The importance of words.

It is important for us to reflect on the title chosen collectively to designate the new Institute. It uses three important words each of which calls for some comment.

- a. **Brothers:** Fraternity is what should characterise the language, behaviour and relationships of these schoolmasters, a fraternity based on human nature and on the gospel, a fraternity which the Founder would spell out in the Rule of the Brothers and in numerous Meditations written for their benefit. We could multiply the quotations. It was to be a fraternity which went beyond the circle of the religious community and extend to all the members of the educational community, but primarily to the children being educated and to their families. This fraternity would enable the teacher to "win hearts", a characteristic expression which occurs twenty-two times in the writings of John Baptist de La Salle. Lasallian pedagogy is first of all a "pedagogy of the heart". We shall look at its main features below.
- b. **Schools.** In the thought of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, this term had a generic meaning, and referred to teaching in general at all levels. This is evident from the way in which he diversified the educational establishments for which he accepted responsibility. They included ordinary primary schools, Sunday schools for apprentices, special classes for young Irish immigrants, allowing young workers and apprentices to join the catechism lessons on Sundays and feasts, special classes for the sons of sailors in seaside towns, training schools for country schoolmasters, and above all the boarding sections in Saint Yon for the sons of merchants and for young delinquents.

- c. **Christian:** In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the qualification must have appeared strangely paradoxical, since the whole system of education in France was under the authority of the churches, either Catholic or Protestant, and so they were Christian by definition. However, De La Salle would make it clear in his writings what he meant by "Christian Schools", and what distinguished them from the others. Ever since the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the most basic requirement for all primary schools for the popular class was that they should teach the children to read so that they could learn the catechism and thereby know the essentials of Christian doctrine, the necessary minimum for salvation. But De La Salle wanted his schools to form "real Christians", regular in practice, committed, active in the local church and guided by gospel values. They would thus be able to escape from the superstitious errors of heresies, magic and licentiousness. It was an ambitious and demanding programme.
- d. **Gratuitous:** Blain adds this adjective onto the end of the title of the Institute. It seems that this was indeed the custom during the early years. Besides, the Founder wrote on two occasions that this was essential to the Institute. In addition, it meant a lot of trouble for him from the masters of the Little Schools, not because he accepted poor pupils without payment (which the parish charity schools were already doing), but because he also accepted those who were not poor and who were able to pay for their schooling. That meant he was depriving the masters of the Little Schools of some of their customers and the income that went with them. De La Salle was not doing this for financial gain but because, as he said, the gospel must be proclaimed freely to ALL.

"Brothers of the Christian Schools" The thing people might find surprising about this title of the Institute, is the absence of any reference to a saint (man or woman), or even to the Persons of the Holy Trinity, contrasted with the practice in many Orders and Congregations. However, this was not an exception, even for the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Saint Vincent of Paul had recently founded the "Priests of the Mission" and the "Daughters of Charity". De La Salle and the first Brothers agreed to adopt a name which would define their identity in terms of their relationships and their ministry. This would bring out the importance of their professional activity, the work of teaching, as an element in their identity. In later years, the Founder would come to

express this in various ways, and here it suffices to quote just a few of his expressions. "Do not make any distinction between things relating to your state in life and those relating to your employment." "Community exercises and work in school require one's total commitment." "This Community is ordinarily called the Community of the Christian Schools."

## **A2. A necessary rupture**

**W**hen they were choosing their title, De La Salle and the first Brothers no doubt had already some idea about the way they understood their schools as ones which would be places for education in fraternity, but it would take some time before they would be able to put this idea into practice.

They were operating in an environment in which schools already had their pedagogical methods and organisation, and they were not seen to be centres of very much fraternity. The Lasallian schools would gradually become distinct from the model of the Little Schools. The following table compares the two and brings out the importance of the changes.

<b>The Little Schools</b>	<b>The Lasallian School</b>
<b>1. The school clientele</b>	
<p>Little Schools for the Third Estate. The nobility and the bourgeoisie had a system of private schools called Colleges. A sort of segregation prevailed. Since they were fee-paying, only the well-off could attend. The poor went to the charity schools.</p>	<p>The schools were open to all levels of society but were attended only by the children of the popular class apart from a few rare exceptions. The school was "open to all", because gratuity meant they could accept everybody.</p>
<b>2. The school premises</b>	
<p>Often chosen at random and not well suited and poorly furnished. A single room for individual teaching: master and pupil.</p>	<p>Schools with separate classrooms (3 if possible) each one capable of receiving 50 or 60 pupils, all at more or less the same level. This was spelled out in detail in a chapter of <i>The Conduct of Schools</i> first written in 1720.</p>
<b>3. Aims and Objectives</b>	
<p>In line with the Council of Trent: reading and studying the catechism, and politeness if possible.</p>	<p>3 Goals: to form good citizens and good workers for employment involving writing skills, real Christians.</p>
<b>4. Teaching method</b>	
<p>The generalised individual method. In Latin</p>	<p>The simultaneous method with shared activities and in French.</p>
<b>5. Teaching activities</b>	
<p>Repetition. Trial and error.</p>	<p>Repetition. Trial and error. Explanation of reasons. Socratic questions. Monitoring each other by pupils. Explaining of catechism by the teacher.</p>

<b>6. Teaching tools</b>	
Personal tools for each pupil: things needed for writing.	A book for each level of lessons. Things needed for writing. Alphabet and syllable charts. A store of model handwriting texts. Blackboard, inkwells and ink.
<b>7. Discipline in the classroom</b>	
Difficult to maintain. Repressive discipline. Use of corporal punishments traditional in teaching.	General silence. Order in everything. Vigilance of the teacher. Assistance by pupil "officers". Motivation and emulation in work. Regular rewards. Development of interiority.
<b>8. Relationships in class</b>	
Almost non-existent so as to maintain order. Punitive relationships, individualised work relationships.	Personal teacher-pupil relationships. Work relationship through "signals". Controlled relationships between pupils.
<b>9. Assessment of work</b>	
Individual assessment of each pupil's progress.	Immediate assessment as part of every exercise. Monthly assessment for all according to level or lesson. Keeping records.
<b>10. Quality of the Teachers</b>	
Absence of any initial training. Appointment through competitive interviews by a parish panel. Teacher works in isolation. Very little support. Mediocre conditions of work.	Training in the Novitiate and support by an experienced teacher. Regular help from the 'inspector of schools'. Teamwork and mutual help, yearly continued formation via the community retreat. Replacement when sick. Study of The Conduct of Schools. Possible mobility. Work in association.

The above rapid survey of the main elements of the schools, clearly indicates that the Little Schools of the 17<sup>th</sup> century were not designed for educating in fraternity. That was not their purpose, and they were not organised for it. Consequently, they could not compare with the educational project of John Baptist de La Salle and the first "Brothers" of the Christian Schools, who had the experience of living in community and sought to transmit this to their pupils.

A break with the existing school model was inevitable, and the above table shows clearly that it was irreversible. At the same time, schools could not ignore the social and economic environment in which they were developing. The 18<sup>th</sup> century saw big social developments in the lower and middle classes. The Lasallian school adapted itself to prepare the pupils for that new society which was creating new kinds of employment in the clerical sector (secretaries, accountants, administrators), in what was essentially an urban milieu. That is why De La Salle stipulates (in the "Memorandum on the Habit" that his schools were to be "only in the towns". It was in towns that they would be able to find customers in sufficient numbers to fill the classes and so respond effectively to the growing demand for literacy in a country where school attendance was only around 20%.

Against this background, the Lasallian school sought to provide all children, even the poorest, with a rounded education which would cater for the human, professional, social and spiritual dimensions of the individual. Such a coherent project called for competent teachers, working as a team and ready to contribute to the overall success.

Clearly, the changes in the organisation and the running of schools introduced by De La Salle and the Brothers were more appropriate for developing a spirit of fraternity among the teachers, among the pupils and between teachers and pupils.

For forty years from 1679 to 1719, John Baptist de La Salle endeavoured to give shape to this project in his writings such as the *Memorandum on the Habit*, the *Common Rule*, *The Conduct of Schools* the *Rules of Decorum and Christian Politeness*, and in his *Letters*.

We now need to specify what were the characteristics of this Lasallian fraternity, before going on to show how it was practised in the schools and how it developed over the centuries.

### A3. Characteristics of fraternity.

In his biography of the Founder (pp. 245-246), Blain attempts to explain why the ministry of fraternity is not always an easy one to practise. If we take a closer look at his analysis and compare it with the situation of the period, we would probably find his explanation a bit too pessimistic. All the same, we can see that the pedagogy of fraternity was a challenge.

- a. It has to avoid two extremes. On the one hand, there is the temptation to give way to sentimentalism, to give way to one's feelings, instead of maintaining the dignity of mutual respect and observing the limits in relationships entailed in the respective roles of pupils and teachers. On the other hand, it is necessary to avoid coldness and rigidity. These smack of authoritarianism and mean that relations can no longer be fraternal. In terms of modern psychology, the appeal of the older person must be attractive enough to encourage the younger person to grow and to identify with adults.
- b. It must succeed in inspiring the pupils without having recourse to punishments, repression or correction, while at the same time it must not lead to disrespect, disorder and anarchy.
- c. It implies of course that the educational team in an establishment will give a great example of fraternity, unity, homogeneity, friendliness, respect for individuals and dialogue as signs of democracy in practice.
- d. These are the conditions needed for the success of the process of identification both individually and collectively. The human community of the pupils should find its model in the adult community of the teachers.
- e. Fraternal pedagogy is not an *a priori* given. It must be persistently worked at before it can reach the desired equilibrium. It presupposes effort and determination.

When we look at the story of the foundation of Lasallian schools and at the writings of the Founder, we can identify several characteristics of the pedagogy of fraternity as intended by Saint John Baptist de La Salle and

continued throughout the history of the Institute. Evidence for them can be found in the successive editions of *The Conduct of Schools* and in other official texts of the Institute.

- 1. A warm-hearted fraternity.** A reading of *The Conduct of Schools* enables us to see that human relationships are at the heart of the Lasallian school. This involves all those who are active in the life of the school: pupils, teachers, parents and also, indirectly, the local church and the professional milieu. For De La Salle, there was another partner in the educational relationship, namely GOD. The Founder realised full well that the dynamics of personal growth, and hence of the process of education, depended essentially on human relations. Consequently, he frequently insisted on this point in his writings. Just to take one significant example, we can recall how in his *Meditations* he calls on the teacher to "win the hearts of the children". In the *Rule* for the Brothers, he does not hesitate to speak of 'love and tenderness' for the pupils, especially for those who seem to be deprived of this in their families and so have a particular need for it. This emphasis clearly indicates that he wanted to break with the tradition of severity, repression and corporal punishment in schools (and society). In chapter 15 of *The Conduct of Schools* concerning corrections, he writes that a school is running well when it can do without them. Such an orientation is obviously essential for a pedagogy of fraternity.
- 2. A courteous fraternity.** De La Salle and his first teachers lived in an age when propriety and politeness were of special importance in French society. Courtesy already existed in the Middle Ages, but it was only for the affluent classes. It received new impetus in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, thanks especially to Erasmus' work on "politeness in children". Then there followed the Italian ideal of politeness in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which made a considerable impact in France where it gave rise to the concept of the "*honnête homme*" as a model to which every educated gentleman should aspire to conform. By the education they gave, schools were expected to spread this ideal in the various social strata. As a child at home and as a pupil in the College des Bons Enfants in Rheims, De La Salle was bathed in an atmosphere of propriety and politeness. He felt the benefits of this in the personal and social advantages it brought, and he understood its usefulness for life. His biographers report the shock he felt in mixing with the first schoolmasters, when he invited them to take their meals in his house. It is reasonable to conclude that this experience

was the origin of his decision to give an important place to propriety and politeness in the training of the teachers and of the pupils. The change he made to the dress of the teachers was one of the first indications of this. Twenty years later, he published his *Rules of the Decorum and Christian Politeness*, even before producing the *Common Rule* and *The Conduct of Schools*. This showed the importance he attached to the matter. Indeed, it was fundamental to his whole understanding of human nature, as he indicates in the Preface to the work. For him, politeness was a necessary condition for living with others in society. It is the human foundation of fraternity, and so there is some coherence between education in politeness and the desire to provide a pedagogy of fraternity. Moreover, his book *Rules of Decorum and Christian Politeness* continued to enjoy great success in France right up to the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

- 3. Fraternity in solidarity.** Guided by the gospel and his sense of fraternity, De La Salle was not comfortable with the separation that existed in his day between schools for the poor and schools for the rich. Referring as he often did to Saint Paul, he said that like him he too wanted to "preach the gospel to all free of charge". He disliked the segregation between Charity Schools (gratuitous) and the Little Schools (fee-paying), because that ended in a real social segregation. His decision to open his schools to all free of charge surprised and indeed annoyed the masters of the fee-paying schools, who found they were being deserted by some of their customers and so losing some of their income. They protested and registered a complaint to the local *Chantre* [church education authority] and brought De La Salle before the tribunal. They succeeded in getting him condemned, but on that occasion De La Salle showed the strength of his conviction by stubbornly refusing to consult the Bureau of the Poor to check on the financial situation of the parents of his pupils. While the attitude of the Founder was unacceptable for the masters, we can appreciate that it was on the other hand socially defensible and totally gospel inspired. He did not want the poor to feel stigmatised and rejected. He wanted to see them accepted and integrated, having the same opportunities and the same social and financial paths to promotion. The Rule of the Brothers even stated that the poor children should be loved more than the others. "They will show equal affection for all the pupils, but more for the poor than for the rich, because they are much more committed to the former by their Institute." (*Common Rule* of

1718). This text helps us to understand just how De La Salle envisaged the fraternal relationship between teachers and pupils as one that involved prudence in ensuring it stayed at the educational level but went beyond the level of emotion or affection. It meant having an active compassion for the poor, not just the financially poor but also, children in difficulties, socially, morally or spiritually. His use of the words "poor" and "rich" in the same sentence shows clearly his intention to have a social mix in his schools.

- 4. Participative fraternity.** In the introduction to chapter 18 of *The Conduct of Schools* relating to "classroom offices", John Baptist de La Salle justifies their existence in a brief sentence, saying that these "pupil officers" should do "those tasks that the teacher cannot or should not do". The statement is full of good sense in terms of pedagogical intentions, and it is also very relevant today, although the actual tasks involved in these 'offices' entrusted to the pupils have evolved over the time. This aspect of school organisation was not unheard of in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Similar 'offices' are to be found in the "*ratio studiorum*" of the Jesuits, in the "*Ecole paroissiale*" of Jacques de Batancour, in the "*Règlements*" of Charles Demia and in other educational documents of the period. We should also add that in *The Conduct of Schools* these 'offices' were not the only way of ensuring pupil participation. There were in addition set times every day when the pupils helped one another, especially when some of them were experiencing difficulties in learning, or when they checked on those pupils who had been absent or helped others to make up for missed lessons. There were also kinds of monitoring assistance performed by the more advanced pupils to help the others consolidate their learning, and mention must be made of certain services rendered outside of school such as visits paid to absent or sick pupils by other pupils so that they would not feel forgotten or excluded. To these we can add the supervision of classmates in the street as they returned home. The tasks thus entrusted to and carried out by the pupils were an important service rendered to the group, and for those who carried them out they were an apprenticeship in the exercise of responsibility. They reinforced the sense of solidarity, mutual help and social cohesion. The exercise of responsibility makes an individual become more open to others, and it can free them from the tendency to egocentrism. Consequently, these 'offices' constituted an important element in establishing good social relations, and they contributed to the strengthening of fraternity.

Moreover, it was necessary for them to be applied to all pupils in turn, as was specified in the *The Conduct of Schools*. They can be viewed as an aspect of the exercise in participative, democratic power in a school, the sort of power that is more consistent with the goal of fraternity which thus becomes visible, effective and credible.

**5. An ambitious fraternity.** In the organisation of society in the France of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the members of the Third Estate [the common people] had very little chance of economic advancement. The world of the craft corporations dominated activities and social mobility was stalled. However, the reorganisation of administration in the country coupled with industrial development created new possibilities of employment. These were sometimes referred to as "the crafts of the pen", because they presupposed an ability to read, write and do accounting. The school could thus be an agent for advancement. It is clear that the Lasallian schools aimed to do this in the best manner possible, and that was due to the specifics of their organisation. The ambitious aim was based firstly on the sincere belief in the pupils' capacity to make progress and succeed, provided they were properly guided and trained. That was what led De La Salle and the Brothers to provide their pupils with learning experiences that were more demanding and rigorous than those of the Little Schools. To achieve this, certain conditions had to be fulfilled.

- As we have said, it was not enough to learn to read just in order to study the catechism. It was important to be able to read with understanding texts in ordinary print and in the special prints of the period as well as handwritten texts of every kind as used in offices and in administration. The pupils could expect to come across all of these in their future professional work.
- It was not enough to learn a natural handwriting. It was necessary for them to master calligraphy, round hand and italic script. This was counter to the privileges granted to the writing masters in this domain, and it cost Saint John Baptist de La Salle a number of court cases.
- It was also necessary to know the spelling rules in vogue at the time, which were complicated and not yet officially standardised.
- In arithmetic, in addition to the four basic operations, it was necessary to be able to devise and to solve problems based on situations of everyday life.

- To sum up, the Lasallian school sought quality and excellence in order to increase the pupils' chances of employment and advancement. This excellence referred in the first place to the teachers themselves in terms of their levels of training and competence.
- 6. A universal fraternity.** It was not easy for John Baptist de La Salle to free himself from the canonry which he saw as an obstacle to his duty of taking care of the schools. The cathedral chapter and the Archbishop of Rheims were unwilling to see themselves deprived of the presence of a person of such quality in their midst. Then again a few years later in 1688, he had to struggle to get the Archbishop's permission to leave Rheims and go to Paris. The excellent results shown in the city by the first Lasallian schools made the prelate think it was not a good idea to release him for the benefit of another diocese. However, the Founder's visions of education were different. His notion of the church led him to embrace all the dioceses of France, and perhaps even then his eyes looked as far afield as Rome. Of course, all this has to be analysed in terms of the conflicts taking place in the church in France at the time. Ultramontane people such as De La Salle were not very popular, and yet we know that his attitude would end in him sending two Brothers to Rome in 1702. Then, when one of them returned, De La Salle was ready to permit an exception which he had already refused elsewhere and allow Gabriel Drolin to remain alone in Rome for more than 20 years. This was a relaxation of the commitment to work in association which was at the heart of the Brothers' formula of vows, but it bore witness to the strong catholicity that would be an essential part of the image of the nascent Institute.
- 7. A gospel-based fraternity.** John Baptist de La Salle's thinking was certainly in line with the decrees of the Council of Trent, which insisted that schools must be places where children were catechised, but at the same time the Founder aimed to give his schools an even wider purpose. From among the texts which support this assertion, we can cite a passage from *Meditation* 160 for the feast of Saint Louis, King of France. " You will procure the good of the church by making them true Christians, docile to the truths of faith and the maxims of the holy gospel. You will procure the good of the state by teaching them to read and write and everything else included in your ministry in relation to the exterior life. However, you must combine piety with the exterior life, otherwise your

work will be of little use." (MF 160.3) In his writings and in his actions concerning the Brothers, De La Salle took these twin objectives of human and Christian education very seriously, and the features we have just outlined relate essentially to human education. We should also mention what the Founder says at the end of his *Meditation* for the 31<sup>st</sup> of December. "Have you seen to it that your disciples have been instructed in their religion? That is your principal duty, although the other points must not be neglected." It was for that reason that, 20 hours out of the 40 hours a week of classroom teaching were assigned to religious activities such as prayers, the daily reflection, examination of conscience in the afternoon, catechism, Mass, frequent recalling of the presence of God. In addition, to facilitate the work of the teachers, he published five works designed to be teaching aids for catechism lessons and some others on daily prayers, assistance at Mass and the hymns for the end of the school day. For Christians, fraternity is based above all on the gospel.

## **Conclusions on the ministry of fraternity.**

As De La Salle explains in the first two *Meditations for the time of Retreat*, the Christian teacher is chosen, raised up and sent by God to contribute to the realisation of His plan of salvation, His project of love for all men and women on earth. He says that participation in the saving action of God is our "ministry" in the basic sense of the word in Latin, namely "service". That is why we can speak freely of "the ministry of Christian education". It would be even more correct to talk about "the ministry of fraternity". It is on this basis that we can claim to be the "older brothers" of those whom we serve.

That is what gives dignity to the teaching profession and justifies the expectations that De La Salle had with regard to teachers, requiring them to live up to the 'virtues of the good teacher'. They were to be available and at the same time stable, committing themselves with generosity and being exemplary in everything. To attain this high standard, the Brothers/Masters needed to be integrated into a team, supported in their progress, helped in times of difficulty, congratulated and rewarded in success. All that is included in the role of Association.

**Is there a more beautiful ministry than that of the fraternity in today's world?**

## **B. IMPLEMENTING FRATERNITY**

Fraternity between people may seem like a utopian dream in view of the countless examples of the lack of it in the world! However, it needs to be one of the goals set for achievement in education, something to be progressively discovered, a process that should become part of everyday life. That is the ambition of Lasallian pedagogy, and we can identify some educational practices that are needed for it to take root and develop in any educational establishment.

## **B1. A strong educational relationship.**

**1. Personal knowledge of the pupils.** John Baptist de La Salle spoke fully about this feature especially in his *Meditation* for Good Shepherd Sunday, where he talks of a profound knowledge which goes right to the heart of the individual and creates real empathy. De La Salle even uses the expression "discernment of spirits" to characterise the relationship. He says that this discernment is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and it requires time and patience. That is why the teacher is in class "from morning until evening", as the *Rule* of the Brothers stipulates, and at the time it meant literally from daybreak until nightfall.

**2. An effective relationship.** The relationship needs to use means that are appropriate, simple and concrete in order to avoid subjectivism, since the intention is to arrive at a relationship that is transparent, trusting, cordial and affectionate. Such knowledge enables teachers to adapt their approach, teaching method and assistance as necessary. Thus, the *Meditation* on the Good Shepherd shows us the need for a differentiated pedagogy, one which must be adapted to the needs and abilities of each individual pupil. Such adaptation is what will give the teacher effectiveness, credibility and authority.

**3. Understanding psychological differences.** It is not an exaggeration to talk of this when one reads certain chapters of *The Conduct of Schools*, especially the one on "Corrections". It speaks of "those who should be corrected and those who should not". The chapter on "Absences" analyses the possible causes of absence and the remedies that can be applied to reduce absenteeism. The chapter on "Offices" lists the criteria for selecting the "Officers". We can also mention the chapter on how to separate pupils into classes and especially the chapter on "Lists" which deals with the good and bad qualities in pupils.

**4. Warm and cordial relations.** These could also be described as affectionate and fraternal, and that is not just a superficial label. The Lasallian teacher should have a particular attitude to pupils, as described in the *Rule* of the Brothers of 1718. "They must love all their pupils tenderly, but they shall not be familiar with any of them, and they shall not give them anything on the grounds of individual friendship but only by way of reward and encouragement." (RC 7, 13). As an educational insight, all this sounds very modern. Love provides a pathway for personal growth. De La Salle often uses the word "*douceur*" [gentleness] when talking about education and he makes it one of the "Twelve Virtues of the Good Teacher". There is also a spiritual side to this sort of relationship, since it can enable the person being educated to discover the love of God.

