

**The Brother of the Christian Schools  
in the World Today:**

# **A Declaration**



Thirty-Ninth General Chapter  
Second Session  
1967

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(Word Processor version by George Van Grieken, FSC)

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Foreword

This declaration on the brother in the modern world is one of the principal documents of our 39th General Chapter.

In the course of the first session it became more and more clear that we were in need of a document that would give a synthesis of the many facets of the brothers' life and mission in the world of today. As it studied the questions of the vows, formation, our life of prayer and of community, the Chapter increasingly senses the need of an authoritative statement that would serve as foundation and unifying principle of all the Chapter's work.

The notes from brothers in all sectors of the Institute, and the minutes of community studies of the pre-capitular questionnaire and of the successive projects of the Rule, clearly indicated that it was on the fundamental questions of our identity and our purpose that light must be cast. What is the meaning in the light of today's needs of traditional words like "schools" or "the poor"? What are the apostolic works that today's brother can accomplish? Which apostolic forms are compatible with the purpose of the Institute? What is the meaning of religious consecration in today's world? What is the relation of this consecration with the apostolate and the profession of the brother? How shall we preach the good news of Jesus to peoples in various stages of belief or of unbelief? How can we best respond to the appeals of peoples of developing areas, to the needs of the missions?

Moreover, the ordinary chapter of 1966-67 had to respond to the tasks assigned by the Council to the "special chapter" that all Congregations were commanded to convene in the years immediately after the publication of Moto Proprio "Ecclesiae Sanctae." These tasks were summed up in the conciliar expression, "to promote an adapted renewal in the Institute." To accomplish this work means an investigation of the evangelical principles and of the initial inspirations of the Founder on the one hand, and on the other to investigate the needs and aspirations of the men of our time, in order to be more fully aware of the very *raison d'être* of the Institute.

To say that this Declaration is a true response to these objectives is to recognize by that very assertion its importance and the vital role it must play in the adapted renewal of the Institute. As it stands, it represents the work of the entire General Chapter. It is a document that has developed gradually during the long months of work of the intercession and the second session. By numerous discussions in regional and inter-regional committees, during courageous debates and differences of opinion, through many successive editions, it took shape and the text arrived at its definitive form; and during this time a common understanding of the Institute in the deepest sense developed

in the Chapter. Finally, on the 6th of December, 1967, it was the object of an affirmative vote that was practically unanimous.

The Declaration does not provide us with ready-made answers to the questions posed above in the second paragraph; a document of the Chapter, or even the General Chapter itself, must not be confused with the adapted renewal of the Institute. This renewal is something yet to be realized, and its effective realization is confided to the common effort of all the members of the Institute. But the text that is here presented to you will aid the renewal by the light it sheds on the essential aspects of our life, and by the personal and community effort it will arouse.

It is for those reasons that I invite you to read and meditate this Declaration, which your representatives at the General Chapter have prepared with you in mind and your daily labor in perspective. You understand, moreover, that a text like this is not created just to be read; we must live it. It will be the duty of regional chapters and councils to study the text and to determine the manner of reducing its theory and principles to practice, but it remains of first importance that each brother realize his role in applying this Declaration to his own life in order to bring about in himself the renewal each of us needs, and even to bring about a veritable conversion of heart and will.

The Declaration does not blame or condemn anything in the past experience of the Institute; its purpose is to invite each of us to resolutely enter upon the path of renewal and adaptation. It appeals to us to renew our patterns of thought, it urges us to a lasting purification, to a continuous revision of our personal synthesis to the end that we may each day respond to the demands of our vocation with fidelity and dynamism. Conversion is always a bit frightening, but let us not be afraid. Let us receive this Declaration as an appeal to rise above our fears and to go forward to the renewal by the light of the great documents of Vatican II. Then we shall understand that this text here presented to you is something other than one document among many. This document imparts the spirit that should animate our renewal and invites us to undertake it.

It is, then, in the light of the Declaration that we must read and understand the other texts of our General Chapter, including the Rule and the Constitutions. It is the basis of the doctrine that you will find in each of them. In its turn, the Declaration will be further appreciated in the light of the developments that will be found in these other documents. The spirit of the Declaration, a spirit that is basic to an understanding of all the capitular texts, is at once a spirit of spiritual renewal and a personal, responsible engagement in the service of Christ; a missionary spirit of dedication to the needs of youth and to the educational service of the poor; a spirit of community which daily nourishes itself on the word of God, heard and served together; the spirit of renewal of our apostolic works, and especially renewal of the school.

Finally, this Declaration should contribute to strengthen further in all our hearts an apostolic virtue par excellence: the *assurance* of him who knows that he has been called by God, sent by him among men to serve them, and who is fully aware that the light and

the strength of the Holy Spirit are given him that he may be a better servant of God and of youth.

Brother Charles Henry, FSC  
*Superior General*

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## List of Abbreviations

AA	–	<i>Apostolicam Actuositatem</i>
AG	–	<i>Ad Gentes</i>
GEM	–	<i>Gravissimum Educationis Momentum</i>
GS	–	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
LM	–	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
MM	–	<i>Mater et Magistra</i>
MR	–	<i>Meditations for Time of Retreat</i>
PC	–	<i>Perfectae Caritatis</i>
PP	–	<i>Populorum Progressio</i>

## [p1] INTRODUCTION

(1) Faithful to the spirit of Vatican II which invites religious families to undertake the work of renewal and adaptation, the thirty-ninth General Chapter gives expression to the willing response of the Institute and to the understanding it has at present of its own nature and mission, and therefore considers it opportune to publish this declaration on the Brother of the Christian Schools in the world today.

### (2) *Renewal and Adaptations*

The renewal of the religious life implies that certain practices be given new vitality and that certain institutions be transformed. More importantly, renewal demands a return to the sources found in the Gospel and in the origins of the Institute. In this way new vigor will be derived from the creative principles that gave the Institute existence and the brothers will be able to go beyond mere externals to live effectively the charism of the Founder in the world today.

### (3) *Personal and Spiritual Renewal*

1 – The renewal and adaptation of the Institute will become a reality to the extent that each brother, each community and all the various councils and chapters give themselves to the work of a spiritual renewal. "Even the most desirable changes made on behalf of contemporary needs [p2] will fail of their purpose unless a renewal of spirit gives life to them" (PC, 2e). Accordingly each brother is now invited to undertake personally this spiritual renewal.

2 – For a person to renew himself spiritually, he must first be aware that it is the Holy Spirit who brings about the renovation of men and of institutions. There can be no renewal without a renewal in the life of prayer and without an effort to re-emphasize meditation and contemplation.

3 – For a person to renew himself spiritually, there is need, above and beyond the demands of human existence, that the life of a brother be a true expression of his call to faith and baptism, his membership in the Church, his engagement in the Institute and his ability to recognize in the complexity of his daily life that it is the Father who leads, offers himself in love and forgives.

4 – For a person to renew himself spiritually, it is important also to understand that his vocation is a vocation of love. When a brother truly loves those with whom he is involved, he helps to reveal the fact that God too loves them and calls them to give witness of his love for all men.

5 – Throughout the entire process of personal and spiritual renewal, it is important to pay constant attention to the real situation in the Church and in the world. Spiritual renewal implies a more concentrated effort to be present among men, a real attempt to be sensitive to the special circumstances of each, to keep abreast of the constantly changing reality of the human situation, to have an effective love for contemporary life and for those who live in it, taking people seriously and on their own terms. It means, too, that one is willing [p3] to join actively the life of the Church and to make his own "the enterprises and objectives of the Church in such fields as these: the scriptural, liturgical, doctrinal, pastoral, ecumenical, missionary and social" (PC, 2c).

#### (4) *Community Renewal*

Granted that personal and individual effort is basic, the necessity of dialogue among the members of the Institute must also be emphasized in order to give vitality to what is fundamentally a community undertaking. That is why it is appropriate for the General Chapter, once it has explained the nature and purpose of the Institute, to suppress outmoded regulations (PC, 3) and to establish appropriate organisms of animation, coordination, adaptation and continuing renewal. It is only through vital groups working in community that the life the Founder gave his Institute can survive and flourish.

[p4]

### CHAPTER I FIDELITY TO THE FOUNDER

#### (5) *Return to Sources*

1 – Responsive to the invitations of the Spirit of God, the Institute returns to the sources of its life. We return, first of all, to the Gospel; that is, to faith in the reality of the living Christ who calls each brother to follow him and to serve him in others. We return also to the sources of the Institute, that is, to the Founder and his living work. The brothers are convinced that in the life, work, and writings of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, the Holy Spirit is revealed in a privileged manner, and that they will find there even today a living principle for their guidance.

2 – Our guarantee of this desire is the use of scientific methods in studying the Founder and the history of the Institute. In this regard the work accomplished during the past ten years to promote such study deserves special recognition. It is highly desirable that this work be further intensified in the years to come. Certain dimensions of the thought of the Founder are also brought to light by the active participation of the Institute in the catechetical and liturgical renewal of the Church, by the recent attention given to the poor, and by the development of a theology of this world and its real values.

[p5]

## *(6) Letter and Spirit*

1 – Fidelity to the present moment of history and fidelity to the Founder, far from opposing or excluding each other, are closely related, provided that we do not expect Saint John Baptist de La Salle to have known in advance all our problems and the answers to all our questions. This poses the problem of how to interpret the work and writings of the Founder.

2 – The Church serves as our guide in this delicate task. At the very moment when she invites all the congregations to a thorough-going reform, which will require that some of the practices and texts of the primitive rule be abandoned, she insists on fidelity to the spirit and specific intentions of the Founder. Such fidelity cannot exist without a filial search accomplished by living men.

## *(7) Interpretation of His Charism*

1 – The charism of the Founder involves institutions only through the mediation of men. Saint John Baptist de La Salle founded a living community of brothers with whom he shared his apostolic ideal and who in turn passed on this ideal to their successors. Fidelity to the specific intentions of the Founders and to the tradition of the Institute is confided to us as living men. It is we who carry on the task of discovering how fidelity to his charism can be lived in the present time.

2 – This dynamic fidelity to the Founder follows its own internal laws. It is marked first of all by the community character of the search. Although confided to men, it is not given to them as individuals. Fidelity to the Founder is entrusted to the Institute, that is, to the community of men [p6] who constitute it. In such a community living in a profound exchange of personal thought the active presence of the Holy Spirit can be found. The General Chapter, above all, is the occasion when the Institute as a body, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, can see itself and declares to itself what it really is.

3 – The community must also conduct its examination according to objective norms. There can be no question of "refounding" the Institute, but respect for the action of the Holy Spirit in the past will in no way prevent the brothers from being equally attentive to the signs of the times today.

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## CHAPTER II THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

(8) 1 – The brothers as members of the Church live in this world and are necessarily sensitive to the problems which arise in each successive period of human history. They experience the same desires and anxieties as the rest of men. It is important for them to recognize that the signs of the times stress the urgency of their mission in the world today, the necessity to renew their religious life, their apostolic ministry, their presence among men.

2 – To achieve the adaptation and renewal sought by the Church, the brothers must be attentive and ready to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit that speaks through

this mediation of men. Since they have chosen to work for the salvation that comes from Christ, they should let themselves be guided by the Spirit of God. It is he who stirs up in the brothers the desire for renewal; he it is who inspires the Church today to accentuate certain elements in her teaching; it is he who speaks in a mysterious fashion through the events that transpire in the world and through the hopes and aspirations of its people.

(9) *Desires of the Brothers*

1 – There are certain moments when the brothers show a remarkable union of thought and [p8] desire concerning their apostolate and religious life. At such times the action of the Spirit is undoubtedly present. This happens especially when, on the occasion of a General Chapter, the notes of the brothers from all over the world make particular requests with unusual insistence. Taken together these notes and petitions are more than a collection of personal opinions. They deserve to be recognized as an expression of the corporate conscience. Accordingly, the Institute gathers these suggestions together and studies them with care.

2 – These notes have helped the thirty-ninth General Chapter to recognize in the Institute a strong desire to play a much more active part in the life of the world and of the Church, a desire for a more determined adaptation of our life and work to the geographical, social, cultural, political and religious circumstances in which the Institute finds itself. Quite a few of these notes express the desire for a more authentic religious life. Others reflect rather strongly a more precise awareness of the apostolic mission of the Institute and its missionary vocation. As a result there is an insistence on the need for works that reflect this apostolic and missionary purpose. There is the desire too that the brothers be given the thorough training and formation that will prepare them for the apostolic work they are going to do.

3 – Another element that can be drawn from the notes is the expressed will for greater flexibility in the commitment of personnel to institutions so that when more urgent educational needs present themselves the brothers will be readily available. In particular, there is a widespread insistence that [p9] the service of the poor become a principal characteristic of the Institute once again.

(10) *Desires of the Church*

1 – The post-conciliar Church also has appealed to the laborers in the vineyard of the Lord to organize their apostolate so that it will be effective in bringing the gift of salvation to the world of today. The Church stresses the importance of united action and of combined effort, because she achieves her full apostolate through the diversity of ministries and charisms which are all complementary to one another.

2 – The Church emphasizes her community character as the People of God and the sacrament of the presence of God among men. For this reason she teaches the importance of the apostolate as witness. The Church is defined as missionary by nature and gives prior concern to those who are separated from her. When the members of the Church receive the sacrament of baptism they assume their responsibility for the salvation of the world. Yet the Church respects the diversity of charisms which the Spirit imparts to each of her members for the apostolate.

3 – The Church desires that this apostolate of the faithful be enlightened, recognizing and admiring the action of the Spirit outside her visible membership among the separated brethren as well as among non-Christians. The members of the Church are therefore called to acquire the ecumenical spirit and to collaborate with all men of good will. Acknowledging that the truth cannot be imposed by force, the Church declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. On [p10] the other hand, the Church regards everything that is good and true outside of herself as a preparation for receiving the Gospel and a gift from Christ that enlightens every man.

4 – In this spirit the Church proclaims the value of things of this world, affirms their lawful autonomy, and teaches that faith and hope engage the Christian to labor more ardently for the prosperity of the city of men. Wishing to be the servant of man, she declares "that all things on earth should be related to man as their center and crown" (GS, 12). The Church is concerned for man in his totality and wants him to develop harmoniously in the fulfillment of all his potentialities. The mission of evangelization consists in communicating to man the ultimate meaning of the world and enlightening him concerning the mystery of his own existence.

#### (11) *Desires of the World*

1 – If the Spirit of God appeals through the teaching of the Church, he makes himself heard also in the hopes and sorrows of the men of our day, in the possibilities and deficiencies of our changing world, recalled to us, for example, in such documents as *Gaudium et Spes*, *Gravissimum Educationis*, and *Populorum Progressio*.

2 – It is a world marked by the greatness of man and by his scientific, technical and economic progress; a world become secular in the continuing process of desacralization; a world of increasing political cooperation among men, a humanity united in the development of the means to travel and communication; a world which aspires to make the benefits of culture accessible to all; a [p11] world of population explosion marked by the constantly increasing importance of youth.

3 – But it is also a world in which the life, liberty and dignity of men are more and more threatened; a world of loneliness and despair for many who are trodden down by selfishness, greed, indifference or desire for power; a world of social injustice with an increasing disproportion between the rich and the poor; a world of illiteracy and ignorance in which the young are neglected; a world of strife and wars; a world where God is missing or rejected and where man, because he closes himself off from invisible realities, is threatened with extinction.

4 – This world has more need than ever, even at the very center of man's temporal pursuits, for a witness given by people who are consecrated and who know and love God as a living being. It is more necessary than ever that an international Institute should exist for the educational service of people throughout the world.

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### CHAPTER III THE CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS OF THE BROTHER'S VOCATION

(12) Despite the enormously varied needs of the world today and the many demands for the services of the brothers, it is not possible for them to disperse their efforts into all the areas where they could possibly render service. The part played by the Institute in the work of the Church and in the building up of the temporal city has to be coherent and specific if it is to be effective. It is appropriate, therefore, to define the elements that constitute the brother's vocation, apart from which he could not be considered a member of the Institute.

(13) 1 – The General Chapter declares that the brother is a baptized Christian who responds to a special and mysterious call from God. He consecrates himself completely to God and to his service by his religious profession. Guided by the Holy Spirit, he tries constantly to bring unity to his life by integrating the following elements: \*

2 – The brother gives full and explicit expression to his baptismal consecration (PC, 5) by making a public profession of vows which are received [p13] by the Church. He assumes this engagement in an exclusively lay Institute.

3 – The brother specifies his decision to work for the glory of God through the service of men by giving himself to a community that is totally dedicated to the kingdom of God: witnessing to its reality, announcing it to men, serving the kingdom to come and promoting its growth in this world. Every brother, no matter what his actual assignment may be, makes a personal contribution to the common realization of this special mission which the Institute receives from the Church.

4 – The brother takes upon himself in community an educational mission which the Institute carries out with special preference for the poor. Regardless of the social class of the students with whom he is directly engaged, the brother places his total educational apostolate at the service of those whose poverty hinders their development as persons or their aptitude to receive the message of salvation revealed in Jesus Christ.

5 – The brother makes his contribution to the divine plan of salvation not only by exercising the ministry of the word of God but also by dedicating himself to the education of his students, helping them to grow as human beings and so come to the full maturity of personal development (GS, 53).

6 – The brother chooses the school as the preferred but not the only means "to form the family of God's children during the present history of the human race" (GS, 40).

[p14]

#### CHAPTER IV PERSONAL SYNTHESIS

(14) *Unity in a Variety of Gifts*

1 – The constitutive elements of the brother's vocation taken together give the brother a distinct place within the People of God. The brother is identified by none of these elements considered separately, but rather by the decision to assume them all in a personal synthesis as an expression of love.

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\* Chapters V, VI, VII and VIII of the Declaration expand and develop each of the more concise paragraphs of this section.

2 – Experience shows that the ways of being called and the particular steps taken to respond are quite diverse. The socio-cultural origin, the psychological maturity, the variety of human and Christian experience, differ from one individual to another in the successive stages of one's life. These variable factors produce notable differences in understanding the ministry of the Word, the service of the poor, the intrinsic worth of different cultures and the appreciation of religious consecration that is gradually acquired.

3 – A laudable desire for unity does not require that there be a changeless and universal type of brother to which all should conform. God calls each brother to make a personal response to the constitutive elements of this vocation as received from the Founder, and to adapt his response to the signs of the times which are manifest in the needs of the world today. [p4]

4 – The General Chapter desires to ensure the unity and to preserve the specific nature of the Institute by being faithful to its original charism; it also desires to affirm the interior liberty of each brother and the advantages of the diversity of their personal charisms. Unity is not to be found in uniformity, but in harmonious complementarity, according to the words of St. Paul, "There are diversities of gifts, but it is the same Spirit", and also, "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" ( I Cor., 12, 4-7).

5 – Each brother, then, will achieve his personal fulfillment as a brother in a continual responsiveness to his brothers and to the Rule of the Institute as well as in his relationships with the men of his time. He will also implement the principle of subsidiarity in his own life by taking the initiative and to respond personally and to persevere in fidelity to the Holy Spirit. According to Saint John Baptist de La Salle, it is this fidelity to the Holy Spirit that is the unifying element in the brother's life.

#### (15) *Personal Formation*

1 – This emphasis on the responsibility of each brother demands that an initial period be devoted to a formation that is profound, while recognizing that the work of formation is a personal and continual task. The General Chapter insists on the importance of a serious preparation for the brothers, one that is professional and pastoral as well as cultural, spiritual and theological, a preparation that joins the knowledge that comes from serious scholarship to the experience derived from appropriate activity. In this way the brothers [p16] will develop a mature balance of individual initiative and union with the community in the growth of an apostolic spirit.

2 – Programs for the training of the brothers, however excellent they may be, can never dispense with the responsibility which each brother has for his own formation. The achievement of a personal vocation is the life-long task of every individual through fidelity to the continual guidance of the Holy Spirit. All true formation is a personal discipline which involves frequent moments of self-study, constant readiness to examine and accept new ideas and the rejection of any complacent reliance on a purely mechanical technique. This spirit is the essential condition for the authentic growth and development of a human person.

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CHAPTER V THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE BROTHER:  
AN APOSTOLIC AND COMMUNITY LIFE

(16) The religious life of the brother represents one of the possible ways of being a layman in the Church. In fact, "the religious state of life is not an intermediate one between the clerical and lay states. Rather, the faithful of Christ are called by God from both these latter states of life so that they may enjoy this particular gift in the life of the Church and thus each in his own way can forward the saving mission of the Church" (LG, 43). Thus the brother's religious life "does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church; nevertheless it belongs inseparably to her life and holiness." (LG, 44).

RELIGIOUS CONSECRATION:  
A CONTINUATION OF THE LIFE OF BAPTISM WITH CERTAIN NEW  
ELEMENTS

(17) *Continuation of the Life of Baptism*

1 – As with all forms of the Christian life, the religious life is rooted in baptism and the other sacraments of initiation. The vocation to religious profession invites the brother, first of all, to deepen [p18] in faith his understanding of the richness and the demands of the life of baptism.

2 – The richness of baptism derives from the free gift of God who rescues man from the death of sin and introduces him to the new life of the risen Lord; incorporates him into Christ who is Prophet, Priest, and King; and makes him a member of the People of the new Covenant, whose journey towards the heavenly Jerusalem is guided by the Holy Spirit.

3 – The demands of baptism evoke the free response of a person who undertakes to build his life on faith in Jesus Christ and on the hope of his second coming. The baptized person decides to adhere in love to the will of the Father as the rule of his life, and to put his intelligence, his resources of will, and his physical strength at the service of his brothers in order to carry out God's loving plan. Thus, as with all forms of Christian life, the religious life of the brother is governed by the ideal of the Gospel.

4 – As with all forms of the Christian life, the religious life of the brother is also apostolic. The vocation that every baptized person has to the apostolate springs from the mission that the Son receives from the Father, and that he communicates unceasingly, in the Holy Spirit, to the members of his body. The end of the apostolate is to bring God to men and men to God. It requires a deep awareness of man's participation in the life of God and his responsibility for the fulfillment of his plan for all men, as well as a realistic sensitivity to the needs of the world to which all members of the Church are sent. [p18]

(18) *Certain New Elements*

1 – As a layman consecrated in the religious life, the brother is called to lead a life that is more conformed to the risen Christ. His witness, which is complementary to that of the other Christian states, expresses the riches of the new life into which he entered when he received the sacraments of initiation. The brother hears this call with joy and

thanksgiving, convinced that this personal invitation is worth the gift of his whole life to God and his service.

2 – Religious consecration then, contains within it certain elements that differentiate it from the life of the layman who is not a religious:

There is a new relationship with the Lord, who invites the brother to follow him in a special way. There is a new and free response in faith to this invitation of the Holy Spirit, who is the origin of every vocation and without whom no vocation could survive.

3 – There is a new manner of life that is planned and lived openly according to the renewal of the world revealed in Christ. It is particularly by his voluntary celibacy, vowed through love, that the life of a religious makes more manifest the new covenant which unites Jesus Christ and his Church. This implies also a special type of presence to men, which is defined on the one hand by the depth of the charity of its commitment, and on the other hand by a certain separation from the world, an attitude dictated not by an contempt for the world, but rather by the intention to recall its transitory character.

4 – There is a new way of exercising the universal priesthood of all the faithful. In the public [p20] profession of vows, especially the vow of obedience, the brother unites himself to the dispositions of Christ in his paschal sacrifice. This offering is an act of worship, a special gift to God of all that one is and all that one does.

5 – There is a new kind of community life which manifests concretely the universal character of brotherhood as established by Christ. The religious relies not only on the bonds of nature but also on the power of the Holy Spirit, the living principle of love between men.

6 – There is also a new sense of mission and apostolic spirit for the work which the Church entrusts to the brothers to be carried out in her name (PC, 8). In serving mankind and building a world that is more habitable, a brother labors for the construction of the City of God in its ultimate form. His religious consecration frees him to be more completely available for the work, enables him to undertake it in a more effective manner and tends to increase his motivation for such apostolic action.

7 – There is a new, definitive and irrevocable commitment by which the religious places his entire life at the disposal of Christ and his members. In consecrating to Christ all the resources presently at his disposal, the brother abandons himself to the Lord for the whole of his life, giving himself up to Christ's love for better or for worse. Each day, especially during the Eucharistic celebration, the brother has the opportunity to renew the offering of himself to the Lord who is the principle of his original commitment and of its continuing vigor.

8 – The authenticity of the brother's consecration [p21] to God and to men is something that needs constant attention. In testing vocations it is important to take into account the matter of the apostolate of the Institute, which requires that a young man be willing to consecrate his life to the service of youth. Motivation of a sentimental nature is hardly adequate, any more than motivation that springs from an interest in the work alone, or a false conception of the religious life as little more than a haven of security.

## COMMUNITY LIFE

(19) *Structures Are for Persons*

1 – The brother makes effective his total consecration to God and his service in the Church when he commits himself to the Institute. The Institute is the instrument of the religious consecration of its members. The public character of the profession received by the Superior manifests one of the ecclesial dimensions of the religious life. In the unceasing dialogue between the Lord who calls and man who responds, the Institute holds an essential place. When the brother enters religion to seek God and serve his kingdom, he expects that the congregation will help him in this search and service. This it does by using every effort to help each brother in his personal way to God.

2 – Thus rules and structures are not established simply that they be kept, but their purpose is the service of persons. They guarantee to each brother the liberty of living his relationship with God in the perspective of his faith, hope and love, [p22] which is renewed continually by an authentic life of personal and community prayer. Rules and structures of government serve as reminders of the demands of the renunciation and self-forgetfulness necessary for community life. The brother in turn respects these rules and structures in his concern for the common good and recognizes that they are an integral part of the religious life.

(20) *Spirit of Community Life*

1 – In consecrating himself to the service of God in the Institute, the brother associates himself with other baptized persons who have responded to the same call of Christ; it is in community that he undertakes to live this new life in Christ. In the early days of the Institute the vows pronounced by the brothers manifested their personal consecration to God in a community established for a specific service directed to the kingdom of God. In our day the formula of the vows still underlines with remarkable vigor the will to live in community. This invites the Institute to study and put into practice the community character of the religious consecration of its members and of the vows that give it expression.

2 – In community life the brother can find his personal fulfillment according to the divine plan inherent in the nature of man, for the human person can realize and fulfill himself only in so far as he opens himself to others; "God has willed that all men should constitute one family and treat one another in the spirit of brotherhood" (GS, 24).

3 – Moreover the community life of the brothers who have each responded to a special call of the Lord gives witness that God chooses men [p23] "not just as individuals, but as members of a certain community," and that "it has pleased God to make men holy and save them not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges him in truth and serves him in holiness" (GS, 32; LG, 9).

4 – The brother meets God to whom he has consecrated himself when he opens himself and gives himself to his brothers in community. In listening to them with faith, he hears God speaking to him; in loving and serving them, he loves and serves Christ; in seeking the common good and in submitting for this purpose to the superior, whose function it is to make this clear, it is God himself whom he obeys.

5 – In community the brothers gather together to listen to God. They help each other to understand what he addresses to them through the mediation of daily events.

Together they examine the quality of their response and strive to remedy their insufficiencies.

6 – In community the brothers speak together of God and his kingdom. True community life gives rise spontaneously to interchanges regarding the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who give to the life of each brother its meaning in relation to his apostolic commitment and his educational responsibilities.

7 – Times of work as well as of leisure are opportunities in which the authenticity of the community spirit should be evident. The apostolic activity of the brother is not an individual occupation carried out independently of the community. It is through the community that the brother [p24] actively participates, according to his aptitudes, in the educational work of the Institute, a work at once human and Christian.

8 – It is evident that community dialogue in all its forms is a privileged instrument of individual conversion and fraternal union. Each one should contribute to its issue in practical conclusions. The superior finds here one of his important roles, which is to bring the community to decision and to make authentic judgments with reference to the nature and the mission of the Institute.

9 – In community the brothers pray together to God to whom they are consecrated. Together they invoke the Holy Spirit, they thank the Father for his love manifested in Jesus Christ, for his greatness and goodness manifest in creation, in history, in the works of man, in the life of the Church, in the Virgin Mary and in the saints.

10 – The Eucharist which the brothers regularly celebrate together is at once the source and the summit, each day renewed, of community life, for which Christ is both the foundation and the goal. He is present in the Eucharistic assembly of the brothers; they listen together to his Word which unites them more intimately in faith; by him and with him they raise to the Father their thanksgiving and their supplication; in his sacrifice they offer themselves and the work they carry out for his kingdom; from communion with his glorious body they draw a renewal of fraternal love and a greater readiness to serve the youth to whom they are sent.

## (21) *The Community and the Institute*

The community of the brothers extends beyond [p25] the limits of the house in which they live. The district is a community and so also is the entire Institute. For this reason the brothers are particularly sensitive to the bonds that unite them with those brother who suffer persecution and the destruction of their work.

## APOSTOLIC PURPOSE

### (22) *Essentially Apostolic Vocation*

1 – Religious consecration and community life do not include all that is to be said about the vocation of the religious brother. The Institute exists in the Church to work for the salvation of men and so procure the glory of God. In the one act, Saint John Baptist de La Salle established the brothers as apostles and religious. While seeing to it that the schoolmasters were aware of the apostolic dimension of their work, he led them to offer themselves wholly to the Lord who employed them in his service. The spirit of the

Institute is one, although it is expressed in two dimensions: faith makes the brothers attentive to the design of God for the world; it blossoms into zeal which sustains and unceasingly renews their commitment to the service of the members of Christ.

2 – The purpose of the Institute is apostolic. For its members apostolic action is of the very nature of the religious life (PC, 8).

3 – The missionary awareness and apostolic love by which the brothers "strive to associate themselves with the work of redemption and to spread the kingdom of God" (PC, 5), is an integral [p26] part of their consecration. The renewal of the Institute requires that all of its members reanimate in themselves the spirit of zeal in the light of the Council and the teaching of the Founder, especially in his *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*.

4 – The brother has been the object of a special mission from God. He becomes a more dedicated worker in God's loving plan to seek out and recover those who have gone astray. Because his religious consecration associates him more closely with Christ, the brother participates more fully in Christ's mission: "the Son of Man is come to seek and save that which is lost" (Lk 19, 10). Entry into the Institute unites a man more completely to the Church, and ought therefore to lead him to share more fully its missionary zeal. When the brothers associate themselves together and live in community, they stimulate and help one another to procure the glory of God through the salvation of men.

### (23) *Needs of Youth*

1 – The Institute will find in its attentiveness to today's youth and their need for salvation an indispensable source of renewal to which the Council invites them.

2 – These needs are not less urgent than they were at the time of the foundation of the Institute. The youth of today are the hope of the Church, but they are also one of its major anxieties.

3 – The community effort to recognize and understand the problems of the youth of our time and to respond by a generous commitment is among the first of the objectives of the Institute.

[p27]

### (24) *Missionary Vocation*

1 – In response to a major need of our time, the Church is renewing her awareness of her missionary vocation and accomplishing it more effectively. She wishes to announce the Gospel to all men; she seeks to be present to all civilizations. To affirm today the apostolic character of the Institute is also to proclaim its missionary character. It is not, of course, exclusively missionary, but it has been established to "bring the means of salvation within the reach" (MTR, 193, 3) of youth who are deprived of educators and whose evangelization has been neglected.

2 – This first intention which determined the very existence of the Institute has to be transplanted into a generous missionary impetus. The Council invites us to take this orientation resolutely. As with all other congregations engaged in the active life, now is the time "sincerely to ask ourselves in the presence of God whether we cannot broaden

our activity in favor of expanding God's kingdom among the nations" at the expense of "leaving to others certain ministries" (AG, 40).

## INTEGRATION OF RELIGIOUS CONSECRATION, COMMUNITY LIFE, AND THE APOSTOLATE

### (25) *Integration in the Apostolate*

1 – It is not true to say that the exercise of the apostolate is in opposition or harmful to the religious consecration. On the contrary, the apostolate is for the brother a necessary expression of his consecration to the Lord and a means to live it well. Apostolic tasks are religious because God wants them. In devoting himself courageously to the apostolate the brother accomplishes the will of the Lord who calls him. These tasks are religious because the brother finds Christ in the students to whom he is sent, particularly in the poor. They are religious because they realize the divine plan by contributing to the development of persons and by preparing them to welcome the Good News of salvation. They are religious because their final end is to prepare for God a people who will be adorers in spirit and truth.

2 – The brother ought to have no fear of losing God when he goes among the young to serve them (Mk 10, 44), nor of being estranged from Christ when he spends himself for men (II Cor 12, 15). On the contrary, the fulfillment of the authentic apostolate is a source for him of spiritual growth; in listening to men he disposes himself to listen more faithfully to the Word of God; in forgetting himself, he allows Christ to grow in him; in spending himself disinterestedly without counting the cost, his heart becomes that of a poor man. Apostolic action degenerates into empty activity or into self-seeking only when one loses the ability to see the call of God in the real needs of the world. It is the awareness of these needs that leads the brother to give himself to prayer, to turn always more and more to God who alone is capable of building his kingdom.

3 – Accordingly, throughout the entire process of formation it is of the utmost importance that the apostolic spirit be engendered, fostered, and brought to maturity. All formation should have an apostolic dimension, both in the teaching [p29] given and the apostolic activities organized by the community. Formation to a life of prayer leads the brothers to direct attention to God who will enlighten and purify their apostolic zeal. Their apostolic zeal in turn will awaken and sustain the impulse towards God.

4 – Community life is more firmly established and more effectively renewed to the extent that the brothers work together for the achievement of a common objective, the building up of the kingdom of God. The communion of minds becomes more intimate, the spirit of prayer and life of faith is deepened, when the members are more aware of their apostolic mission. Fidelity in the common search to serve the will of God through the needs of man builds day by day a community capable of responding to that will. At the same time this common effort to respond strengthens the community and enables it to see more clearly the signs of God present in the world. The reference of everything to the common mission makes it possible for a community to avoid the risk of becoming enclosed within itself, of suffocating in the pettiness of small internal problems which threaten even the most regular communities if they are not constantly renewed in apostolic zeal.

(26) *Integration in Renewed Consecration*

1 – Conversely, the brother's consecration will stimulate and sustain his apostolate. By his vow, and above all by his celibacy, the brother renders himself more available for the service of men, especially for an unconditional dedication to the poor. An open and positive formation will make it possible to understand and to live this integration [p30] of consecration and apostolate. The brother will then be able to bring an emotional maturity and a sense of realism to his apostolate, rather than an attitude of self-satisfaction or timid isolation. His apostolic life will be more evangelical and more community minded. He will be able to extend himself confidently in the role of animator to the Christian laity, helping them achieve a better grasp of their responsibilities as men and as Christians.

2 – Within the People of God the brothers are called, as are other religious, to exercise the function of witness, investing it with a specific character. They are signs of the action and the presence of the Spirit of God in our own day; signs of the present reality of the new world inaugurated by Christ and announced by the word of the Church; signs of the power of the Risen Lord who grants to sinful men the power to respond to the God who calls them; signs of a renunciation which does not destroy their human dignity, their love of earthly life, or their readiness to serve men, but rather makes them less self-centered in their activities, more all-embracing in their charity, more available in their service (LG, 44).

3 – Such a witness is more necessary than ever in our scientific and technical world, in which man wishes in some way to touch realities in order to believe them. It is advantageous that this witness be given by men who are not estranged by their consecration from participating in the life of the world. The brothers are called to bear the witness of their total consecration to God at the very heart of their educational activity. Religious consecration, then, does not disparage the realities [p31] of this world, but points to the foundation of their values in the divine act of creation and in their eschatological destiny. The brother's witness, then, is a kind of invitation to break through the limitations of time.

4 – True community life constitutes a living sign of the central reality that it is the brother's mission to announce. The love that God has shown to men in Jesus Christ becomes the principles of unity among them: "That they may be one that the world may believe" (John 17, 21). This is why a community of brothers must be built upon faith, that its very existence give witness to the God whom the brothers have been sent to reveal by their teaching.

**CONCLUSION: THE MYSTERY OF THE PERSON  
TRANSCENDS ACTIVITIES AND INSTITUTIONS**

(27) 1 – The brother's commitment to his apostolic mission engages fully his consecration to God. Yet the religious consecration which the brother lives at the very heart of his apostolic activities is not confined to any one of them. Consecration reaches its full expression in the mystery of the personal relation each one has with God. It is, after all, a characteristic of the person to transcend his activity. It is important, then, that

the brother rise above his activity, and regularly renew his awareness of the meaning of his life in the eyes of God.

2 – The Institute and every community, therefore will consider each brother in the totality of his person and not simply in terms of the apostolic work he does. The community should provide the opportunity to develop the special talents of [p32] each of its members; it should respect as well their personal spiritual qualities. Each brother, for his part, in devoting himself entirely to the common mission, can be assured that it is in giving that he receives, and in losing himself that he finds his salvation.

[p33]

## CHAPTER VI SERVICE OF THE POOR THROUGH EDUCATION

(28) 1 – The service of the poor through education is a work of preference for us as Brothers of the Christian Schools. This is made clear by the sense of unity among men in the world today, by the appeals that have been made by the Second Vatican Council and recent popes, by the fact of our religious vocation which dedicates us in a special manner to the imitation of Christ, and by fidelity to the specific intentions of our Founder.

2 – The General Chapter emphasizes that the apostolate with the poor is an integral part of the finality of the Institute. This orientation should be kept in mind whenever there is question of a new foundation, or the evaluation of an institution already in existence, or the planning of the formation that will be provided for the young brothers. Fidelity to this aspect of the living spirit of the Founder can give new motivation to the apostolate by stressing the idea of unselfish service. This would provide a fresh approach to the Christian understanding of poverty.

3 – Although the Institute as a whole is directly concerned with the service of the poor, it is not the role of the General Chapter to pronounce on the details of particular situations in various parts of the world to which the brothers [p34] may want to respond, or to determine the exact forms that their response should take. Different historical and sociological contexts provide opportunities for chapters on the local level to define clearly and according to a realistic plan how to engage personnel and structures in the service of the poor. It is the responsibility of each community and each brother to be as alert as possible to the conditions of the poor and to propose appropriate remedies to the local chapters. This applies not only to the problems close at home but also to the needs that exist throughout the world. Special attention could be given to the districts of the Institute that are in need of help.

(29) *Who Are the Poor?*

1 – To determine exactly who are the poor whom we serve today, two extreme positions must be avoided:

2 – a) First, a rigid interpretation which defines the poor only from an economic point of view. This puts much of the work we are doing under suspicion and neglects the possibilities inherent in it to be of some service to the poor. Fidelity to the service of the poor is not guaranteed merely by changing the field of our apostolate. This fidelity requires in the first place a change of attitude so that we can see, for example, in our

ordinary classes how many poor students there are and how we can help them or, even more importantly, how we can better direct our teaching of religion so that all our students become sensitive to the problems of the poor.

3 – b) Second, a loose interpretation which defines the poor and our work with them so broadly [p35] that we are encouraged to do nothing except maintain the status quo with an easy conscience. It is clear that there is a poverty of intelligence, a poverty of affection, and a poverty of faith; often the poorest of all are those who have no family, are in poor health, or cannot adjust socially. All of this calls for our study and educational service. But it remains no less true that these forms of poverty are generally rooted in the poverty which is material and economic.

4 – To avoid confusion concerning the meaning of poverty, a further distinction must be made between the 'poverty of frustration' and the 'poverty' which is a Christian attitude of mind. The word 'poverty' has at least these two rather different meanings.

5 – a) The poverty of frustration is generally a product of injustice, of physical and social evils, or of personal insufficiency or failure. This form of poverty consists in the impossibility of certain people, groups, or persons to obtain a standard of living which would allow them real freedom. They live in a kind of slavery from which they cannot free themselves because of the deprivation in which their material and cultural poverty holds them. Often experienced as an absence of love in one's life and accompanied by a struggle to survive, such a situation prevent the human person from developing according to his proper dignity. This poverty of frustration is an evil which we have to fight.

6 – b) The poverty which is a Christian attitude of mind, on the other hand, is a relationship with God and with other persons, based essentially [p36] on the attitude of free and full acceptance of the salvation which is given to us in Jesus Christ.

7 – The religious consecration made by a brother includes this Christian attitude of mind; his profession as an educator includes the mission to communicate this attitude to others.

### (30) *War Against Poverty*

1 – As a witness and a teacher of this Christian attitude of poverty, the brother is also called to wage war against the poverty of frustration.

2 – It is important not to confuse these two roles. The ultimate purpose of the brother's educational apostolate, for the poor as well as for all, is to communicate the Christian spirit. The poverty endured by those whom the brother instructs is not necessarily a favorable situation in which to accept the Gospel. Faith in Jesus Christ is a real comfort and a true inspiration for those who are suffering from material deprivation, but it would be false to make Christianity an endorsement of an established order opposed to the claims and efforts of those who are endeavoring to secure social justice.

3 – The service of the poor requires that a brother use the opportunities of his apostolate to oppose all forms of the poverty of frustration, to maintain a special concern for the full human development of those who suffer poverty, and to stimulate their desire to improve the milieu in which they live. Sensitivity to the needs of individual persons and a preference for an apostolate to serve the poor can never dispense with efforts to establish a more equitable social order which is aimed at the elimination of poverty. [p37]

(31) *Teaching the Poor*

1 – Concern for the poor ought to lead to the gradual modification of some of the programs we are now conducting and to the complete transformation of some of the others.

2 – The programs in which the brothers are engaged must be frequently examined to see that they correspond to real needs. Courses must be organized and educational standards set in such a way as to foster the human development of the poor, for whom the Institute has a special concern. Persons must be the center of educational systems rather than the prestige of some academic curriculum.

3 – The expansion of the brothers' teaching activity into pastoral or educational fields will always take cognizance of the needs of the poor.

4 – In some countries an effective democracy is endeavoring to provide the underprivileged with an access to normal human and cultural development. The brothers will gladly contribute to this public effort, giving special attention to those students who have difficulty adjusting to the normal scholastic program, or for whom family, vocational or social adaptation is a problem.

5 – In every situation the brothers will avoid any external manifestation that would scandalize the poor. The schools and communities should manifest an atmosphere of sincerity and simplicity which will prevent those who are poor from feeling ill at ease when they have occasion to enter them.

6 – The brothers will promote the self-improvement of the poor as a group. This requires the preparation of leaders who will not abandon [p38] their people but remain among them as a leaven to assist the less favored in their progress as a community. For example, the brothers can assist in the development of a dedicated laity among the working class, without whom there can be no true improvement of the conditions of labor; similarly, leaders are needed in the fields of government, social justice and scientific agriculture.

(32) *Training Other Social Classes*

1 – The orientation by preference of the Institute towards the education of the poor does not exclude the brothers from involvement with other social classes. They may even be sometimes obliged to this type of work because of special pastoral needs, or because of the demands of the total operation of the district. But when the brothers are not teaching the poor directly, it is important that they nonetheless be identified with concern for the poor and the work of the Institute in their favor. This identification will be assured by the brothers' efforts to develop a sensitivity to the problems of justice and peace through doctrinal and social teaching, in order that their students participate effectively in the mission to which the Church calls them in the world today. Christian love disregards social and racial barriers, since all men are in need of salvation (GS, 31).

2 – In their educational activity the brothers will take care to assist their students to become keenly aware of human suffering. They will strive to awaken a greater sense of the universal "brotherhood among individuals and peoples" (PP, 68); they will do all in their power that the young who live in favorable circumstances understand their [p39] responsibility to share their goods and their service with those who are in need, a

responsibility based on the union of all men in the world today and on a clear understanding of the meaning of Christianity (AA, 8 ).

