



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS**

Thursday, 12 April 1984

Dear Brothers in Christ,

it gives me great pleasure to welcome you as members of the Twenty-sixth General Chapter of the Congregation of the Christian Brothers. I greet you with the words of the Apostle Paul: "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because *your faith is proclaimed in all the world*" (Rom 1, 8).

1. You represent almost three thousand Christian Brothers actively involved in the education of youth in over three hundred and fifty communities on the five continents. Moreover, you are the bearers of a truly glorious tradition of commitment to the education of the young which had its humble origin in the first school that your founder, Edmund Ignatius Rice, set up in a stable at Waterford in the early years of the nineteenth century. That was indeed an act of *evangelical compassion*, moved as he was by the pitiable state of young boys who had no prospect of education or guidance in the sad conditions of poverty and extreme religious discrimination in which they lived.

Who can measure the extent of the good achieved by your Congregation since then? How many boys have grown to Christian maturity in their personal and professional lives, as a result of the often unspoken heroism of the work carried out by the Brothers with that deep personal faith, with the spirit of self-dedication, and the inner joy that characterizes the followers of Edmund Ignatius Rice?

2. Your General Chapter has the important task of revising the Constitutions and other regulations to be submitted for the approval of the Sacred Congregation of Religious and Secular Institutes.

You are also engaged in a process of renewal and adaptation.

In this respect I would draw your attention to what I said in my recent Apostolic Exhortation "Redemptionis Donum": "The Church thinks of you, above all, as persons who are 'consecrated': *consecrated to God in Jesus Christ as his exclusive possession*" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II, Redemptionis Donum, 7).

Without doubt, the effectiveness of your apostolate and the vitality of your Congregation, indeed the sense of personal identity and therefore the spiritual maturity of each member of your Congregation, follows from the authentic way in which this *consecration* is accepted and lived.

As members of a Religious Institute you have a specific witness to give. You proclaim the saving power of Christ by your particular style of life, which is based on the observance of the evangelical counsels and animated by a solid piety that is at once personal and common to all the members of the Congregation.

3. Allow me to mention briefly one aspect of Christian piety which contributes greatly to the attainment of holiness and the consistency of your witness. I refer to the intense devotion to the Blessed Sacrament that marked the spiritual journey of Edmund Rice and from which so much strength and enlightenment has come for innumerable members of his Congregation. You must be men of frequent contact with the Risen Christ in the Sacrament of his presence, in order to nourish the faith that sustains and gives meaning to your vocation.

The Second Vatican Council took pains to point out that the fact must be honestly faced, that even the most desirable changes made in view of contemporary needs will fail to achieve their purpose unless *a renewal of spirit* - an interior renewal of the heart - gives life to them (Cf. Perfectae Caritatis, 2).

4. You have wished to visit the Pope. And I take this opportunity to thank you for your specific ecclesial service in fostering the integral development of youth. I appreciate too the direct assistance given by the Congregation of the Christian Brothers of the Holy See.

May I also ask you for something? You are well aware of the needs of the Church all over the world in relation to vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life. My request is that you do not fail to challenge the young to follow Christ in this way. Help them to discover the divine call. Support them by your prayer, your advice, and the example of your lives.

It is my ardent hope that you will be encouraged by this meeting to continue along the path of fidelity to the original inspiration of your Founder. I pray that your Congregation will grow and flourish with new vocations; that the lives of all its members will be fruitful and fulfilled in the task entrusted to each one.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles, protect you and inspire you by her example of perfect consecration!

Praised be Jesus Christ!

Copyright © Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana