



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE 27th GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE CONGREGATION OF CHRISTIAN BROTHERS**

Thursday, 29 March 1990

Dear Brothers in Christ,

1. I am pleased to have this opportunity to welcome the members of the *Twenty-seventh general Chapter of the Congregation of Christian Brothers*. My cordial greetings and best wishes go to your newly-elected Superior General and his Assistants as they begin their term of office. The Christian Brothers are renowned for their dedicated and self-giving apostolate in educating the young. It is my fervent prayer that the deliberations of this Chapter will contribute to confirming and strengthening you in this necessary ecclesial service.

2. In the period after the Second Vatican Council, your Institute has been compelled to adapt to new circumstances and to make new beginnings as it strives to be faithful to its *distinguished tradition of excellence in education within the framework of the Church's evangelizing mission*. It was in order to respond more fully to those challenges that your Twenty-sixth General Chapter sought to revise the Constitutions of the Congregation of Christian Brothers in a way most appropriate to the ecclesial realities of our own day. In doing so, it laid the foundations for the renewal of community life and structures called for by the Council. May this latest General Chapter, dedicated to assessing the impact of the new Constitutions upon the life of your Congregation, foster that deeper growth in holiness and vocational commitment which is the very heart of the authentic renewal of religious life.

An essential part of that commitment will always be fidelity to the charism and example of your Founder, whose desire to *bring the ennobling power of the Gospel to the poor* has borne abundant fruit in the dedicated lives of countless Christian Brothers in Catholic Educational Institutions all over the world. The vision and zeal of *the Servant of God, Edmund Ignatius Rice*, remain stable

points of reference for your entire Institute as it seeks to fulfil the role assigned it by God in the advancement of his Kingdom. A generous concern for the poor and an unfailing dedication to the education of the young in sound doctrine and virtue must continue to be the hallmark of every school and apostolic undertaking of the Christian Brothers.

3. The goal of a truly Christian education, as the Council itself pointed out, is "to relate all human culture eventually to the news of salvation, so that the light of faith will illumine the knowledge which students gradually gain of the world, of life and of mankind" (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 8). *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, in which the ultimate meaning of all human life and activity is revealed, *is indeed the measure of all authentic progress in personal growth and apostolic effort*. The history of your Congregation bears eloquent witness to the Church's conviction that the education of the young is a privileged expression of the ministry of evangelization which she has received from her Lord.

In this context, I recall the observation of my predecessor Pope Paul VI, that in preaching the Gospel *the Church begins by being evangelized herself* (Cfr. Pauli VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15). Cannot this insight, which derived from a profound understanding of the nature of the pilgrim Church in her mysterious growth toward the fullness of God's Kingdom, also be applied to those who undertake the apostolate of educating the young in their growth to human maturity? As teachers, you are called to form the minds and hearts of children and adolescents at a very significant time in their lives. With wisdom, prudence and great patience, you seek to ensure that the development of their personalities will be matched by the growth within them of the "new creation" (Cfr. *2 Cor. 5, 17*), which they became at the moment of their Baptism (Cfr. *Gravissimum Educationis*, 8). In order to accomplish this delicate task, how essential it is that each of you should have first known what it is to be *educated at the school of the Gospel*, to come to a rich and integrated understanding of God's fatherly love for us as revealed in the life and teaching of Jesus, and to experience the purifying and enlightening power of the spirit who has been poured into our hearts!

4. Dear Brothers: I express the fervent hope that the Christian Brothers will uphold the great traditions of competence, zeal and holiness of life that have marked your Congregation since its beginning. I encourage you to set the noble ideal of your vocation before new generations of young people in the certainty that the Lord of the harvest will provide where needs are most urgent. I also take this opportunity to express the Holy See's gratitude for the generous way in which the Christian Brothers have assisted in its work over the years.

Commending you to the loving protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, model of all holiness, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of grace and peace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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