**5. One must have the right idea of the nature of love.** Authentic human love is not just sentimental affection. It must also be committed, devoted, sometimes courageous and demanding, attentive to the needs of the pupils, to their capacities, their plans, their successes and failures. It must be disinterested. On that basis, a balanced relationship can develop, one that avoids extremes of any sort.

**6. A reciprocal relationship.** Once again, it is in his *Meditation* on the Good Shepherd that De La Salle most clearly expresses this aspect of the educational relationship. The reciprocity must always be based on the *Rules of Decorum and Politeness*, because it concerns an education for socialisation. In De La Salle's day, society valued courtesy and politeness, which meant a high degree of respect for the individual. These aspects of a relationship are discussed in a number of chapters in *The Conduct of Schools*, where we find reference to mutual respect, solidarity and sharing, self-control, the rejection of violence, disinterested commitment to the class group and modesty of behaviour in everything. All these elements contribute to the strengthening of fraternity.

**a. Relationship as a pathway to humanisation, liberation and evangelisation.**

We need to be clear about the meaning of the expression " Love your pupils". It is not just any kind of love that is intended. In order to avoid any misconception or error, it is important to state that the verb " love " is here used in its widest and most general sense, in the sense in which we usually talk about loving sport, the theatre or the sunshine. To make this clearer,

we can mention some of the actions and attitudes by which this love for the pupils can normally be shown. They include taking a genuine interest in them, paying unceasing attention to them, being committed to serving them, showing enthusiasm for their abilities, their progress and their success, being happy when they achieve something positive, being glad to serve them gratuitously, showing a lack of self-interest in one's work and maintaining a demanding and rigorous standard. These are all signs of that genuine love which is necessary for human growth.

John Baptist de La Salle summed this up in a sentence which describes clearly his attitude to education, when he talked about joining the tenderness of a mother with the firmness of a father. In the co-educational school communities of today, we might also talk about the firmness of a mother and the tenderness of a father.

In the chapter of *The Conduct of Schools* concerning corrections, De La Salle writes "they will combine gentleness and firmness in dealing with the children". Inevitably, that excludes showing weakness, neglecting one's adult responsibilities, compromising, neglecting and ignoring the difficult pupils, inconsistency in behaviour, and any irregularities in the treatment of the pupils. All those things are counter-educational and would not present the pupils with serious criteria for human behaviour, or the model for identification which they need in order to grow, to develop their personalities, to become free and autonomous and ultimately to discover and accept the love of God.

#### **b. Relationship as a pathway to humanisation.**

John Baptist de La Salle lived in a period when child psychology was still unknown, and educators had no idea about the workings and phases of human development. One had to wait until the 20th century before a psychiatrist would write "a child needs love just as much as food in order to thrive". And it is only today that we have begun to highlight and analyse concepts such as educability or cognitive and affective development. Only recently have we identified the emotional roots of certain kinds of abnormal behaviour in children and adolescents who lack identity models. That applies to behaviour such as dyslexia, kleptomania, denunciation reflex, morbid timidity, repetitive lying, laziness, closing in on oneself, obstinate silence, anorexia, and behaviour linked to social marginalisation such as escapism, drug addiction and suicide.

There are of course variations in such forms of behaviour, but we know that they are all obstacles which get in the way of a peaceful progress towards an autonomous, balanced human development and a proper spiritual development. They are also obstacles to affective growth which depends on the complexity and richness of our interpersonal relationships. It is affective growth which enables us to pass progressively from captative to oblation love, from sensory perception to abstract knowledge, from determinism to adult freedom.

Although he did not have the knowledge of psychology that we possess today, De La Salle seems to have been convinced that for their human development children need good quality human models along the way, and he envisaged what psychoanalysis and psychology call "identification models". His ideas on this matter can be summarised as follows.

- The basic principle was "They will love all their pupils tenderly" and "They will show equal affection to all their pupils, to the poor as to the rich, because the poor are commended to them to a greater degree by the Institute".
- The mode of operation was for the teacher to set a good example all the time, which corresponds to being what we call an "identification model".
- In line with that general principle, *The Conduct of Schools* states repeatedly that the teacher must practice precisely everything he expects or demands from the pupils in terms of attitudes, behaviour, posture, movement, speaking, keeping silent, recollection and piety, and the same holds good for the way they pronounce the words when reading and how they write. That is why *The Conduct of Schools* concludes with the list of the Twelve Virtues of a Good Teacher.
- The list can be arranged around three principal points, namely self-control, interiority and a generous commitment to the task. In this way, the teacher's example will facilitate the human development of the pupil.

The educational relationship is fundamental, but De La Salle stands out as different when he talks about reciprocity in *Meditation 33*, in a passage that refers to the teacher's tenderness towards the pupils and the pupils'

tenderness towards the teacher. One would have to question how it would be possible for a pupil to identify with someone he/she does not know and does not love. That is why De La Salle calls for a mutual understanding between teacher and pupils. The teachers must allow themselves to be observed and known by leaving aside the masks of their position and role, the authority and power that go with knowledge and age, in order to make way for some kind of closeness, authenticity and fraternity.

*The Conduct of Schools* suggests some concrete ways to facilitate this understanding when it points out that the process of identification functions more completely and lastingly where there is mutual understanding, appreciation, admiration, affinity, and love which is the mainspring of identification. Hence it stresses the need to spend time keeping records with written portraits of each pupil, and getting the pupils to do things in class, so that the search for individual understanding takes place through the organisation of activities during class.

When love is real and effective, it shows itself in the determination to succeed in one's work and avoid failure. The pupils need to feel the satisfaction of success and learn to love themselves. How can they love themselves in a failing situation? It is interesting to see how *The Conduct of Schools* organises learning in such a way that individual pupils progressed at their own pace according to their levels. Rather than personalised learning, it was what one might call "made-to-measure" work, and it led naturally to success in assessments.

### **c. Relationship as a pathway to freedom.**

The lives of all human beings are marked by limitations, pressures, prohibitions and sometimes aberrations, which prevent them from attaining freedom or at least from exercising it to the full. This amounts to what we call "alienation" which can be more or less serious. Naturally, individuals want to free themselves from alienation, and education can help them to achieve that freedom.

Parents and teachers often identify such problems in their pupils, and they are generally referred to as "difficulties in school". By experience, we know that these difficulties either slow down personal development or prevent it altogether and impede success in schooling. Difficulties can be categorised in various ways. They may be scholastic, affective, relational, intellectual,

cultural, moral, religious or existential. Nowadays, we are able to study and analyse these difficulties closely. We have found and we apply various means for countering them. In general, the remedies fall into three types: preventative, compensatory and curative.

In a figurative sense, we can say it is a question of "breaking the chains" that paralyse individuals. De La Salle thought that in order to break their chains it was necessary to reach the hearts of the pupils, "to touch their hearts". From the outset, Lasallian pedagogy has been a "pedagogy of the heart ". However, the way to somebody's heart is sometimes difficult to find and complicated to follow. And yet it is necessary to do so, if we want to help young people in difficulties. That is the only way in which we can offer them the "good news" that they need and help them to find the self-confidence to show the courage required to overcome obstacles.

It is precisely in these situations that one needs to "join gentleness with firmness", as De La Salle puts it. To this we can add another piece of advice from the Founder, which we find in the *Meditation* for the feast of Saint Francis de Sales. "If when dealing with them you use the firmness of a father in order to preserve them from disorderly conduct, you should also feel the tenderness of a mother for them in order to gather them and do for them all the good in your power." This last image is particularly beautiful and suggestive. Of course, it may seem difficult and actually be so, but we should remember that ultimately we are not the ones who will free them from their problems. They will free themselves when they regain confidence. What we need to do is to persuade them and help them in every way possible, and to do this we must show them sufficient compassion and show our confidence in them so as to encourage them.

Some young people need to liberate their ability to judge things properly, and a good intellectual education can free them from their ignorance, their prejudices and their false convictions. Some need to liberate their relationships by developing more intimacy, better friendships and more fraternity. To them we must stretch out our hands. Still others need to escape from being closed in on themselves, from the blockages in affection which make them mistrustful, bitter, aggressive, pessimistic, incredulous and discouraged. They can only be really helped by a love which is human, authentic, comprehensive and merciful.

It is not possible here to list all the situations that can occur, and in any case it is not essential to give an exhaustive description. What is required is an attitude of care and attention in a warm atmosphere of fraternity which makes for equality and intimacy in relations.

#### **d. Relationship as a pathway to evangelisation.**

For John Baptist de La Salle as for us, the discovery of love is always "good news to the poor". This is true for all individuals, men or women. In our educational and pastoral activity, the constant concern should be to ascertain whether the young people entrusted to us are in possession of the right conditions for discovering and accepting the love of God through a regular and positive experience of human love. The Lasallian school is not there for purely secular goals. It aims to announce the Gospel to all.

All the Founder's writings, even those that appear to be purely secular, insist on this aspect. He quite often reminds us that the school should form "real Christians", true disciples of Jesus Christ. The school should not be content with promoting the study and memorisation of "speculative truths". It should foster the daily practice of "the maxims of the gospel". To better understand the distinction he makes, and especially the second of them, we need to think of the Beatitudes, the true code of life for Christians.

The distinction between theory and practice as proposed by De La Salle becomes clearer when we view it against its historical background. In the years after the Council of Trent, the church considered a thorough knowledge of the principal truths of Catholic doctrine to be indispensable for salvation. To promote that knowledge, the Catholic counter-reformation decided to open schools for the people, and every diocese was asked to publish a "catechism" for children, and even one for adults. These catechisms were to present a summary of Catholic doctrine in the form of questions and answers to make them more easily memorised. The principal purpose of the popular schools was in fact the study of the catechism.

The schools set up by De La Salle and the first Brothers were clearly in line with the general movement in the church, but they wanted to go beyond what was expected of the Little Schools of the period. De La Salle did not think it sufficient to memorise abridged versions of Catholic doctrine or to limit oneself to theoretical discourses on the faith. He wanted it all to be translated into practice in daily life so as to become good news for the pupils.

In this he was in tune with Jesus Himself (the first evangelist) who, as the gospels tell us, taught the people, cured people, encouraged them, rehabilitated them, sometimes using discourses, sometimes just by His approach, a look, a direct intervention. In all these ways, Jesus brought the good news to those who were afflicted by ignorance, difficulties, sickness and suffering, to those who were looked down on, marginalised or rejected by others. This brings us back to those who suffer from the alienation referred to above. To bring good news to such people is the original meaning of the verb "to evangelise".

### **Conclusion.**

In his *Meditations for the Time of the Retreat*, De La Salle sets out what God requires and expects from each one of us. We in turn should "win hearts" in our own way, seeking to help people to discover, accept and share the love of God.

As ministers of fraternity, we are ministers (servants and mediators) of the love of God. De La Salle invites us to become "good news" for the poor, living the gospel among them, being "saviours" for them, as he writes in his *Meditation* for Christmas. In it we find the key idea that being a believer and being evangelised consists in discovering the love of God, experiencing it and sharing it with others.

## **B2. Living the values which give meaning to life.**

Living in fraternity implies wanting young people to be happy, and the discovery of a meaning to life contributes greatly to that goal. Consequently, education seeks to prepare them for an existence rich in meaning, dignity and success, and in that way they will become sowers of fraternity in their turn.

In order to give meaning to actions, relationships, plans and efforts, an individual needs to acquire reference values and live them with conviction in day-to-day existence. It is no exaggeration to say that this has been one of the priorities of the Lasallian school since the beginning.

