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## LIVE JESUS IN OUR HEARTS!

### FOREVER!

I should like to say a few things about these 6 words we use so often. My point of view will be both historical and practical. This article does not seek to be an exhaustive treatment, but simply to examine this invocation against the background of Lasallian spirituality.

#### 1. This short invocation is one of the Lasallian devotions.

Starting with the Trinity (formula of vows) and going on to Mary (Liesse...), St. Joseph (1719 Mass...), the Guardian Angels (Med. 172, 197, 198...), St. Cassian (at the Grande Maison), we see that De La Salle has a special devotion to Providence (God who leads...), the Holy Spirit (By the movement of the Spirit), and especially to Jesus Christ.

John Baptist de La Salle encouraged his Brothers to meditate on the principal mysteries of the life of Christ, on the Eucharist, the Passion, and the Child Jesus. (Cahier Lasallien 8, p. 484).

#### 2. Where did De La Salle find his inspiration for it?

According to Blain (C.L. 8, p. 493): «It was partly to imitate this great saint (St. Ignatius, martyr) that he established in his Institute this pious custom of saying "Live Jesus in our hearts – Forever!" at the end of all community activities. It is like a password for the Brothers».

We find a parallel in Abbe Condren's prayer: «Come, Lord Jesus, and live in your servant...»; as well as in that of Jacques Olier: «Oh Jesus, living in Mary, come and live in your servants». Olier also heads a letter to Mme. Rousseau with the words: "Live Jesus in our hearts". Other letters of his begin with: "God be blessed, forever".

Grignon de Montfort's motto during his missions was: "Long live Jesus, long live his Cross" (R. Laurentin, "Dieu seul est ma tendresse", p. 83).

It can really be said that we inherited it partly from St. Sulpice and the French school of spirituality. Ri-

gault says (Vol. I, p. 466): «At no point did De La Salle seek to be entirely original: he synthesised, assimilated, adapted... created formulas specifically for the use of a new religious family, and whatever its origin, the invocation was adopted by the Brothers as their watchword or password...»

The Abbe Deville sees this invocation for the use of the Brothers as yet another example of the mystical Christocentric character of the spirituality of Berulle.

#### 3. Its use in the early days of the Institute.

In the Practice of the Daily Timetable (C.L. 25, p. 95, 96, 101, 102), it says that «when it is time to get up in the morning, a Brother says "Live Jesus in our hearts" and the Brothers in the dormitory reply, "Forever". It is the community signal». The Director uses the same invocation to tell the Brothers in the Common-room to stop reading the Imitation and go to the oratory. In the evening also, the Director uses it to start spiritual reading, and to indicate it is time to go to bed.

The copy of the above publication which we have is dated 1713. We know, however, that it was composed before 1705, a time when the so-called Avignon Rule already existed in manuscript form. De La Salle had already written Regulations of a simpler kind at Vaugirard and Rue Neuve, and the invocation could very well have been in use even then.

It would be useful perhaps also to mention that, in a manuscript dated 1738 and found in Chartres in 1905, it can be seen that Brothers use this invocation to start mental prayer and after the O Domina Mea and the Angelus which follow it.

#### 4. The continuation of its use in the history of the Congregation up to the present time.

During the Generalate of Brother Agathon, for the first time an indulgence was attached to a prayer expressly for the use of the Brothers. There was an annual plenary indulgence to be gained, and 40 days each time the Brothers used it on meeting one another. (Collection of Bulls, p. 48; Pius VI in 1786).

To maintain uniformity in the various communities, Brother Anaclet decided that all recreations should begin and end with the invocation.

As De La Salle's cause progressed to Venerable, Blessed and Saint, he was invoked as such, but the final invocation was always the "Live Jesus in our hearts – Forever".

In the 1946 Rule, at the time of Brother Athanase Emile, the use of the invocation remains more or less what it was in the Practice and the Rules that followed. There are three references to it in the Rule: (ch. 29, art. 1, 3, 5).