(33) *Help for Those most in Need*

1 – There is also need for both individual and community effort, based on creative study, to discover new and adapted forms of education to meet the needs of those among the poor who are most neglected.

2 – The serious problems of mankind and the urgent appeals of the Church ought to guide this research and initiative. For this purpose the brothers will continually study the "signs of the times" as they become apparent in the daily evolution of events and conditions in the world; this is a function of a religious community (PC, 2d). Examples are found in the presence of widespread hunger and disease in the world; of racism, exploitation and violence; of war, the enslavement of whole nations, and the uprooting of people from their homes and countries; of broken homes, juvenile delinquency and mental illness.

3 – At this moment in history all of us must respond generously to the needs of the developing nations of the world and unite with the Church which brings "close attention particularly to the development of those peoples who are striving to escape from hunger, misery, endemic diseases and ignorance; for those who are looking for a wider share in human qualities" (PP, 1). The Institute must be particularly sensitive to the fact that in countries that are suffering from poverty, it is the [p40] youth who are most affected in their health, their culture and their development. Dedicated as we are to education, we are called to work more and more directly in the service of these peoples; "basic education is the primary object of any plan of development. Indeed, hunger for education is no less debasing than hunger for food: an illiterate is a person with an undernourished mind" (PP, 35).

4 – The General Chapter, then, invites all the brothers to be responsive to this need in the world today. It expresses a strong desire that in every region there will be many among us who will be qualified and anxious to serve the people of the developing countries, and that the local needs of each district will not prevent a response to other areas where the needs are urgent. The Chapter further calls on each brother and each community to participate actively in this service of the poor. It is of the utmost importance that from the center to every part of the Institute there be a bold and generous response to the immense suffering of men in the world today.

(34) *Preparation and Practical Orientation*

1 – The effective service of the poor calls for serious preparation on the part of those who would respond adequately to the persons and the milieu that are in need. A brother who makes this choice must be qualified by a thorough study of social, economic and political affairs which will help him understand the full dimension of the Christian struggle for the dignity of man.

2 – Every brother must make his own the decision of Saint John Baptist de La Sale to go [p41] to the poor "with the heart of a poor man." He will discover as he does so a deeper understanding of the meaning of his consecration to God. For the service of

the poor cannot be separated from the poverty which is a Christian attitude of mind, the humble acceptance of the gift of Christ, the response of love for Christ and for all men. It also requires a genuine preparation in the life of the poor, and effective union with them, a courageous personal and community practice of poverty that is consistent with the practical needs of professional life.

3 – An authentic service of the poor through the apostolate of education will contribute greatly to an integration and a deepening of the personal life of a brother, helping him to overcome more easily the difficulties encountered by those who have given their whole lives to Jesus Christ.

4 – Every level of authority, then, every dialogue and decision in the Institute, must be in harmony with this orientation, so that all our plans and work will show in deed and in truth our "return to the poor."

[p42]

## CHAPTER VII EDUCATION AND THE TEACHING OF RELIGION

(35) By the very fact that God calls the brothers to consecrate themselves to him, he sends them into the world to work for the spread of his kingdom. This is done through the apostolate of service in the Christian education of youth: "The end of this Institute is to give a Christian education to the young" (*Rule of 1705*).

### THE RELEVANCE OF THE APOSTOLATE OF EDUCATION

(36) *Contemporary Needs*

1 – Educating the young is no less important today than it was at the time the Institute was founded. The population explosion is everywhere increasing the ratio of the young in proportion to the total population. Young people today are attending school in greater numbers and for longer periods of time. They compose a special sociological group that is characterized by a common outlook and group consciousness. They think, judge and react in a way that is peculiar to them. They represent a force in society with a sociological, political and economic influence that increases every day. As far as the Church is concerned, this [p43] group provides a true missionary opportunity, since the young are for the Church a source both of hope and anxiety.

2 – The importance that we now attach to young people only serves to underscore how detrimental is the shortage of educators who can serve them with unselfish love and genuine competence. When they do not have adequate guidance from the adult world, the young tend to close themselves off from the rest of society. They revolt, they are corrupted and fall prey to ideologies that are more interested in exploiting them than teaching them to merge into adult society or preparing them to be of service to humanity.

3 – The right to an education is generally recognized and the means for achieving a suitable formation and a degree of culture are many. Yet, forty percent of the world's population is still illiterate. That is why the Council has called upon Christians to work generously in the various branches of education, to fight intelligently and courageously against illiteracy. The Council stresses also the right of all baptized Christians to a

Christian education. All of these factors highlight the importance for today's world of an Institute composed of dedicated men who have joined together to serve their fellowmen in the Christian education of youth (GEM, 1 and 2).

(37) *A True Apostolate*

1 – This mission of the Institute is an apostolate: it is directed towards the eventual salvation of the world. In their work of education the brothers have as their goal the realization of that transformation of the world which was begun by the [p44] Incarnation and the Paschal mystery of Our Lord. They are determined to make their contribution to the growth of the people of God.

2 – This is a pivotal teaching that the Founder gives in his *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*. As Christian educators, the brothers are "God's laborers" who are working out his great plan of love; "ambassadors of Jesus Christ" for the fulfillment of his great mystery; the "agents of the Holy Spirit" who build up his kingdom. For the students to whom they are sent the brothers are "the ministers of God and the dispensers of his mysteries."

## THE PRIMACY OF CATECHESIS

(38) *Purpose and Requirements*

1 – The brothers make known the divine mysteries by exercising the ministry of the Word of God. The brothers are catechists by vocation; this is their "principal function." The Council, too, has called attention to the primacy of the ministry of the Word and the role the catechist has in the apostolic activity of the Church.

2 – Catechesis makes a baptized Christian more conscious of his involvement in the mystery to which baptism has introduced him. It makes more clear the Word of God, giving the Christian deeper insight into the meaning of his existence and teaching him to make of his life a response to this call. Catechesis leads a man to understand the world and to contribute to its growth in history viewed in the light of God's loving plan. Catechesis [p45] challenges a person to consecrate himself in love to the service of his fellowmen in order to make the world more livable and so give reason to hope for its eventual salvation. Catechesis introduces Christians to an active and intelligent participation in the liturgy of the Church. It initiates them in a concrete way into a Christ-like life of justice, charity and liberty which is activated by the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of men. Catechesis finds practical ways to prepare Christian missionaries to witness by word, by work and by prayer to the divine life as a living reality within them, so that it will overflow into all mankind (GEM, 4). Finally, catechesis utilizes sound personal guidance so as to assist every baptized Christian to find his proper place in the service of men and of the Church, be it as a lay apostle, or in vocation to the priesthood or the religious life.

3 – The General Chapter calls upon the brothers in a very special way to undertake the evangelization and catechesis of those among the young who are the most neglected, especially adolescents. The Chapter expresses the hope that the brothers will collaborate with diocesan and regional catechetical institutes as well as any other

organizations that provide opportunities for catechists to be trained, or to have their training brought up to date (AG, 17). It invites the brothers to follow up the catechetical renewal that was begun in the Institute several years ago and to which Circular No. 371 (February 2, 1962) gave official approval and encouragement.

4 – In the exercise of the ministry of the Word of God, the person of the minister has an important place. By his life, his conduct, his professional [p46] competence, his human qualities and the way he relates to people the brother is called to give witness to the reality of the transformation proclaimed in the Gospel which he teaches. The exercise of the catechetical ministry to the young is for the brother a permanent incentive to live more authentically his religious consecration.

5 – The wealth of the Institute is nothing less than the brothers who compose it; its apostolic effectiveness depends on their preparation. Accordingly, it becomes urgent that the means be provided to permit them to work with confidence and optimism. In particular, special care is needed to provide the training in Scripture and theology that is indispensable for their mission. The same is true of a solid preparation for catechesis, including an introduction to contemporary methodology. At the same time, my approach to catechetical methods have value only insofar as it is based on a knowledge of psychology, sociology, and anthropology; nowadays every catechist must be well versed in the human and social sciences. Furthermore, catechesis belongs in the larger framework of the Church's pastoral effort. There can be no truly efficacious catechesis unless the brothers learn to collaborate with the clergy and the laity in the work of educating young people in the faith. All this shows the dimensions of training that must be given to the young brothers. It is equally important to provide for the brothers who are already engaged in the apostolate ample opportunities and concrete means to bring up to date the training they received years ago and to adapt it to modern needs. [p47]

### (39) *Difficulties in Modern Catechesis*

1 – In practice, however, circumstances in the world today often render the ministry of the Word more difficult than in times past. Catechesis as such is impossible in some of the concrete situations in which the brothers live and work. This is often the case in so-called mission areas, but it is even true sometimes in Christian countries where many students, even though they have been baptized, have not really accepted the faith. As a matter of fact, Christian doctrine is not merely some objective body of knowledge that can be handed down to anyone. In the technical sense of the term, catechesis is possible only where there are already believers.