We find the evidence for this in the 'Virtues of a good teacher' and also in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* wherever there is mention of the pupils. Naturally, De La Salle uses the vocabulary of his period and speaks of "virtues" or "qualities", which correspond to what we generally refer to as "values". In this connection, we can look again at a passage from Blain's biography. "The correct way for teaching and keeping schools is a more difficult science than one might think. It is an art which requires method, silence, gentleness mixed with gravity, tranquillity, great patience and especially a great amount of prudence." (CL 7 p 245).

Some decades later, Brother Agathon, Superior General of the Institute, produced his "Explanation of the Virtues of a Good Teacher", in which he laid special emphasis on "gentleness". Clearly, that particular virtue is essential in a pedagogy of fraternity. De La Salle returns to this point repeatedly in his writings, perhaps inspired by the thought of Saint Francis de Sales, as we said above with reference to *Meditation 101*. He also insisted on the need for the teacher to "win hearts". It is noteworthy that subsequent editions of *The Conduct of Schools* all kept the chapter on the virtues of the teacher, although the number of virtues varied from twelve to fifteen!

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we speak more readily of values. Three important Institute texts list a number of values which one can say are priorities for a Lasallian school. The documents are the *Declaration on the Brother in the World Today* (1967), *The Characteristics of the Lasallian School Today* (1987) and of the *Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (2015). But before describing these priority values, some points of detail need to be made.

## **1. Values and willpower.**

For a long time, willpower was presented as the capacity for making an effort and not giving up even in difficulties. Parents and teachers urged children to make efforts and sacrifices with the idea that this would develop and strengthen their willpower. More recently, psychologists have begun to think that willpower is more like a kind of innate vital energy that each individual possess, a capacity for action, for surpassing oneself, a kind of natural dynamism that is available to be used and which must be nurtured. This view brings out the natural link that exists between willpower and personal desires, passions, interests and motivations.

A value is something that attracts me, seems important to me, impels me and encourages me in my life. It is something that is worth the effort, for me first of all and perhaps also for others. So for example, it is worthwhile working, striving and even suffering in order to ensure the triumph of peace, justice, solidarity and fraternity for others. Or again it may mean establishing order, self-discipline and silence in order to acquire power and money.

Consequently, a value is not something theoretical and abstract, which exists only as an item in a list of values. It is a real force, an inner motivation, something which drives me, and maybe many others, to act in a particular way, and hence it is connected to willpower.

There is no point in making a distinction between "human values" and "gospel values", since the latter are of necessity universal human values illumined by the example and words of Jesus. They are lived by believers in the light of their faith and their love for God and for their neighbour. Values are innumerable, and one could easily draw up long lists of them. The fact is that individuals all select the values that will be the priorities in their lives and activities, their projects and commitments, and they work at developing them because they consider them to be essential.

## 2. Priority Lasallian Values.

In the three Institute documents cited above, there are nine values that stand out and are presented as being the most important and urgent. They are fraternity, peace, justice, solidarity, human dignity, a critical mind, interiority and responsible, autonomous liberty. These are the priorities presented to all Lasallians, wherever they are and whatever work they are engaged in.

- a. **Fraternity.** Ever since the origins of the Institute, fraternity has been a central feature of the Lasallian school, as it is of the Brothers' Community. As we have seen, the Founder's biographers say a lot about this. Various episodes in the life of the Founder illustrate the importance he attached to it. Today, it constitutes the heart of the Lasallian Educational Project. Fraternity extends to everyone, founded as it is on anthropology and on a shared human status as children of God. Consequently, we want to work to spread it everywhere until fraternity becomes universal. This is something that should be clearly visible in the life of and the relationships in Lasallian establishments.

- b. Peace.** We frequently link peace and fraternity, as if to say that one is the result of the other, and that frequently is the case. However, we could equally say that peace is linked to justice. Where justice exists, peace and fraternity will also exist. and *vice versa*. Consequently, we can view peace and fraternity as two values that always go together and form the central hinge for all Lasallian values. Every educational establishment needs to analyse carefully the extent to which it embodies and develops these two values.
- c. Human Dignity.** In every social or professional situation, human individuals possess rights and qualities that must be recognised, respected and promoted, because they are a fundamental dimension of their identity. This is particularly important and urgent in the case of children and those who are poor, simple and humble and who can easily be forgotten and dismissed. We could even say that recognition and respect are indispensable for their personal equilibrium and happiness. Hence this is something that should be a matter of concern to all Lasallian educators.
- d. Justice.** The recognition of human rights constitutes the binding element in an educational establishment. In addition, this recognition leads to the development of a sense of justice in particular, and so to the rejection of any forms of injustice which amount to the disregard or violation of the basic rights of individuals. It is in the name of individual rights and human fraternity that the Institute insists especially on respect for and the promotion of justice. See Circular N° 412, of the General Council, which talks about this at length.
- e. Solidarity.** This goes naturally with justice and fraternity, while justice and solidarity are frequently linked even in everyday language. Solidarity is an approach consistent with respect for individuals and for justice, and this goes with the search for fraternity. This should lead educators and those being educated to commit themselves in concrete ways to help those who are in need or are rejected by society.
- f. A critical mind or discernment.** The presence of this feature among the Lasallian values may surprise some, and even the fact that it is called a "value", since the word "critical" generally has negative connotation for human relationships. It is nonetheless justified,

because there is a natural and logical connection between educating for human rights through justice and developing a critical mind. The development of a critical mind enables a person to analyse situations lucidly and with sound discernment. A critical perception of things gives light to our observations, reveals the causes of injustice, analyses and denounces unjust situations and often leads to the discovery of solutions. A critical spirit also serves to denounce false values presented by society, to discern the richness in all the different cultures and to ensure that a precise study is made of situations of poverty and injustice.

- g. Interiority and liberty.** These two values are really inseparable. An ongoing education in interiority appears to be a prerequisite for growth and the exercise of personal freedom. Interiority and freedom do not happen all at once. They need time to progress and develop so as to reach the right level. A Lasallian establishment should carefully organise the way in which it will promote and support these two values, taking into account of the age of the pupils, because their growth is at times difficult, even chaotic, and it never ends. Today's society offers an abundance of things through the media with its endless attractions, but it does not favour interiority and it retards growth in freedom. As a result, these two values are probably the most difficult to interiorise and to appropriate.
- h. Responsible autonomy.** According to the extent to which they are understood and absorbed, the eight values listed above will enable an individual to arrive at responsible autonomy. This calls for a great capacity for freedom, reflection and discernment, and it is the goal of the educational process. It also means that all the other values have been absorbed.

### 3. Appropriating the Values.

A value exists for me when I choose it, interiorise it and then practice it until it becomes a driving force in my life. To reach that point, one must really discover the value, analyse it personally or with others, try it out concretely in one's activities, interiorise, adopt and appropriate it so as to then to put it into practice in the long term. Putting all this into effect, will require the fulfilment of the following important stages.

- We study the value in order to get to know it properly, using various books, documents, films and other media, and participating in pastoral activity, catechesis, committed groups, conferences and any other activities related to the virtue.
- We constantly educate our conscience so as to refine with greater nuance our sense of good and evil and to develop our critical faculty relating to what we observe and to practice discernment as a habit.
- We try to practice the value as far as possible in our daily relationships, in groups or associations and the events of everyday life.
- We carry out our responsibilities in the classroom and school, or outside in groups, movements, projects etc.
- We make use of meetings, gatherings and other particular activities focussed on the value.
- We meet important witnesses who are living the value and striving actively to promote it.

### **Conclusion.**

The appropriation of values is not done just by listening to discourses. It is a lengthy continuous process that occupies our daily life and needs to begin early in one's school years. It must happen simply and naturally, and it often comes about outside of the school in the context of specific commitments that are repeated and diversified.

It is interesting to note the link that exists between the nine Lasallian priority values and the challenge of fraternity. In fact, it is evident how they converge in a fraternity that is reflected, active and generous. This process of symbiosis takes place in a variety of appropriate ways in all the cultures and religions that are part of the diversity of the Lasallian network throughout the world.

### **B3. Constructing a Fraternal Society.**

Fraternal educational relations and the appropriation of social values are not sufficient for creating a non-violent society. But that is what John Baptist de La Salle was looking for in his dream of the ideal school. He

thought that schools could change a society that was far removed from non-violence, justice and fraternity. His ideas on education in behaviour and politeness, the abolishment of all forms of violence in school, the professional advancement of the underprivileged and their acquisition of gospel values were all so many pathways for realising the dream. To make the achievement credible, there was in addition the creation of a coherent network of schools that just kept on expanding.

In spite of all this, it would be a long and difficult process, because the network remained relatively small and resistance to it was considerable. When we analyse the way in which Lasallian pedagogy, as practised in the beginnings of the Institute, sought to achieve the above goals, we can note several features that were calculated to help the pupils develop behaviour, attitudes, relations and even reflexes of a pacific and fraternal nature. They were grounds for hope for the future.

### **1. A pedagogy of the heart.**

Lasallian pedagogy speaks heart to heart and is something spiritual, according to the Lasallian Educational Project of France 1990. It is a pedagogy which serves to awaken and improve the pupils' sensitivities and help them master and control their emotions. We have already said that "Lasallian pedagogy is a pedagogy of the heart". We can find many passages in the writings of De La Salle in which he invites the Brothers and teachers to win the hearts of their pupils.

We are aware of the importance he attached to tenderness in the educational relationship, and how he even made it a prescription of the Rule. But it was not a soft and feeble tenderness, as we can perceive by reading the opening pages of the chapter on corrections in *The Conduct of Schools*, where we find a call for a balance between firmness and gentleness. We find the same thing stated in several of De La Salle's *Meditations*.

In the list of the twelve virtues of a good teacher, tenderness and gentleness occupy a privileged place. De La Salle takes up the same idea in the *Meditations for the Time of the Retreat*, and to this we can add the lengthy treatment devoted to gentleness by Brother Agathon in his *Explanation of the twelve Virtues of a God Teacher*.

In the treatment of educational relationships, we are told that even those times when correction is appropriate can be occasions for educating in sensitivity, because they should always be full of respect and show consideration and tact for the guilty pupil. That was a very rare approach to educational relations in the time of the Founder.

## **2. A pedagogy of relationship.**

De La Salle and the Brothers introduced the simultaneous method of education to replace the method of individual teaching generally used at the time for primary education, and that decision obliged them to work at developing new kinds of interpersonal relationships in the classroom. In *The Conduct of Schools*, we read that these relationships were characterised by mutual respect, solidarity and constant mutual assistance among the pupils. The mutual respect was based on Christian politeness, and it was manifested in behaviour and attitudes in all the class activities, especially on occasions of pupil movement, such as when they were arriving in school or going out to participate in the daily parish mass or returning home. Their general behaviour, posture and appearance were precisely controlled according to the rules of politeness.

Frequent if not constant recourse to mutual help among the pupils in the daily school activities fostered the development of fraternal sociability. The more advanced pupils were asked to assist the weaker ones, and in that way the whole group made progress together in solidarity and not in a spirit of rivalry or competition. Classroom "officers" were appointed by the teacher in every class, and they represented a large percentage of the pupils. This created natural forms of solidarity, because they were at the service of the whole class carrying out tasks, sometimes important ones, so as to enable the whole group to function well. They needed to be selfless and to have a strong sense of solidarity without thinking of their own interests. In this way, the relations that were developed in school enabled them to escape from the individual or closed group mentality that characterised the urban populations of the period.

## **3. A pedagogy of success.**

The organisation of the profane subjects of reading, writing and arithmetic into a structured order of lessons, together with the separation of pupils as far as possible into homogenous classes, enabled individual pupils to

progress at their own pace according to their abilities. They were given tailor-made work to enable them to pass the tests organised on a monthly basis. Pupils were thus freed from the burden of anxiety and feelings of insecurity with regard to the results they would get. Such feelings could lead to nervous aggression which might end in violence.

Because pupils were informed of their progress through precise evaluations, they were able to advance with confidence and security. They were able to develop self-confidence and feel happy with their progress and proud of their success. All these attitudes resulted in the elimination of violence.

