



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER TO THE BROTHERS OF CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION OF ST GABRIEL

Saturday, 29 April 2000

Dear Brothers of Christian Instruction of St Gabriel,

I am pleased to welcome you as you meet in Rome for your General Chapter. In particular I greet Bro. René Delorme, your new Superior General, and with him all the Council members who have just been elected for their first term. I extend my warmest words of encouragement to them for their new service in the institute and in the Church. Your Chapter is a central event for you and strengthens your mission, rekindling your desire to draw from the source of your founding charism in humble yet bold fidelity to St Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, Gabriel Deshayes and all your predecessors.

The Church rejoices to see your institute's vitality renewed, as shown by the large number of young new members on the different continents, especially in countries where evangelization has recently developed. She needs the prophetic sign of your consecration, "*in order with [Christ's] Spirit to build fraternal communities, to join him in washing the feet of the poor, and to contribute in your own unique way to the transfiguration of the world*" (*Vita consecrata*, n. 110). In the eyes of the world, you show that love and forgiveness are stronger than hatred and resentment, and thus invite our contemporaries to base their personal, family and social lives on the primordial value of charity, so that peace, justice and solidarity will be sought by all in forging human bonds within society. Through your community life, in accordance with your original status as a religious institute of brothers, a status which the Church holds in high esteem, as I recalled following the Synod Fathers in my Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata* (cf. n. 60), you witness with fidelity and enthusiasm to the Gospel, as well as to the love which profoundly unites Christ's disciples. The more intense fraternal charity is in your communities, the greater is the credibility of the message proclaimed and the more perceptible the heart of the Church, the sacrament of the union of human beings with God and with one another (cf. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Address to the Plenary Meeting*, 20 November 1992).

The principal theme of your reflections, "*Mission, Source of Life: In Montfort's Footsteps, Everyone Committed to a Just and Fraternal World*", is linked to the Great Jubilee, which is leading "the whole Church into a new time of grace and mission" (Bull *Incarnationis mysterium* n. 3). For your institute too a new page of history is being written. It will enable you to carry out the decisions of your General Chapter. In 1997, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the canonization of St Louis-Marie de Montfort, I urged you to make fruitful the heritage you have received from your founder: it "must be

laid open to so many young people who search for meaning in their lives and for an art of living" (*Letter to the Montfortian Family*, 21 June 1997).

Your institute is totally oriented to the education of youth. Today more than ever, this has become an essential task for the Church and for the world of tomorrow. Your vocation, in fact, is to guide young people in their spiritual, moral, human, intellectual and professional formation, and to prepare them to become adults who will take their share of responsibility at all levels in their future life. This also gives them from now on the hope that a future is open to them. By this mission you participate actively in proclaiming the Gospel and in building a just and fraternal society, since formation occurs at a deeper level in educational communities where each young person is accepted, respected and loved as he is. Living environments such as these have an incomparable educational value: they help personalities to mature by giving each person self-confidence and encouraging social integration. In the name of the Church, I thank you in particular for your role in educating society's poorest young people or children who are often rejected, the deaf, the blind, those living in slums and the streets. You are also called to eliminate illiteracy and to provide formation for many people, especially women, who have no access to educational systems. In doing so, dear brothers, you develop your educational charism with patience and tenacity in the footsteps of your founders. I appreciate the efforts you are making for human development and your concern to establish new foundations, especially in Africa and South-East Asia.

At the present time your institutions benefit from the help, competence and experience of many lay people, whom I cordially greet through you. You are working with patience and discernment to find the most suitable ways to associate them ever more effectively with your life and mission, by sharing with them your enthusiasm for educating young people and the specific features of your Montfortian charism. While respecting the baptismal vocation of each person, you offer with the laity a special example of ecclesial communion, which strengthens apostolic action for the evangelization of the world (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Fraternal Life in Community*, n. 70).

May the joy of the Jubilee spur you to live each day by following Christ after the example of Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort! He will give you the boldness to be tireless missionaries of the Gospel in the world of education! May the Virgin Mary, so dear to your founder and to all your religious family, sustain you each day! I cordially impart to you an affectionate Apostolic Blessing, which I extend to all the Brothers of Christian Instruction of St Gabriel, the lay people who work with them, the young people who benefit from their help, their families and their former students.

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