2 – It seems to be true that we shall be exercising our apostolate more and more in an environment that is pluralistic. Not all of those who come to a Christian school are necessarily looking for an education that is explicitly Christian. A keen sensitivity to the requirements of religious freedom obliges us not to impose indiscriminately the same catechesis on all of our students, especially when they are more mature.

3 – More fundamentally, contemporary thought tends to consider the Christian message irrelevant, especially when it appears to deal largely with abstractions, to be imposed by external authority, or to be arrived at by a system of deduction from principles without any relation to the concrete life-situation of real men. Modern man begins with the concrete facts of his own experience. Furthermore, he is less interested in

preserving the past than in building for the future. He is hardly touched at all by a catechesis which [p48] strikes him as nothing more than the transmission of a system of thought from the past and the constant repetition of traditional formulas.

4 – These difficulties invite us to search together for answers in a clear-sighted and courageous fashion. We do not renounce in any sense our determination to proclaim Jesus Christ; we remain convinced that young people today need the Gospel message and that they are capable of understanding it. In full respect for their freedom, we recognize the vast differences to be found among the young in their attitude toward religion and in their understanding of Christ. Yet we realize, too, how important it is to satisfy those who are starving for a more profound explanation of their faith and to give honest answers to the many questions they are asking about the meaning of their lives.

## HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AS A PREPARATION FOR CATECHESIS

### (40) *Lasallian Traditions*

1 – These difficulties are such as to lead us to review the fundamental insights at the heart of the Lasallian tradition and to make better use of the riches they contain.

2 – From the beginning the Institute recognized the central place that catechesis has in the apostolate of the brother. However, this never led the Institute either to dissociate the teaching of religion from the rest of education, or to devote itself to catechesis alone. Almost by instinct the living tradition of the Institute has integrated faith in Jesus Christ into the daily lives of the students. [p49] There has always been this concern to tie together the work of evangelization with growth in education and culture.

3 – Lasallian catechetics concerns itself with persons; it respects the individuality of each person; it begins by taking into account the character, the social situation, and the personal vocation of each student. Students have to be brought to the point where they can take over progressively the work of their own formation. A catechesis in the tradition of the Institute will accomplish this by taking into account the interests of the students and by attaching more importance to their real life situations than to elaborate programs. In this way the students will be prepared realistically for the kind of life they will lead in the world; they will become part of the total society in which they live; they will be capable of serving the community of man.

4 – In the words of the Founder, the brother is with the students from morning to evening. This means that Saint de La Salle conceived of education in terms of a fraternal relationship between the teacher and the student. The brother is totally immersed in the life of the students: he shares their interests, their worries, their hopes. He is not so much a schoolmaster instilling a set of teachings as he is an older brother who helps them to be aware of what the Spirit is speaking within themselves, what their own abilities are, and little by little how they may discover their true place in the world.

5 – The catechesis given by the brothers is rooted in life and is ordained to life. Before spelling it out in words, the brother is called upon to [p50] live the Gospel message that he is going to preach. Christ is revealed as the Savior and servant of men by the very fact that the catechist makes himself a servant of youth, preparing them to be more alert, more responsible and more truly human. The brother reveals the religion of love by giving to his students an idea of what it means to experience a love that is

sensitive, virile and unselfish. The Word of God does not fall out of the sky in an abstract way on anonymous individuals. It always comes as a way of integrating, or enlightening, or deepening some human experience. It is not in words or in books that young people meet most forcibly the God who calls them by name, but rather in the person of the brother who catechizes them.

(41) *Contemporary Insights*

1 – The context of the world today makes it possible for us to discover a new dimension in these original insights; it allows us to see new ways in which the brothers can exercise the ministry of the Word of God, even when it is not possible explicitly to announce the Gospel.

2 – The brother often sees himself constrained for all intents and purposes to limit his activity to the general education of his students, and sometimes for long periods of time. In this case there is no reason to think that he is unfaithful to the apostolic mission the Church has given him. The act of faith is a free response of man to the Word of God. When one works for the education of free persons, he is already disposing them to receive God's Word. It is true to say that the brother exercises an apostolate whenever he [p51] truly educates. It is apostolic to awaken in students a serious attitude towards life and the conviction of the greatness of man's destiny; it is apostolic to make it possible for them, with intellectual honesty and responsibility, to experience the autonomy of personal thought; it is apostolic to help the students to use their liberty to overcome their own prejudices, preconceived ideas, social pressures, as well as the pressures that come from disintegration within the human person; it is apostolic to dispose students to use their intelligence and their training in the service of their fellowmen, to open them to others: to teach them how to listen and to try to understand, to trust and love; it is apostolic to instill in students a sense of trustworthiness, brotherhood, and justice.

3 – The teaching of the Council encourages the brother to find God's work in whatever he does for the advancement of human civilization and culture. It is in this view of Christ and of his Body that God created man and his universe. To open man up to the possibilities of life and knowledge and love is already a step in the building of God's kingdom. This is not achieved by the Church alone, but also by work in the world. A man is given the means whereby he can better cultivate the earth, so that it produces fruit and becomes a better place for the society in which he lives, and is brought to a certain self-knowledge and self-mastery; by that very fact the image of God in man is perfected and it becomes possible for man to achieve his God-given vocation to be lord of the earth. To open the mind of man to the world and to life, to the wonder and beauty of nature, to the diversity and richness of art, to the conquests [p52] of science and technology, to a deep thought and reflection, to the varieties of civilizations, to the joys of friendship and of giving oneself to others; by all these things man is led to recognize "the Word of God who, before he became flesh in order to save all things and to sum them up in himself, was in the world already as the true light that enlightens every man" (GS, 57)

(42) *Primacy of the Word of God*

1 – Such a vision does not minimize in any way the importance of an explicit catechesis which the brother provides whenever it is possible. It is the Word of God that reveals the ultimate meaning and the infinite value of human existence in the same way that the mystery of man is truly understood only in terms of the mystery of the Word made flesh (GS, 22, 1). An exclusively human humanism would be an inhuman humanism (PP, 42).

2 – In order to accomplish effectively the work that God is doing in the world today, it is important that the brother learn in prayer and faith to recognize the word that God is speaking in our times. Granted that the service of the young in the total work of education does accomplish this work of God, it is also true that the personal relationship of the teacher with God will be a test of the authenticity of this service.

[p53]

## CHAPTER VIII THE EDUCATIONAL WORK OF THE BROTHERS: THE NEED FOR RENEWAL

(43) From the beginning the brothers devoted themselves to the Christian education of youth in various ways, but the school has always been the principal work of their apostolate, the one in which the greatest number have been involved.

### THE VALUE OF THE SCHOOL

(44) 1 – The General Chapter then declares that education through the school constitutes the foremost apostolic work of the brothers: "The end of the Institute is to give a Christian education to children, and it is for this purpose that the brothers keep schools" (*Rule of 1705*). Even today the apostolate of the school holds this rank in the work of the brothers, not merely because of a long-standing tradition, but because of the intrinsic bond which links the school with the ultimate purpose of the Institute.

2 – "It is a fact bearing on the very person of man that he can come to an authentic and full humanity only through culture" (GS, 53, 1). It is in view of its cultural value that the school is a privileged instrument of education. In addition, "by his very nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither [p54] live, nor develop his potential" (GS, 12, 4). The school is one of the principal experiences of life whereby children and adolescents learn how to participate in human society.

3 – The Christian school promotes both the exercise and objectives of the explicit catechesis that it normally includes. By its total atmosphere the school can dispose the students to understand the Word of God. The day-to-day human experiences and the discovery of the secrets of the universe are presented there with their own inherent values. This in turn gives rise to questions about the ultimate meaning of things that are charged with hidden and unnoticed potential. Moreover, the Christian school is an opportunity for the immediate application of the teachings of catechesis. There the students experience true community and the value of prayer. They can be introduced to the liturgical mysteries. They can be taught the concrete implications of the freedom of the children of God and the apostolic responsibilities that are assumed with the sacrament of baptism.

4 – It is true that in many places today the Catholic school system is being questioned. It is not enough simply to reaffirm the principle that the Christian school has an apostolic value. This will not satisfy everyone, including many of those who have given their lives to this form of education and who now wonder whether such a school has any real effect, or indeed, any future at all.

5 – Every period of important change in the history of civilization has known similar crisis. The solution, however, was never to suppress the school, or abandon it, but rather to emphasize its renewal. Today the Institute is committed to make [p55] its contribution to the rebirth of the Christian school, to help create such a school capable of preparing men for the twenty-first century. The General Chapter is pleased to take cognizance of the desire of the brothers, evident throughout the entire Institute, for this renewal of our educational apostolate. All are invited to participate actively in this movement, committing themselves with confidence and courage to the new directions necessary to answer the needs of youth today. Insofar as such a renewal is undertaken and pursued with intelligence and perseverance, the importance of the school will become more evident than in the past, and the relevance of the education provided in the Christian school will be felt more than ever before. But the implications of such a renewal are many and complex.