Even though they may not have enjoyed absolute certainty, it is reasonable to suppose that pupils were able to envisage the possibility of a good profession in the future. In connection with our topic here, it was important for the schools to provide a chance of advancement. The employments to which their pupils could aspire were generally more stable and better paid than those offered by the guilds. This freed pupils from worries about tomorrow and the accompanying anxiety that could lead to violence.

#### **4. A pedagogy of behaviour.**

Based on the concept of "modesty" in the sense of that word peculiar to the 17th century where it meant 'self-control', the education given by the Brothers encouraged calm, measured and non-violent conduct. Time and again, *The Conduct of Schools* specifies what attitudes the pupils should adopt (in imitation of their teacher) in school activities and outside of school when in the street or the church for example. Emphasis is placed on the way the pupils should control and restrain themselves.

Undoubtedly that went counter to the natural spontaneity of the children, but at the same time it eliminated the risk of flare-ups and violence. The desire to achieve self-control is evident in the prescriptions of *The Conduct of Schools* relating to behaviour in the street, which is a public place and a social space. In that period, it was in the streets that one encountered the most violence. The maintenance of calm and silence demanded of the pupils contrasted greatly with the noise, the disorder, the stress and the violence of urban society in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## 5. A pedagogy of interiority.

*The Conduct of Schools* lists many special activities conducive to installing calm in the classroom and developing interiority in the pupils. We can point to the following:

- Habitual silence and the avoidance of unnecessary words by implementing a rather sophisticated system of signs using a tool called "the signal". The large numbers that were usual in the classes meant that this approach was very appropriate to the school situation.
- Regular appeal to religious motivations in the pupils, even when doing ordinary work in class or when prescribing the right kind of behaviour in school.
- Appealing to pupils' conscience and sense of responsibility when applying sanctions for faults or misdemeanours.
- The morning reflection, when pupils were invited to examine their own behaviour and values in specific situations of daily life or in reaction to events.
- Regular recalling of the Presence of God with the aim of renewing the pupils' motivation and purifying their intentions. This took place every half hour.
- An examination of conscience at the end of the afternoon with a view to having greater self-awareness a feeling of personal responsibility.

This kind of education in interiority is essential for the educational process. It is the exact opposite to brutal, blind, unthinking violence, and it is the right way to develop personal freedom in a gradual way.

## 6. A pedagogy of prevention.

Lasallian pedagogy is an excellent illustration of the adage "prevention is better than cure", and a reading of *The Conduct of Schools* is sufficient to reveal that prevention was everything. We can see that prevention was permanently present in the following ways.

- The initial conversations with the parents who were enrolling their sons.
- The daily regulations of the school.
- The organisation and discipline in the school.

- The personal relations between pupils and teachers.
- The learning processes in school.
- The habitual silence of teachers and pupils in class.
- The teacher's watchful presence.
- The teacher's competence thanks to a solid initial and continued formation.

All these things were calculated to avoid hesitation, incertitude, irritation and whatever might engender tension, frustration, disorder and aggression or violence. When this peaceful behaviour is applied continuously, it becomes a habit for one's whole life. It is an educational investment in the future.

## 7. A pedagogy of politeness.

There are three works by John Baptist de La Salle which deserve to be studied in parallel: *"The Rules of Decorum and of Christian Politeness"* (1703), *"The Common Rule"* (1705) and *"The Conduct of Christian Schools"* (1706).

All three show a great amount of surprising and interesting convergence and coherence on the subject of education in politeness. *The Rules of Decorum* give a picture of the civilised person each pupil should become. *The Common Rule* prescribes for the Brothers behaviour in conformity with *The Rules of Decorum* of which they should always give an example. *The Conduct of Christian Schools* portrays a school which has become a pathway to politeness for the pupils.

The comparisons and similarities between the three works are easy to spot. They say that in order to eradicate violence in a school and the people in it, and in order to create habits of non-violence, the pupils must always behave according to *The Rules of Decorum*. That is what is required of them from the time they enter the school. The six aspects of Lasallian pedagogy we have presented above show the way and provide the means for preparing the pupils to live without violence. Even though the term "fraternal society" was not in use during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it is still the right word to describe the educational and social project of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. It reflects the anthropological foundations and proofs that De La Salle experienced in his own education and in his faith, and it expresses the

conscious, persevering efforts that are needed to guide and support the growth of a child, especially in an environment like that of the common people of the time of the Founder. The human ideal of De La Salle was, naturally, that of the *honnête homme*, the civilised person to whom the use of force and violence was alien. That was the ambitious goal which De La Salle set himself for the sake of the children of the artisans and the poor who made up the clientele of his schools.

### **Conclusion.**

A school should be working to create a non-violent society. That is one of its essential goals. It should teach and develop attitudes and behaviours that are impregnated with respect and courtesy in its interpersonal relations. Politeness should not be based solely on human motives of mere amiability but on a view of faith regarding each individual. John Baptist de La Salle was wise enough to underline that politeness may take on different forms according to time and place and the people involved, so long as the basic essential of Christian anthropology is always preserved.

### **B4. Therefore: "Let your school run well!"**

The Brothers like to quote the expression that is found several times in the *Letters* of Saint John Baptist de La Salle "Let your school run well!". The expression is rather general, but it is rich in its potential for interpretation and remains quite valid today.

One point is clear. The school that is well run becomes a place that is favourable to the emergence of fraternity. It fosters serenity in people. The concrete signs that a school is well run are visible when studies lead to success in attainments, where there is a calm acceptance of the regulations and a positive quality in the interpersonal relations, and where fraternity can be experienced. When we analyse the way in which Lasallian schools have been organised since the beginning of the Institute, we can easily pick out the strategies calculated to obtain that sort of result.

For Saint John Baptist de La Salle the reforming of schools was in itself a good and necessary undertaking, but it was not enough. There was a need to find a new way of running them well so as to fulfil all the expectations placed on them. This was one of the Founder's concerns and a goal which

preoccupied him a great deal. This preoccupation is evident in many places in the letters which he sent to some of the Brothers Directors. In them he focussed on the concrete level of the operation of the schools, and it is on that same level that we can identify the strategies for achieving the desired result. But before describing how they operated, we must first of all ask what were the grounds for his preoccupation and what it signified.

## 1. Why be concerned about functioning?

*The Conduct of Schools* contains a number of indicators which allow us to see the Founder's ideas relating to the good functioning of his schools.

- a. He had a clear idea of the precarious situation of artisans and the poor in the society of France of that period. He knew that many of them met with serious difficulties in maintaining their standard of living and even surviving without public assistance. They frequently relied on the help of their children as soon as the latter were able to secure paid employment and so to make a contribution to the family budget. Child labour was the norm at that time, even for those under ten years old. From the age of seven onwards, children were generally viewed as adults in miniature, and people had no qualms about putting them to work.
- b. Because of their poor financial position, it was hard for the parents to understand and accept the idea that their children should spend several years in a school. They saw no immediate benefit in that. And we must remember that most of those parents themselves had received no schooling and could not appreciate its value. So they had to be convinced of the need for education, as chapter 16 of *The Conduct of Schools* explains at length when it is dealing with the problem of "Absences".
- c. Another reason why it was important for the school to 'run well' was to avoid any temptation for the parents to withdraw the children before the end of the time needed to complete the course of studies. Such an interruption of schooling would deprive the children of any hope of the chance to have a better future. Consequently, the school needed to show its effectiveness clearly and in a verifiable way through the monthly assessments. Causing the children to waste time would be doing them a serious injustice.

- d. A school, therefore, should first of all be efficient in teaching and learning. Efficiency in this area would be seen in the regular rhythm of the lesson times. In De La Salle's day, the terms used to designate levels of work were *Ordre* and *Leçon*. A *Leçon* normally comprised three *Ordres* or levels. Schools must also be efficient in the area of human education, that is to say in the observance of the rules of decorum and politeness. Finally, they must be efficient in terms of Christian education. The chapter which deals with absences states bluntly that the poor are not so easily convinced by arguments of a religious nature as by financial promises and the prospects of a good job. Consequently, those are the kind of arguments to be used in persuading them not to withdraw their children from the school.
- e. We must also remember that De La Salle's concern for the schools to be well run was not the result of any wish for prestige. It arose out of his preoccupation for the poor and for their advancement in society. It is also worth noting that the pupils of the Brothers were not all strictly speaking poor, but that the school was meant to "run well" for them all. Moreover, from what we know of the Founder's character we can assume that he was inclined to think that anything worth doing was worth doing well, as the saying goes. He demanded quality in everything he undertook.

## 2. What is meant by "run well"?

When De La Salle used this expression without further explanation, the Brothers certainly understood what he meant by it. Perhaps it was an expression the Founder used and commented on in his conversations with the Brothers during his visits to the Communities, and certainly at least during the "many discussions" that took place while preparing the publication of *The Conduct of Schools*. If we keep in mind the totality of the Founder's writings, we can identify several features of "a school that runs well".

**The disciplinary dimension.** This refers to organisation and good order. The whole operation should function calmly, in good order and without misbehaviour. There are plenty of examples.

- Respecting punctuality and being assiduous in attendance, because absenteeism or lateness were the plague of the Little Schools. We

know that De La Salle wanted to give stability to his pupils. Frequent absences for no good reason seriously undermined the progress of teaching and learning, especially when the simultaneous class method was being used.

- Observing the silence that is indispensable for good working as a group. This was especially important in classes of mixed ability with several divisions. It is with good cause that *The Conduct of Schools* devotes a whole chapter to the silence to be observed by pupils and teacher.
- Controlling acts of violence. This was something to which *The Conduct* does not pay a large amount of attention. However, at the beginning of the chapter on corrections, the text is very explicit on this matter. All quarrels and fights between pupils must be punished, because they are a serious breach of the rules of the decorum and politeness. Violence is always contrary to good human relations, because it shows contempt for others and seriously disturbs the good order of the school. Violence cannot be tolerated in a school based on fraternity, and it was seen as grounds for dismissing those guilty of it.

**The dimension of secular education and formation.** It is obvious that the good functioning of a school is not just a question of discipline. For De La Salle, the school functioned well when it proved to be useful and effective, and that meant it offered studies in subjects that related to future employment. The simultaneous method itself calls for order and discipline, through a suitably balanced timetable, appropriate teaching methods for the different subjects and a strictly logical ordering of the steps required to overcome problems. Hence there was a need for teachers who had competence in the methods being used, and who could direct the exercises and adapt the class time as needed. It could sometimes happen that a teacher might be unable to achieve this because of inexperience or a lack of skill. Such situations were not very good for the pupils and could even lead to absences or dropping out from school by some. Hence it was necessary either to give such teachers further training, or provide support from an experienced teacher, or simply just change them. It was necessary to ensure that the pupils showed clear signs of progression in order to keep the parents satisfied.

## **The human and social dimensions.**

- John Baptist de La Salle was educated in good manners and politeness within his family in the first place, and then in the College des Bons Enfants in Rheims. He seems to have attached a great deal of importance to correct behaviour, and he was keen to impart it to the working class children who attended his schools and even to the teachers in the first place. Behaving with good manners and politeness would give the pupils better professional and social chances of obtaining and keeping good employment, which might even give them social advancement and higher prestige.
- When we read *The Conduct of Schools*, we can visualise how school life rolled out in a way that ensured that the pupils experienced and practised the rules of decorum and politeness constantly and to a high degree throughout their time in school. It was a noble educational ambition for a school population of the kind.
- People outside the school were able to see the results of such an education. That was the case for the Bishop of Chartres, Mgr Godet des Marais, who expressed his admiration for the high standard of behaviour of the Brothers' pupils in the streets of the town. In later years, similar views were expressed by other people in other towns. In this connection, one can read "*Annales de l'Institut*" by Brother Lucard.
- There are certain passages in *The Conduct of Schools* which attract our attention and impress us. They are the ones which describe the way in which pupils are to arrive in school, the forms of greeting between teacher and pupils, the bodily postures adopted while doing classwork and during prayers or studying catechism. They go on to describe the way pupils should leave the school when going to and returning from church, the way they take their lunch breaks in class and the way they are to behave when returning home. In all these different situations, the requirements of good behaviour and politeness should be observed.
- Today as in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, we are aware that good behaviour and politeness are an essential element of life in society, although they may vary in form from country to country. We still appreciate the value of an establishment that provides its pupils with an education in behaviour.

