



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO BROTHER JOHN JOHNSTON

*To Brother John Johnston
Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*

The Great Jubilee of the Incarnation will mark a double anniversary for the Brothers of the Christian Schools. During this month of May you will be celebrating the centenary of the canonization of St John Baptist de La Salle, the founder of your institute, as well as the 50th anniversary of his proclamation by my Predecessor, Pope Pius XII, as the *special patron of all teachers of children and youth*. This double anniversary gives me the opportunity to join deeply in your prayer and thanksgiving, as well as in that of all the members of your religious family, and to extend a cordial greeting to everyone, especially as you are gathered for the 43rd General Chapter of your institute.

With his pedagogical genius, St John Baptist de La Salle was a distinguished pioneer in the popular education of children and youth. A true apostle, he knew how to serve the children who came to his schools, striving first of all to form their teachers. This insight remains fundamental today, for it underscores how education presupposes, on the one hand, the transmission of human and Christian values and, on the other, the witness of adults who show young people what a happy and balanced life is. Teaching is thus more than a profession; it is a mission that consists in helping each individual to recognize his irreplaceable and unique qualities so that he can grow and develop. In proclaiming your founder *patron of all teachers of children and youth*, the Church presents him as a model to be imitated and an example for all educators, inviting them to show creativity, patience and devotion and to discern the needs of young people, thus responding to their deep aspirations.

It is the brothers' task to make known the greatness of St John Baptist de La Salle's apostolate

and Christian vision as an educator, which have retained all their timeliness for the contemporary world.

His charism, fostered by assiduous contemplation of God, the Creator and Saviour, and lived in accordance with the religious ideal of a life consecrated to the Lord in fraternal and community life, shows that educating, teaching and evangelizing form a whole. Education remains incomplete if it does not lead to an apprenticeship of respect for life and freedom, of service to the truth and of the desire to give of oneself. In proclaiming the Gospel in schools, the goal of your apostolate, you strive to form each person and to form the whole person.

I therefore encourage all the brothers in their mission of education and evangelization, especially among children and young people who are poor or in difficulty, showing them that each one is infinitely precious in God's eyes. Thus they participate in a significant way in the Church's mission. I urge them to be true sons of St John Baptist de La Salle by supporting one another on the path of holiness. By taking their part in the "work of God" and by fully living the catechetical dimension of their noble task, may they always rise to the present and future challenges in the many countries where they work, especially in these times when many moral guideposts are disappearing from a world in flux! As I said to you during your last General Chapter on 14 May 1993, "in all circumstances be teachers, witnesses to Christ and Christian educators by your word and example"! Through this double commemoration in the middle of the Jubilee Year, may you give new life to your mission and invite young people to follow the La Salle ideal in the religious life!

As I entrust you to the intercession of the Virgin Mary and of St John Baptist de La Salle, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to all of you brothers and to the professors, the students at your schools and their parents, former students and all who work with you in your mission.

From the Vatican, 2 May 2000.

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