



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS
ATTENDING THEIR 43rd GENERAL CHAPTER***

Friday, 9 June 2000

Dear Brothers,
Dear Friends,

1. I am pleased to receive you as you gather for your 43rd General Chapter and as your religious family celebrates the centenary of the canonization of St John Baptist de La Salle, as well as the 50th anniversary of his proclamation by Pope Pius XII as the special patron of all teachers of children and youth.

These various anniversaries are a particularly favourable opportunity for you to give renewed vitality to your various educational and evangelizing missions in accordance with your founder's charism, despite your diminishing numbers. I am especially pleased with your institute's willingness to respond, in close communion with the local Churches, to the new appeals of children and young people, especially of the very poor throughout the world who need to receive a human, moral, catechetical and scholastic education, so that they can become men and women capable of taking their share of responsibility in the Christian community and in future society. The theme of your work expresses this willingness: *Associated for educational service to the poor as the La Salle response to the challenges of the 21st century*. The Church is invited never to tire of offering young people this gift of education, which shows her attention to the realities and expectations of peoples who need support in their human development.

2. Your brothers have an incomparable role. Through their consecrated life, they are witnesses in the eyes of the world to the absolute primacy of God and to the happiness found in serving the Lord by serving human beings, especially children, whom God loves so much. Through their community life, they show that Christ is a very strong bond of fraternity among people, which

opens them to fellowship, collaboration, peace and forgiveness. They are also close to everyone in the daily solidarity of the teacher who patiently and sensitively leads young people on the path to maturity and true freedom.

3. Your recent Chapters have enabled you to reflect on the participation of other religious congregations and the laity who wish to be associated with your missions and to live the La Salle charism in their own way. I am particularly sensitive to these forms of collaboration, which make it possible to join forces for great missionary effectiveness. The presence of lay people at your side is a significant sign of the more and more important place they are called to take in the Church's life, which I would strongly like to encourage, as I have already done in my Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata* (cf. n. 56). It is your task to give the lay people who wish to be associate members the necessary formation for their spiritual life and their service. Relying on St John Baptist de La Salle's teaching and spirituality, they will then be able to find ways to pursue their spiritual journey according to their own state of life and with respect for the respective identities and particular features of consecrated life, so that they can put it into practice in the educational service that will be entrusted to them and strive to become model Christian teachers.

At the end of our meeting, I ask the Blessed Virgin and St John Baptist de La Salle to support your efforts and to make your General Chapter bear fruit. I cordially grant you an affectionate Apostolic Blessing.

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