## **The spiritual, religious dimension.**

For De La Salle, the ultimate purpose of a school was to be "Christian" and he always called his own schools "the Christian Schools", although all the other schools were also officially Christian. Nevertheless, the title of Christian Schools was not adopted unjustly, when you consider the great care they took to give the pupils a Christian education. There were clear signs by which one could verify the effectiveness of that education. For example:

- the regular attendance of pupils at catechism classes on Sundays and Feasts,
- following the advice on good behaviour given before the start of the holidays,
- the avoidance of bad company as recommended,
- the piety shown during religious exercises in class,
- learning the catechism by heart,
- participation in the local religious events such as patronal feasts, processions, pilgrimages etc.

Finally, we must note that a school is one that runs well when it gives its pupils an education that is truly all-round. As De La Salle himself wrote, it operates without problems, attracts lots of pupils, does not need to apply frequent corrections and is recognised for its high quality by parents, pupils and society in general.

## **3. Strategies for attaining the goals.**

How did the Brothers go about ensuring the good functioning of their schools? We can detect the combined use of several strategies. They firstly concern organisation, but mostly they are about relationships within a school. Part Two of *The Conduct of Schools* is in fact entitled "The principal things that can contribute to the establishment and preservation of order in the schools". There are nine means listed, and each becomes the topic for a separate chapter. Clearly they were seen by the Brothers as judicious and effective from the beginning and over the years, since they were preserved with variations in all subsequent editions of *The Conduct of Schools*.

### **a. A strategy of presence.**

The continuous abiding presence of the teacher in front of the pupils was a feature of Lasallian pedagogy right from the beginning. The teacher could educate the pupils only if he was with them continuously. According to the indications regarding the timetable in *The Conduct of Schools* of 1706, the Brother spent around forty hours a week in class for eleven months of the year. It was a question of being present for enough time to make a precise observation of each pupil and build up a personal knowledge. As we have already noted, mutual understanding can facilitate reciprocal trust. Continued presence is also a natural means of prevention which will discourage those who might consider being disruptive. In the writings of the Founder, we frequently meet the words "watch" and "vigilance" in the full sense of the terms with regard to education. In effect, we are talking about the calming presence which constitutes a spiritual responsibility of the teacher. It preserves the pupils from moral danger by ensuring good order and encouraging them to work.

### **b. A strategy of fraternity.**

It is precisely through this continuous presence that personal cordial and fraternal educational relations can be gradually built up. It presupposes closeness and should lead to mutual trust. That is why we say that Lasallian pedagogy is a pedagogy of the heart and a pathway to universal fraternity. This striving for fraternity has a profound effect on the pedagogical situation and the atmosphere of the classroom. Several pieces of research in education have verified its influence on the conditions for making learning more effective. The pupils are continually working at their sensitivity and relationships, just as much as at their intellectual ability. They all work together. Of course, we do not arrive at fraternal society all at once. De La Salle knew this, and that is why he insisted on certain preliminary steps such as the need to eliminate all kinds of violence from a school, the creation of strong educational relationships, the development of mutual aid and sharing among the pupils, asking pupils to play a part in the running of the class by undertaking 'offices' and showing concern for others in various concrete ways.

### **c. A strategy of success.**

The attainment of success will satisfy the parents and encourage the pupils in their efforts, and the teachers must develop a pedagogy that is effective. Obviously, immediate success pleases everybody, pupils, parents and teachers. It shows people that the school is well run and demonstrates effectiveness to parents who might have doubts about it. From the beginning, the Lasallian school achieved success through its simultaneous method, detailed organisation, good order and methodology. For De La Salle, a well run school is one that gets good results and gives satisfaction to the parents. Clearly, all teachers seek the success of their pupils and do everything they can to ensure it. That is their responsibility. But what I want to emphasise here about the origins is that De La Salle and the Brothers set in motion a school organisation that was flexible enough to allow each pupil to work at his own level. In that way, they combined the advantages of the simultaneous method and the individual method. As a result, the pupils and their parents were proud of their success. This was an excellent way to develop a relationship of trust, cordiality and of fraternity.

### **d. A strategy of competence.**

All De La Salle's teachers did not have the same ability or competence in teaching and educating. However, good quality in the teachers is obviously essential for the running of a school, and that comes from their initial and continuing formation, their motivation, their commitment to the educational task and their teaching. The formation of teachers was one of the principal concerns of John Baptist de La Salle throughout his forty years activity. It is sufficient to read the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* to become aware of the vision he had of the ministry of the Christian teacher. The good functioning of the school depended above all on the quality of the teachers.

### **e. A strategy of coherence in association.**

In John Baptist de La Salle's plan, the teacher never works alone, and the good functioning of a school does not depend on any single individual, even if it is a question of someone with great ability and skills. A good school is always the result of the joint action of an educational community, which is united in and through an educational project that will lead to success. We

are well aware of this today, and since 1691 we have referred to it as working "by association". In contrast to the Little Schools of his time, De La Salle always wanted to entrust his schools to educational communities that were associated, stable and open. He realised that association required the members to be available and mobile so as to facilitate discernment and make appropriate responses to the needs of young people. These were the ideas according to which the teachers were prepared through their initial formation so that they would fit in with the style of operation in the network of Lasallian schools. We too are aware of all this, and it has been something on which we have rightly insisted over recent decades.

There is one aspect of the original *Conduct of Schools* which needs to be underlined, and it concerns the good functioning of schools. It was not enough for association to involve Brothers or lay teachers. Parents too were to be included and so were the pupils themselves. In spite of the particular difficulties of the era (poverty of families, the working day from dawn to sunset), the parents were expected to share in the schooling of their children by encouraging them not to miss school, not to be late for school and to arrive with all the things they would need for schoolwork. Parents also had to meet with the teacher or the inspector of schools when any difficulty arose. It was their way of contributing to the good functioning of the school. The pupils also became involved in the operation in various ways. The most visible way was in performing the 'offices' which they were given and which concerned discipline, application to work, punctuality, absences, arranging class materials, helping other pupils in difficulty and overseeing movements outside of school. Besides contributing to the running of the school, these things developed the pupils' solidarity, their social relations, their attachment to the school and their social living.

## **Conclusion.**

The five strategies or challenges that we have presented may seem a complex lot, but in reality they are not all that complicated. We can see that all have one trait in common, namely they are concerned with individuals in a school and their relationships with one another. And here we are only talking about affective relationships, since in any school there are by necessity various professional and functional relations, conscious or unconscious, which are all very important.

It is not a matter of mixing everything together. On the contrary, personal relations do not preclude respect for regulations and the tasks expected of each individual. The adults cannot leave aside their responsibilities, or the pupils their duties. But likewise, when a fraternal spirit exists, responsibilities and duties do not get in the way of cooperation, tolerance, trust and the sharing of tasks. The relational dimension is the backdrop of Lasallian pedagogy.

Clearly, one can modify the order of presentation for the five strategies and give priority to operating in association, since association can ensure and organise all the other strategies of presence, effectiveness, fraternity, trust and participation, which are by necessity the fruits of real work in association. Consequently, it is important for association to be authentic, living and dynamic.

## C. THE RELEVANCE OF THE LASALLIAN FRATERNITY

## C1. The continued endurance of the fraternity project.

The Institute's initial commitment to a service of fraternity did not disappear on the death of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. It has been continually renewed up until today. The evidence for this can be found in the Acts of the General Chapters of the Institute, in the successive editions of *The Conduct of Schools*, and in some of the *Circulars* by Superiors General. Let us review the principal characteristics of fraternity which we have mentioned so far.

### 1. A fraternity that is warm-hearted.

It led the Brothers to take some significant decisions.

- a. **In the 1720 edition of *The Conduct of Schools*** — produced shortly after the death of the Founder at the request of the General Chapter of 1717, it was decided that in order to implement fraternity in the schools it was necessary to discontinue the traditional practice of corporal punishments in use up to then in all kinds of schools and also within families. This was manifestly a preoccupation of John Baptist de La Salle from the outset of his involvement in schools, but it was a difficult question to tackle. Consequently, in the 1720 edition of *The Conduct*, the chapter on corrections was preceded by a long foreword which aimed to clarify the Lasallian position on this difficult topic. The goal aimed at was the establishing of a "well run school", and one of the indicators of achieving that goal was when corporal punishment was no longer needed.
- b. **This line of thinking was continued in the General Chapter of 1777**, which planned a new edition of *The Conduct of Schools* and decided that "We will reaffirm what is said in the chapter on corrections about forbidding the Brothers to use rod or whip, because of the indecent and inappropriate nature of that sort of correction". This was one step further in the development of thinking concerning general guidelines of education.
- c. **The General Chapter of 1811** marked a rebirth of *The Conduct of Schools* after the turmoil of the French Revolution (1789-1799) and the whirlwind First Empire. The new edition reproduced a number of passages from the 18<sup>th</sup> century editions, but it introduced some

very interesting new points. It signified an attempt to move from a pedagogy of repression to a pedagogy of motivation and emulation. "With a view to bringing our education into conformity with the gentler approaches of today, we have suppressed or modified anything that involves corporal correction. We dare to believe that our Dear Brothers will find the means of support prescribed to be as effective as they are agreeable to generous hearts, and that they will cut back on any kind of corporal punishments." The text goes on to explain briefly how recourse to corporal punishment is incompatible with the Brother's state of life, and it does so in the following terms. "How can the hand of a Brother of the Christian Schools become an instrument of pain? Does not the very name 'Brother' presuppose deep feelings of gentleness, humility, tenderness and mercy? Why otherwise did Monsieur de La Salle, our dear father and illustrious holy Founder, want us to adopt the name 'Brother' and never allow ourselves to be called by any other name? He wanted to endow us with tenderness."

- d. The rejection of the monitor system of teaching.** This system of teaching emerged in France after 1815, and it quickly came into conflict with what was then known as the "Method of the Brothers", namely the simultaneous method. In the Preface to the 1838 edition of *The Conduct of Schools*, the Brothers determined to justify their rejection of the monitor system in the following words. "The simultaneous-monitor method combined with the advantages of the purely simultaneous method keeps the pupils more usefully and steadily occupied and it is capable of producing very good results. It is the method indicated by this present edition of *The Conduct* for all lessons to which it is applicable." Those who wrote that text were not unaware that, from the beginning, Lasallian schools had supplemented the simultaneous method with various forms of monitoring entrusted to more advanced pupils in the same class. That was similar to the work of the pupil monitors of the monitor method. However, in the following passage they underline the fact that they did not wish to lose the essential element of education, namely the personal relation of the teacher with each pupil. "The advantages of the simultaneous method are incontestable, especially in a school large enough to require several teachers, because in that case each teacher will have fewer subdivisions in his class and so will be able to

pay closer attention to his pupils in longer lesson periods. However, the value of the method lies in the fact that it gives the teacher continued contact with his pupils and thus enables him to develop their intellectual ability, study their characters and inclinations and train their hearts to virtue."

