

# In the whirlwind of the French Revolution: Brother SOLOMON LECLERCQ

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Nicholas Leclercq, Brother Solomon to be, is born in the city of Boulogne-sur-Mer, France, in 1745, to a well-to-do merchant family trading wines, spirits, salt and timber.



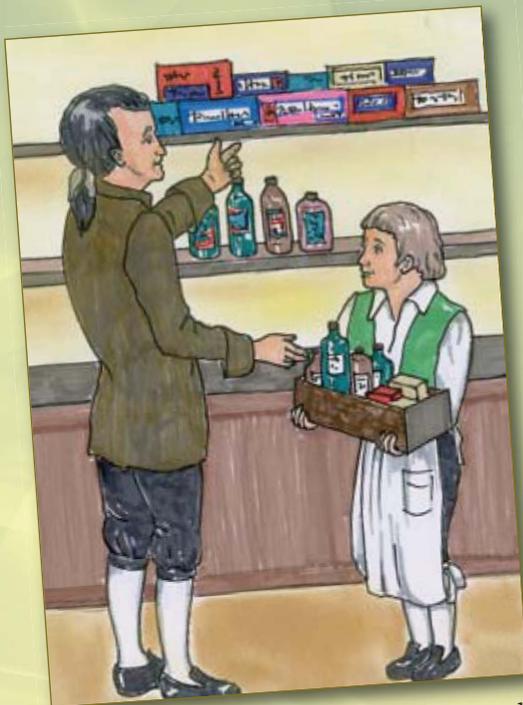
His deeply religious parents impart solid Christian values to their son; familiarize him with daily prayer, knowledge of God's Word and devotion to the Blessed Virgin.



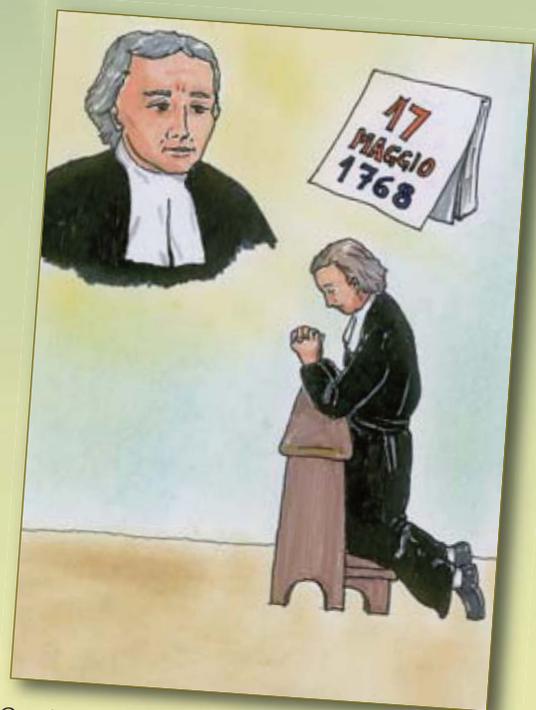
The spiritual atmosphere of the family influences Nicholas' choice of consecrating himself to God. Later, he will write regarding his mother: "She fostered in me the desire to serve God and to secure my eternal salvation."



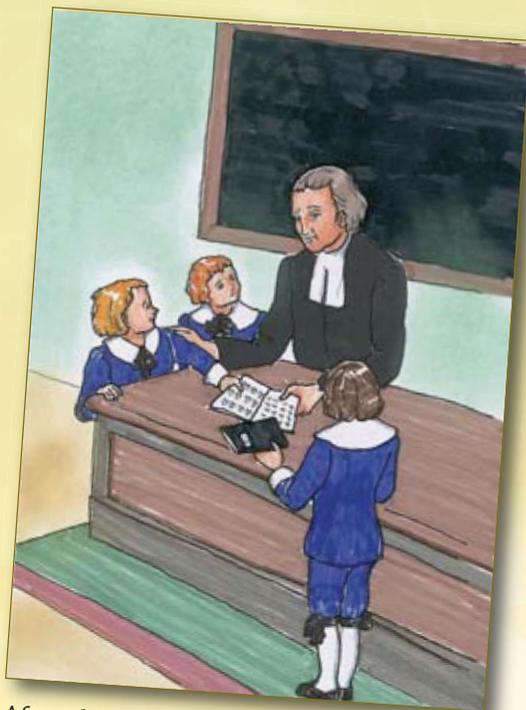
Nicholas attends the school of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Boulogne, visited by de La Salle in 1716. In 1757, Nicholas makes his First Communion in this school while the Seven Years War between France and England is being waged.



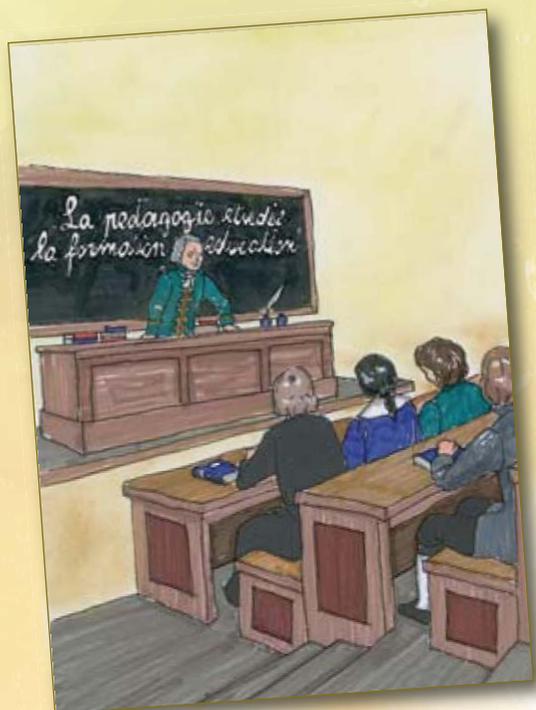
Though Nicholas discerns a call to the religious life when he finishes his studies, he must wait until he is 22 years old to answer as he is obliged to work in the family business because of the war and the economic situation.



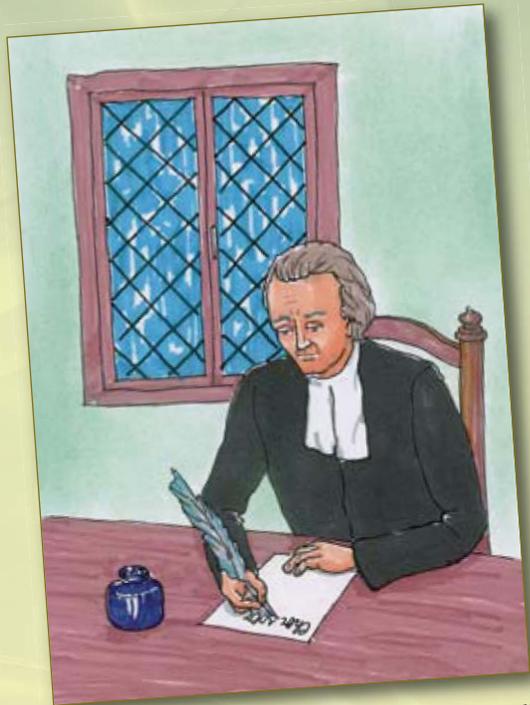
On the feast of the Ascension, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1768, Nicholas receives the habit of the Brothers and takes the name of Brother Solomon. On that occasion the newly professed Brother promises to remain faithful to his vocation until death.



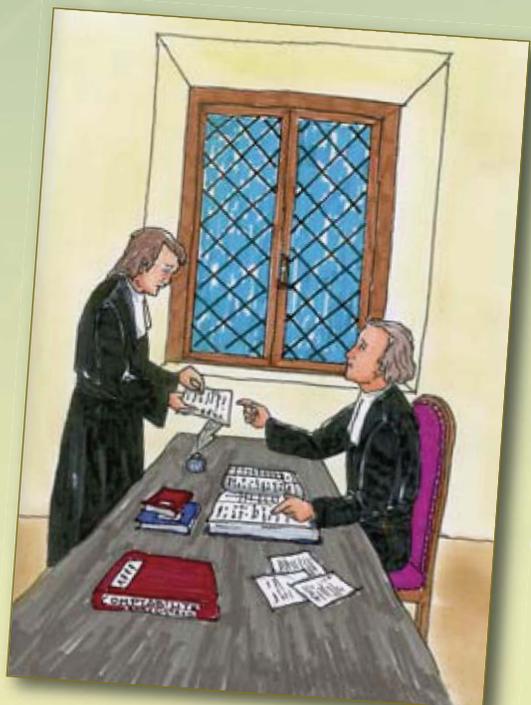
After the Novitiate year, Brother Solomon receives the task of teaching the youngest children. He does this for nine years as day by day he becomes a very experienced teacher. His class has 130 students!



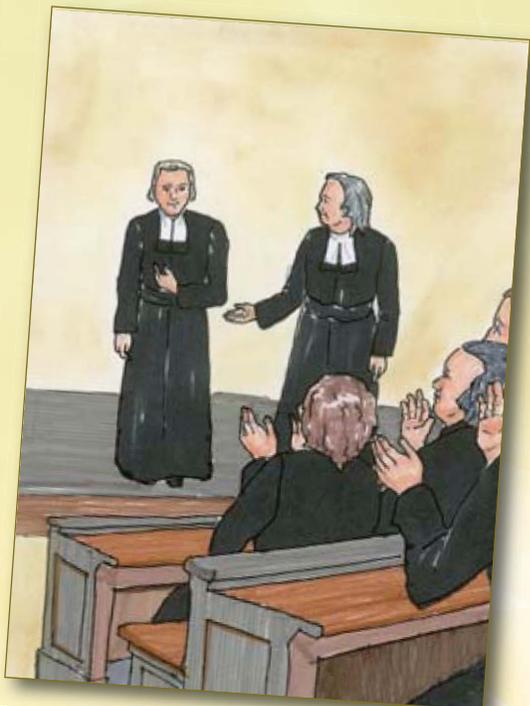
Between 1769 and 1770 he spends a year at Rouen taking courses in pedagogy in an effort to develop his teaching skills.



He is named Sub-Director of the Maréville Novitiate in 1772 and Director the following year. He writes a letter to his sister asking her to pray that the Lord grant him the necessary understanding to guide the novices on the way to perfection.



In June 1777, Brother Solomon is appointed Procurator of Maréville as a result of his studies in business and accounting. He has to think about practical matters ranging from food for his Brothers to maintenance of the house and the properties of the institution. He obeys although he would have preferred to devote himself to the spiritual life.



In 1787 Brother Solomon becomes Secretary of the General Chapter and then of Brother Agathon, the Superior General.



The French Revolution erupts with the fall of the Bastille on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1789. The anger of the revolutionaries also focuses on priests and religious who are forced to take an oath to support the Civil Constitution. Whoever refuses is imprisoned.



Between August 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, even King Louis XVI is imprisoned and locked up in the Temple Prison. He will be guillotined on the morning of January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1793.



On the night between August 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, about fifty "revolutionaries" break into the Brothers' house on the Rue Neuve. They take Brother Solomon prisoner and lead him to the Carmelite prison.



The day before he had written a lengthy letter to his sister Marie, where among other things one reads: *"We suffer gratefully and happily the crosses and afflictions that God will send us."*



On September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1792, Brother Solomon is killed by sword blows in the monastery garden. He was only 46 years old.