Under Brother Nicet Joseph, a Latin version was tried out: "Jesus in cordibus nostris vivat! – Semper!" but it never caught on.

In the Rules "ad experimentum" produced by the Chapter which elected Brother Charles Henry, there is one mention only of the invocation, and it is added that it is the community signal (ch. 10, art. 13). Under Brother Pablo, the same text reappears.

Under Brother John Johnston, the new Rule was approved by the Church. In article 68a, the use of the invocation is linked to a way of thinking dear to the Founder: "Live Jesus in our hearts" Forever! is the usual invocation in the community; the Brothers see in it a reminder of the presence of the Lord who lives in their midst."

## 5. It is still in the chapter on prayer.

This is so because, although very short and succinct, it is still a prayer. As Deville says in his "Ecole Française de Spiritualité, p. 133, this invocation is "a cry of love and desire", "a living summary of a whole range of teachings on mental prayer which the Founder left his Brothers."

Insistence on the presence of God takes a concrete form in the presence of Jesus in the midst of his Brothers, «like the sun... so that all their actions should be directed towards him as their centre, and draw all their strength from him as the branches of a vine draw it from the stock» (C. L. 14, p. 10).

## 6. It is considered to be the invocation of the Lasallian community.

De La Salle wanted all the Brothers to have the same spirit. This spirit is the spirit and life of Christ in the heart of each Brother. It is a part of community relationships and of apostolic undertakings.

If for the followers of St. Francis a way of expressing the fact they belong to the Friars Minor is the use of the motto "Pax et Bonum", so for the Brothers, their invocation has a similar role.

To the Brothers who have been formed by mental prayer on the maxims, virtues and sentiments of Jesus Christ, De La Salle says the following: «Ask therefore the Lord of all hearts to make yours one with those of your Brothers, in that of Jesus.» (Med. 39, 3).

## 7. In his life, De La Salle shone with Jesus living in his heart.

He was image of Jesus Christ (C.L. 7, p. 113). His heart was modelled on that of Jesus Christ (C.L., 8, p. 373). He summoned his remaining strength on his death-bed to answer "Forever!" to the invocation.

The fire which Jesus Christ kindled in his heart was apparent to all (C.L. 8, p. 485). He begs Jesus Christ to answer in his place when someone comes to him for advice (C.L. 8, p. 318).

## 8. One can say the same of his disciples.

The Brothers are called children engendered in Jesus Christ (C.L. 8, p. 358). The Spirit of Jesus Christ reigns in the community (C.L. 7, p. 434). Jesus Christ seems to be in the midst of the Brothers during recreation (C.L. 8, p. 138).

The Institute spreads everywhere the good odour of Jesus Christ (C.L. 7, p. 357). Young teachers are... the good odour of Jesus Christ (C.L. 7, p. 279).

## 9. In conclusion, by way of suggestion...

a/ Every time we use this invocation in community, we should make it a real prayer.

b/ Those who are more in tune with the Russian Pilgrim method will find in our invocation the finest prayer of the heart a Brother could want.

c/ In the Office Book, the expression "your name" returns frequently. It is true it refers to the name of God, Yahweh, but this name "in our midst" is also that of Jesus (Ieshoua). And outside the psalms, there are various passages where the actual name Jesus figures (Phil. 2, 9-10; Apoc. 15, 4). We all know the power of a name in Jewish thinking: to say his name is to make him present, make him come alive, not separately, but in us, on our lips, in our lives, "in our hearts".

d/ According to M. Olier, who indirectly was De La Salle's teacher, "the Brothers should learn to look at Jesus, unite themselves with Jesus, act as Jesus". This means that, when we are with our pupils, this invocation will help us "to have Jesus in our eyes, in our heart and in our hands" (Olier, Introduction à la vie et aux vertus chrétiennes, p. 24). In this way we will be able to instil the love of Jesus in the hearts of children so "that they think often of Jesus... speak frequently of Jesus, aspire only after Jesus, and live for him alone" (Med. 102, 2).

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