- e. **1860: The era of Brother Philippe.** A new edition of *The Conduct of Schools* in 1860 put particular emphasis on the various means for establishing order in the pupils' work. The chapter on emulation lists fourteen means to be employed, all of them positive. The same chapter also forbids "corrections", not to mention "punishments". We can recall in this connection two passages from the *Circular* of Brother Philippe dated the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 1864. "We also think it useful once again to call the attention of our Dear Brothers to the ban on corporal corrections of any kind whatever". "The law of the land states that each transgression is to be punished according to its gravity, the circumstances surrounding it and the effects it might have in society. The same laws state that any corporal correction of a child, every blow given by hand, foot, ruler or ferule amounts to a transgression and could mean that the person guilty of it will have to appear before a criminal tribunal and incur a ban, a fine or imprisonment."
- f. **The good example of "an elder Brother".** "There is one important obligation that all the virtues combine to impose on a teacher, and that is to give continued good example to his pupils, which means he must himself be truly virtuous. Indeed, example is the first, the most pervasive and the most powerful means of teaching. When it comes to educating hearts, example is sufficient almost by itself and nothing can take its place." In order to give good example, it is necessary to avoid two weak points. "There must be no act of familiarity or intimacy, either by deed, word or sign, which if reported to parents would cause you to be compromised or made to feel the slightest embarrassment or concern." (*Circular* of the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 1849). When commenting on the virtue of "firmness", *The Conduct of Schools* of 1860 concludes with the following three apposite remarks. "The teacher will take care not to inspire in the children any undue fear, because that dulls the mind and makes study and reflection impossible. It degenerates the heart and causes the pupils to lose

those feelings proper to the nature of Christians. It makes them abhor teaching and school, and by holding the pupils under constraint it creates a reaction in them. Consequently, it produces a permanent threat to the teacher's authority and will ultimately destroy it. Therefore, a good teacher is notable not only for his firmness but also for his gentleness."

- g. From 1875 onwards.** with the emergence and development of human sciences and the need to recognise the internationalisation of the Institute, the Superiors and General Chapters saw a need to formulate more clearly the characteristics of Lasallian pedagogy and to underline the importance of professional training for the Brothers. As a result, there was a revival in the production of circulars of high quality and an enrichment of *The Conduct of Schools* by the publication of various treatises on pedagogy, by the creation of the *Bulletin of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* and by the translation into English and Spanish of certain official documents including the *Circulars* and *The Conduct of Schools*. More recent publications include the *Declaration* of 1967 and *The Characteristics of the Lasallian School Today*, and there has been a proliferation of "Lasallian Educational Projects". Development is so rapid in societies, cultures and sciences that regular revisions of such documents are proving to be indispensable.

## 2. A courteous fraternity.

Ever since 1706, *The Conduct of Schools* presented good manners and politeness as a permanent, central component of the education of pupils. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, successive editions of the book changed the terminology and began to talk of "lessons in politeness" and to deal with it in a separate chapter. Such trends were continued in the schools into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and they also came to form part of the initial formation of the Brothers. That shows how courtesy is an abiding and essential concern in human education, and it continues to be a hot topic today. People talk a lot about politeness and impoliteness. Indeed, when politeness is lacking the social fabric is destroyed, and life in common becomes problematic if not impossible. This is the scene today in many areas of society. Respect for the rules of politeness remains a key means for participating in society and securing professional promotion.

### 3. A fraternity of solidarity.

For John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers, solidarity referred first of all to the pupils themselves in their school activities. However, we have also remarked that De La Salle was attentive to other forms of solidarity outside of school, and this led him to take some special educational initiatives. Fraternity in solidarity developed progressively as the Institute grew, and it was extended to include young people labouring under a diversity of educational or pastoral difficulties. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the range of educational initiatives widened considerably. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 1859, for example, when he was received in private audience by Pope Pius IX, Brother Philippe, Superior General, took the occasion to describe a series of recent initiatives taken for the benefit of a number of needy social groups including apprentices, workmen, prisoners, orphans, soldiers and the deaf-mute. Other new creations were added later: the Perseverance Group, Patronages, Saint François Xavier Group, Saint Benedict Joseph Labre Group, support for the first Christian Workers Union. The 20<sup>th</sup> century also saw a proliferation in the diversity of out-of-school activities throughout the Lasallian world. The following are just some examples: orphanages, centres for drug addicts, Boy's Towns, work with travellers, literacy programmes for young people or adults, promotion of the rights of ethnic minorities, remedial programmes, school support groups, young volunteer groups, holiday camps. These are all different examples of fraternity which aim to reintegrate people in difficulty into school, into the church or into society, and to do this by means of education, since every act of social inclusion contributes to human fraternity.

### 4. A participative fraternity.

We have already explained the system of "officers" in the schools of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the activities of various other kinds that were entrusted to the pupils for the smooth running of the classes and of the school. The "offices" changed progressively in subsequent editions of *The Conduct of Schools* after 1720, and new ones appeared through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The desire to involve the pupils in the good running of classes continued. It was seen as desirable, because it contributed to the pupils' education in autonomy and a sense of responsibility. In many countries of the world, the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the emergence of methods of work which called for a great deal of pupil involvement, such as working in small groups, individual work schemes, programmed teaching, teaching machines, intellectual enrichment

programmes, computer assisted teaching. The Brothers showed great interest in them and sometimes contributed to the development of these techniques of work which involved a lot of pupil participation. One can see that in each of these educational movements the teacher has the role of "mediator" which puts him/her in contact with each pupil and requires the latter to show initiative, effort and responsibility. The process is a very formative one. The attractiveness of such methods was partly down to the fact that the Brothers were able to see in them new ways of carrying out the "made to measure" education described in *The Conduct schools*.

## **5. An ambitious fraternity.**

From the beginnings, the Lasallian schools were ambitious for their pupils. They aimed to raise poor children out of their low economic levels of cultural and religious difficulty, and open up pathways to advancement in those areas. It was a very praiseworthy plan, and developments in society meant there was an ever-increasing need for higher levels of qualification. This is obvious from the way civilisation can be seen to have developed over the past three centuries. In the case of Lasallian schools, that has meant a continuous need to enrich their teaching programmes. Such "ambitious fraternity" has been a constant element in the history of the Institute. We can point briefly to the following.

- The initiatives taken by the Founder himself outside of the school as such.
- The stronger more developed programmes in the boarding schools that were established in several towns during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- The immediate adoption of the new school curriculum proposed in the Guizot Law of 1833 which introduced History, Geography, Sciences, Music, Technical Drawing.
- The reopening and multiplication of boarding schools and the planning for the production of a manual on "*The Conduct of Boarding Schools*".
- The progressive introduction in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century of the French curriculum known as Enseignement Secondaire Moderne without Latin (forbidden to the Brothers), which led to the establishment of the Baccalaureat Moderne.

- The introduction into *The Conduct of Schools* 1903 and of 1916 of new study programmes in typing, shorthand, artistic drawing and gymnastics, subjects that had become useful or necessary for certain kinds of employment.

We can multiply the examples, when we consider all that has taken place in the Lasallian network throughout the world in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Underlying these innovations, there is the desire to provide the pupils with whatever is new and useful for their professional future and their insertion into society. This explains the general trend in the Institute towards higher levels of qualification. That has stimulated the increase in the opening of secondary, technical and university establishments. In all these developments we can recognise John Baptist de La Salle's wish not to exclude anyone from his schools.

## **6. A universal fraternity.**

The Lasallian dynamism for association has revealed itself many times during the history of the Institute. It has led the Brothers to respond to educational and pastoral needs in an increasing number of countries.

- In 1702 in Rome, Italy was the first country outside of France to open a Brothers' school. Other schools opened in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and Italy also became a place of refuge for the French Brothers during the Revolution.
- In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the number of countries with Lasallian establishments continued to grow. It was an era of internationalisation for the Institute.
- The French law of July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1904 forced more than 3,000 Brothers to leave France. This resulted in the globalisation of the Institute and in the creation of many international Communities.

This broad movement may be attributed to the force of association which ensured the cohesion of the educational leadership teams, the quality of collective discernment of local needs, the strength of stability in a common project, the availability and solidarity of the Community members, the warmth of fellowship and the readiness to be open to universal developments.

That is what John Baptist de La Salle expected of the Brothers and Communities, and it is something that has grown as the network has continued to perpetuate itself. It is our common patrimony and the guarantee of our future. In a diversified world, Lasallians look for a universal fraternity in their educational activity. This fraternity is discovered and experienced day by day in relationships, encounters, services and commitments of all kinds. But it is a fraternity which transcends the limits of countries, languages, races and religions. Lasallian establishments are open to all who want to attend, and our wish is for all to find tolerance, inclusion, understanding and mutual help through fraternity.

### **7. A gospel fraternity.**

In the time of the Founder, the religious education of the pupils was much simpler than it is now, but the Lasallian school still accorded it a very important place. That continued to be the case in subsequent years. The globalisation of the Institute changed the situation considerably, especially in establishments where there was high degree of religious pluralism. When there is tolerance and mutual acceptance among pupils of different religions in a school, it presents a good example of human fraternity and ecumenism. We can refer to a passage in *Meditation* 198, where De La Salle writes concerning the pupils "They should be gentle and show tenderness for one another, forgiving one another as God forgives them through Jesus Christ. And they should love one another just as Jesus Christ loves them." That is a fine programme for social fraternity. It may be utopian, but it is so gospel! The people in charge of religious education and ministry in our establishments could well make this their principal goal.

## **C2. My personal testimony about my own experience of fraternity.**

Many Brothers could bear witness to the fraternity they have experienced and the atmosphere they have found in schools or in international meetings and other shared activities with Brothers or lay colleagues of different nationalities. The present day style of life favours such encounters more and more. Like many other Brothers, I have been a witness to the increasing numbers of men and women present in Lasallian establishments. Fraternity concerns them too.

### **1. Living in an international community.**

As I review the course of my life in the Institute, I note that I have spent more than half of the time in international communities:

- 14 years in Italy: Bordighera and Rome (Missionary Novitiate and Scholasticate, then the Generalate.)
- 6 years in Madagascar: Tamatave 4 and Antananarivo 2.
- 26 years in Paris, Rue de Sèvres.

Each of these locations gave me the chance to discover a variety of mentalities, cultures, types of relationships and behaviours. The enrichment came about naturally and sometimes unconsciously. The differences called for a great spirit of tolerance and openness to ideas, customs, ways of working and praying. But there was still a profound unity that came from a common history, with many identical reference points and the same commitment to a common global project. There was also a special spirituality and shared undertakings, although the style of life was sometimes different. So one had to make the effort to adapt and fit in, and in order to communicate better one had to overcome language barriers by studying more than one.

### **2. The good fortune to have a special school experience.**

My first teaching experience took place in Madagascar in two different Colleges.

1953-54 and 1961-64, my four years in College Saint Joseph, Tamatave, which became College Stella Maris in 1962. The teachers were almost all Brothers, but it was a very varied Community made up of Brothers from Reunion, Mauritius, Madagascar and France, to whom were added after 1960 Brothers from Spain and Colombia. We were working in really poor material conditions, with very little teaching equipment, and in a very testing climate. But the spirit was fraternal and the atmosphere was remarkably joyful. Like true "Brothers".

The pupils of the school represented a broad social diversity.

- Different races: black, white, yellow.
- Different languages: French (obligatory in the school), Madagascan, English, Hindi, Chinese, Creole.
- Different nationalities: Madagascan, French, Chinese, Indian, Mauritian (those from Reunion had French nationality).
- Different faiths and religions: Catholics, Calvinists, Adventists, Buddhists, Muslims, and no doubt agnostics.

When it came to enrolments, there was no discrimination. The result was a complex social mixture, always changing but remarkably peaceful and tolerant. During the whole four years, I have no recollection of any problems between pupils in the setting of the school. It was an experience that impressed me and which I view as an example for Lasallian establishments and a testimony to universal fraternity. The pupils were keen, generally punctual, hardworking and disciplined.

