



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE SUPERIOR GENERAL
OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS**

To Bro. Alvaro Rodríguez Echeverría

Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools

1. On the occasion of the 350th anniversary of the *dies natalis* of St John Baptist de La Salle, I am pleased to join the Brothers of the Christian Schools and those who share their founder's ideal in giving thanks for the example of the "special patron of the teachers of children and youth". My heart filled with joy at the marvels worked by the Brothers throughout their history, I invite you to "propose anew the enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness" of your founder (*Vita consecrata*, n. 37), to reinforce in each one the desire to respond generously to the charism of your religious family in each one.

2. I have already had the opportunity to recall Jean-Baptiste de La Salle's pedagogical genius, as well as the importance of your mission among children and young people, especially the poor and those in difficulty. Your ideal, ever timely, requires disciples who let themselves be formed by God and who, filled with enthusiasm for education and evangelization, will be able to hold up to young Christians hope and reasons for living. In enabling young people to discover your founder's endearing figure you invite them, at his school, to have the experience of a close encounter with Christ, and introduce them to the "heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters" around us (*Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 43).

3. The secret of Jean-Baptiste de La Salle is the close and living relationship with the Lord that he fosters in daily prayer, the source from which he draws his typical daring creativity. In listening to God, he received the lights which little by little permitted him to discern the urgent needs of his time, in order to find a suitable response. Moved by the Spirit "who dwells in you" and "must penetrate the depths of your hearts" (Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, *Méditations pour tous les*

dimanches de l'année, n. 62, 3), you will live more and more in conformity with the gift received by your founder. He who implored the Brothers to live as "interior men" (*Explications de la méthode d'oraison*, n. 3), reveals to us in the treasure of his writings the contemplative dimension of his life, and therefore of every Christian and missionary life. After his example, renewed by their personal meeting with Christ, the Brothers will be able to proclaim the Gospel to the young people who are entrusted to them and tactfully to guide them in their human, moral and spiritual growth.

4. I would like to draw the attention of the Institute's members to the importance of the witness of fraternal life. John Baptist de La Salle saw it as an essential means to enable the Brothers to carry out their mission of education and evangelization in the best possible way. "We must especially study how to be united in God and to have but one heart and mind; and what must be its principal motivation is, as St John says, that whoever lives in charity lives in God and God lives in him" (*Méditations*, n. 113, 3). Called to make visible Christ's gift of brotherhood to the Church, it is the community's duty "to be and to be seen to be a living organism of intense fraternal communion, a sign and a stimulus for all the baptized" (*Fraternal Life in Community*, n. 2b). It therefore exerts a natural attraction and the *joie de vivre* it emanates, even in the midst of difficulties, becomes a witness that gives religious life a powerful magnetism which is a source of vocations.

5. In this context, I encourage the Brothers to make their houses schools of fraternal life, in order "to promote a spirituality of communion" (*Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 43), involving the young people entrusted to their care and the lay people who collaborate with their mission, helping all to discover and share the Institute's charism. I rejoice in the initiatives already taken, such as the creation of the "De La Salle Youth Network", which it would be good to follow up and develop. It will give rise to an exchange which permits the baptized to discover and to live to the full their specific vocation, and the Brothers to remember the demands of this "high standard of ordinary Christian living" which is holiness, with a "training in holiness adapted to people's needs" (*Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 31), particularly those of the young.

6. "You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things" (*Vita consecrata*, n. 110). Dear Brothers, may this anniversary renew your fidelity to Christ and to the Gospel! For the Christian Brothers' family a millennium is unfolding into which it is invited to enter, "relying on the help of Christ!" (*Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 58), who, contemplated and loved, calls us once again to follow him.

7. The Most Holy Virgin accompanies us on this path. I entrusted the third millennium to her and I called upon her as the Star of the new evangelization. May she also accompany the spiritual sons of St John Baptist de La Salle and make them grow in availability and holiness, as well as in the service of Christ and their brethren! As I entrust you to the intercession of your founder and of all your Institute's saints, to all the Brothers I wholeheartedly impart my Apostolic Blessing, which I extend to the young people, the members of your educational communities and to all who share St

John Baptist de La Salle's ideal.

From the Vatican, 26 April 2001.

JOHN PAUL II

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