1954-1956: Antananarivo, College Sainte Famille. This was in a completely different setting from that in Tamatave, but it was just as good as an example of what I call Lasallian fraternity.

- Teaching was done almost entirely by Brothers, mostly Madagascan, and I was the only exception during my first year there. Three lay teachers also took classes, two Madagascan and one French.
- The pupils were all Madagascan and they came from the two principal tribes of Madagascar, namely the Merinas and the Betsileo. There was some mixture of religious faiths, with a small majority of Catholics and a large percentage of Protestants, Anglicans, Calvinists, Lutherans.

- The most notable thing was the remarkably good harmony that reigned and the peaceful and cordial relations in a sort of everyday ecumenism. The Protestants followed the religious lessons and attended mass. This kind of ecumenism is a characteristic feature of Christianity in Madagascar.

### **3. A warm fraternal welcome throughout the world.**

Without my making any special efforts, my activities have given me the opportunity to meet many Communities in the five continents. Although I was new to many of the Brothers with whom I have stayed, I was impressed by their fraternal, cordial and generous welcome. A simple listing of the countries involved will give some idea of the richness of this fraternity:

- Europe: England, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Spain.
- Africa: Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Burkina-Faso, Niger, Benin, Togo, Madagascar, Reunion, Mauritius.
- America: Canada, United States, Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, Bolivia.
- Asia: Israel, Palestine, Vietnam,
- Oceania : New Caledonia.

This list is an indication of how the spirit of welcome and fraternity remains a universal Lasallian characteristic, and I must add that in most of these countries it was a question of several stays and several Communities. This is a concrete embodiment of the spirit of association which has been our common patrimony since the origins of the Institute.

### **4. Lasallians Sisters.**

As one of my changes of Community, I had the pleasure of spending the summer of 1958 in the Community in Avignon in the company of the Venerable Brother Jean Fromental, Founder of the De La Salle Guadalupana Sisters. I later had the occasion to meet the Communities of those Sisters in Mexico and I carried out some research on the biography of their Founder for them, since he was a compatriot of mine. I was often warmly welcomed in the Communities of the Sisters in our Generalate in Rome, in Mexico, Peru, Bolivia and Madagascar.

During the time I spent in Vietnam, I got to know the Lasallians Sisters founded in that country.

These were all so many occasions for experiencing the fraternal spirit which inspires all parts of the Lasallian Family.

### **5. The survey of 1984.**

When I went to Rome in 1983 to be Secretary of Education, I was asked to organise an enquiry survey among the Districts of the Institute, with a view to finding out exactly what the perception of the Lasallian school was in the different countries. When the returns were collated they produced an interesting result. The main features that emerged in the final document were as follows. Families choose a Lasallian school for:

- the simplicity and cordiality of its reception,
- the attention given by the teachers to each pupil individually,
- the fraternal relations that exist in the establishments,
- the human dimension of life in the school.

These results enable us to have a more objective approach to the situation, and they support the personal impressions listed above. One can also add that our fraternity is strengthened by the links currently being created between the Districts and between establishments by means of:

- twinning between schools,
- the structures of shared mission at all levels,
- teacher exchanges,
- solidarity projects,
- support structures such as Secoli, Semil, Proyde, Lasallian Volunteers, Assedil, The Union of Lasallian Universities,
- Etc.

All this contributes to the dynamism of the Lasallian network. And so: "Faithful to its origins, the Lasallian school is characterised by a community spirit in which everyone according to their position and role, shares their talents, abilities and means." (*Characteristics of the Lasallian School Today*, Rome, 1987).

**To conclude**, I would like to evoke two dramatic situations in which I have found myself and which made a big impression on me. I often think about them, because they seem to me to bear witness to the power of fraternity.

- The first situation arose during the CIL Session in Rome in February 1982. It was during the Falklands War between Britain and Argentina. The CIL Group included two English Brothers and two Argentinian Brothers. They were naturally worried, and one of the Argentinian Brothers felt particularly hurt by the war. This showed itself especially during community prayers, and the Brother regularly asked the CIL participants to pray for peace. The thing that impressed me most was that there was never any manifestation of hostility between the Brothers of the two countries. Fraternity was stronger than the war.
- The second episode took place during the CELAF Session in Abidjan in May 1994, at the height of what became known as the "Rwandan genocide". There were four Rwandans among the young Brothers participating, two Hutus and two Tutsis. I was present at the session because I had to give a series of talks on the history of education. Every day, the media gave us the news about developments in the fighting in Rwanda. One of the Rwandan Brothers learnt that some of his family had been massacred. The tension was extremely high. The Rwandan Brothers often intervened in turn to ask for prayers for peace. At the end of this session, the third year students had to produce a long essay explaining how the transition from traditional to modern education had been effected in their countries, and in his essay the third year Rwandan Brother expressed his dismay at what was happening in his country. He had never believed such a thing was possible. In spite of all that, during the whole month of the session, there was never a word or a gesture on the part of the Rwandan Brothers which might show any animosity between the two ethnic groups. The Gospel and fraternity were able to overcome the genocide.

## Conclusion.

In 1682, when the word "**Brothers**" was adopted to designate the new Institute, it was not just a label. It expressed something profound that was experienced by the group of teachers gathered around John Baptist de La Salle. It was their way of indicating the style of their relation to one another as laymen united for the sake of the education of young people. Their fraternity was meant to extend quite naturally to all the pupils and was, therefore, something that concerned the totality of relations within the school, the style of its organisation, the democratic nature of the exercise of power in it and its openness to the surrounding social, professional and church environments.

As things have developed, this all now applies to the lay teachers working in Lasallian establishments throughout the world. They make up the greater part of the network.

In 1694, in order to ensure the continued existence of the nascent network, the Brothers made a vow of Association, and this became the very heart of the functioning of the Institute. Fraternity is the spirit that should inspire that functioning. It is what gives the operation strength and attractiveness, because it humanises relationships on every level and contributes to the evangelisation of individuals.

Association and fraternity cannot be separated, and they strengthen and enrich each other. Association creates a synergy which channels and harmonises a school community and its educational project. The spirit of association is naturally creative, as can be verified by considering the three centuries of Lasallian activity. It broadens the projects in our establishments, assures their success and gives them wider horizons. Plurality in viewpoints, diversity in talents and the combination of individual efforts provide a guarantee of relevance in the discernment of needs and of perseverance in the implementation of educational responses.

Fraternity provides the impulse that enlivens individuals and helps them find the right way of responding. It is important that this fraternity be open, tolerant and friendly, but also respectful, generous and without self-interest. True fraternity transcends and resolves differences and particularities, because it does not exclude or stigmatise anyone.

John Baptist de La Salle had high ambitions for his schools and wanted them to contribute to the construction of a fraternal world. His own day-to-day experience showed him that such a world did not yet exist, but he laboured at it untiringly with his first Brothers for over forty years.

As brothers and sisters in our humanity, brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, we Lasallians of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are called to be messengers and ministers of a universal fraternity.

# AUTHOR

## **B**rother Léon Lauraire:

\* Born in 1931, he entered the Juniorate of Vals near Le Puy on November 6, 1943. As he wished to go "to the missions", he did his "missionary" Novitiate and Scholasticate in Bordighera and Rome from 1948 to 1953.

\* He arrived in Madagascar in September 1953 and taught French literature and History in the Secondary School until 1964, with an interruption for the Military Service and University Studies.

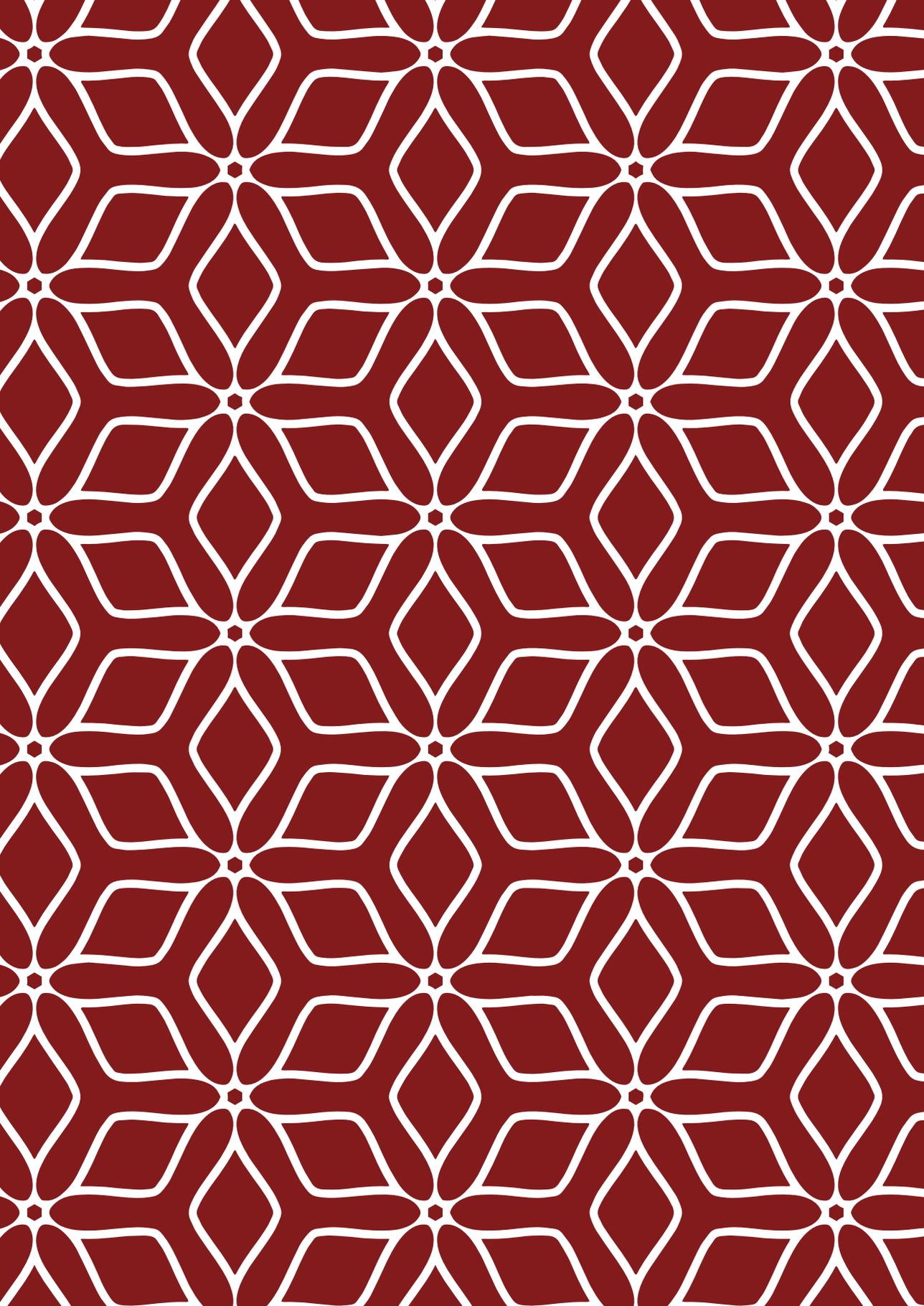
\* Holder of a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy and one in Educational Sciences, from 1970 to 1983, he worked at the "Bureau Pédagogique des Frères [Brothers' Pedagogical Board]" in Paris, then at the "Bureau National de Coordination Pédagogique [National Board for Pedagogical Coordination]" of Catholic Education and occasionally at the Pedagogical Office of the France-Africa Cooperation Organization. This explains its interventions in 22 countries spread over the 5 Continents.

\* From 1983 to 2015, he spent three periods in Rome, first at the Secretariat for Education and then at the area of Lasallian Studies, alternating with the French Lasallian Centre. It was this work that led him to publish numerous articles in various Journals and four Cahiers Lasalliens devoted to the Conduct of the Schools.

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