## THE NEED FOR RENEWAL OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

### (45) *Relevance to Contemporary Culture*

1 – The renewal of the school calls for relevance to contemporary culture.

2 – First, it is important that the brothers' school at every level be characterized by quality education, a truly professional spirit and genuine service to students and society.

3 – The school must be aware of the tremendous cultural changes of our times and consequently update itself in its objectives, programs and methodology: in its *objectives*, by imparting to the students more than mere book knowledge, and by emphasizing instead the development of [p56] the powers of observation, imagination, reasoning and discrimination: in its *curriculum*, by keeping in mind the present importance of physical sciences, the need for sociology, anthropology, the behavioral sciences, modern languages and the significance of the mass media and increased leisure time: in its *methodology*, by highlighting research and creativity rather than rote memorization, by using the best audio-visual materials, and by taking advantage of the more recent developments in pedagogical techniques. In this way the school will play a specific and important part in the total process of education by enabling a man to profit better from other communications media, or by providing a completeness and synthesis to all that he learns.

4 – One of the fundamental functions of the school is to promote "the vitality and growth of a new culture without sacrificing fidelity to the living heritage of tradition." It favors "increased cultural exchange" in such a way that "it does not undermine ancestral wisdom, or jeopardize the uniqueness of each people" (GS, 56, 2, 3). For this purpose schools now emphasize a more dynamic approach to the teaching of history and the masterpieces of the past. In this same vein the school today stresses training in sensitivity, the ability to form judgments and the development of a critical mind. This is important in

a world in which discernment in the use of mass-media is required to maintain one's personal liberty in the face of all the propaganda that abounds. The mission of the school is more indispensable than ever in forming men who can think. In an atmosphere of quiet, study, and reflection it introduces the person to [p57] the life of the mind, to an intuition of and reverence for the inner reality of things, a sense of the sacred and a response to values, an awareness of the limitations and sinfulness of man, and an acknowledgment of the reality of the invisible world.

5 – Education to the faith must also renew itself in terms of the modern world. In a secular society catechesis linked to cultural formation can provide a needed purification for religious thought by ridding it of magical notions of the world and superstitious practices. In a world in which man is tempted to confine his vision to this life and to think of Christianity as useless or dangerous because it is inhuman, catechesis can point out that man realizes himself only reaching beyond himself and that "men are not deterred by the Christian message from building up the world, or impelled to neglect the welfare of their fellows. They are, rather, more stringently bound to do these things" (GS, 34, 3).

(46) *Concern for Persons and Community*

1 – The renewal of the school calls for great attention to persons and to the community life of the school.

2 – The brothers' school, then, will be characterized by a concern for each student. Modern techniques of psychology and pedagogy make it possible for the individuality of each one to be known and respected. This concern encompasses the whole person: his family background, his temperament, his strong points, his special interests; he is more than just another student who happens to attend the school. The brother will endeavor [p58] to discover and develop more and more the special talents of his students, not concentrating on short-comings and mistakes. Thus the school will be a living community where young people, coming from different social and family backgrounds, educate one another by mutual understanding and respect, openness of mind in dialogue, acceptance of the uniqueness and limitations of each, growth in the spirit of service, and the practice of justice and fraternal charity.

3 – To give a living example of the true meaning of community, the brothers' school will strive to promote the students' personal freedom, encouraging them to assume the responsibility for their own formation. Education to freedom is achieved by a cordial relationship between faculty and students, by intelligent school discipline, by the very approach to teaching itself. The experience of freedom is absolutely indispensable to training in responsibility: students need to assume an active part in the life of the school itself, its discipline, and all its operations. Work in small groups will be preferred in order to instill self-confidence, a sense of responsibility and the spirit of collaboration. This will also minimize the problem of undue conflict and selfish ambition. The school will be molded into community only through a faculty rich in the diversity and the unity of its members. For this reason the brothers work closely with lay teachers, who make a unique contribution through their knowledge of the world, of family life and of civic affairs. Lay teachers should be completely involved with the whole life of the school: with catechesis, apostolic organizations, extra-curricular activities, and administrative [p59] positions. Similarly, the brothers will do everything possible to facilitate the ministry of the priest in

the religious spirit of the school as a community, and in the Christian education of the students.

4 – More than in any other domain, education to freedom is required when there is a question of instruction in the faith. The Christian school should be the freest of institutions; it suggests without coercion the infinite possibilities of life according to Christ; it announces the good news of the Gospel to each one insofar as he is ready for it, and with absolute respect for the freedom of all. To those who have heard and accepted the call of Jesus Christ, the teachers explain the Christian mysteries and work to develop the faith of the students and their Christian life.

(47) *Involvement with Life*

1 – The renewal of the school calls for an openness to the life of the world and of the Church.

2 – The work of education is achieved by many influences over the course of a lifetime. The modern school therefore endeavors to collaborate with every educational agent. The brothers work closely with parents, who are the first in responsibility for their children's education, keeping in mind that they can learn much from parents as well as give information to them. The brothers seek to establish friendly ties with other educators, particularly those who are concerned with the activities of the young in their moments of leisure. The school cannot burden itself with everything, but it can ally itself with structures that already [p60] exist for the proper use of leisure. In certain cases it may become necessary for the teachers to take charge of these leisure activities. The brothers can also work closely with parish priests, chaplains of Catholic Action groups, or with laymen in charge of apostolic organizations directly influencing the life of the young. Thus the school becomes a focal point where educational agencies can meet and engage in dialogue for the greater good of the students. Such openness to the realities of the contemporary world can be furthered in particular instances by having the school make its facilities and equipment readily available to the public of the local community for adult education and youth activities.

3 – The Christian school endeavors through its program of instruction to prepare its students for their professional life, for marriage and its responsibilities, for service to society and the Church. It makes known to them the great needs and aspirations of modern man. It encourages them to be competent in today's world and to work closely with all men of good will, especially with unbelievers, for the welfare of mankind.

4 – One way for the brothers to get to know better the real situation and the real needs of a world in evolution is to take full advantage of a continuing dialogue with the graduates of our schools, both those who have recently finished school and those who have had long experience in the adult world. This makes it possible for the brothers to give to the students still in school an education that is more realistic and better adapted to the demands of modern life. Following the recommendation [p61] of Vatican II in this matter, the brothers consider it an integral part of their work in education to be concerned about the human and religious difficulties that their students encounter when they leave school. They will "continue to assist them with advice and friendship and also by establishing special groups genuinely inspired by the spirit of the Church" (GEM, 8). From an ecclesial point of view, this implies on the part of educators an unselfish

dedication that will respect the initiative and responsibility of laymen. It is in this spirit that the brothers offer to the graduates the support of professional competence and religious motivation. Special attention is due to the younger alumni who are in unfortunate financial circumstances or who have need of other support and encouragement. Alumni relations aim to help the graduates become actively involved in civil society, in the Church, and in movements appropriate to their age and station which foster an informed and responsible laity. In this way the important apostolate on behalf of the graduates of our schools will maintain a true harmony with out ultimate goals and our educational activity will enjoy greater efficacy.

(48) *New Requirements for the Training of Teachers*

1 – The renewal of the school calls for teachers who are prepared to meet the needs of modern man. "But let teachers realize that to the greatest possible extent they determine whether the Catholic school can bring its goals and undertakings to fruition" (GEM, 8). An Institute committed to the education of the youth of the world will contribute to the renewal of the school only to the [p62] degree that it emphasizes and develops the value of the teacher's vocation.

2 – The General Chapter notes with satisfaction the strong attachment of the brothers to the profession of teaching. This function assures them a particular role among the laity in the Church. It adds a new dimension to their religious life, since for them the exercise of the teaching profession is an integral part of their religious consecration. Their competency gives them a fundamental confidence, because it permits them to be at the service of others and guarantees their usefulness to society.

3 – The professional preparation of the brothers is, therefore, an indispensable requirement which must be given every possible consideration. Religious profession in no way dispenses with technical competence. The spirit of faith, far from substituting for professional or cultural qualifications, demands even greater respect for what is human: the realities of this world and those of faith find their origin in the same God.

4 – Those responsible, then, will guard against fearful attitudes and narrow pragmatism in the preparation of the brothers. Not only will they see to it that all will have the necessary professional and university degrees, but they will strive to have them receive an education as broad as possible, developing the particular talents of each. It is important that the young brothers have the time and the necessary means to acquire this basic education, without which the competence and effectiveness of their work would risk being compromised over the course of time. It is the [p63] responsibility of the young brothers to apply themselves wholeheartedly to prepare themselves for a teaching career. Likewise, it is an obligation for superiors to help the brothers in community to continue their education by providing the necessary means, whether by in-service training of periods of intensive study.

5 – The teaching profession requires by its very nature a broad experience with men and society. The training of young teachers must not, then, cut them off from the life of the men of our time, but must help them to participate deeply in it, according to their state and in view of their mission. The professional preparation of the brothers is not reduced simply to academic degrees and an intellectual excellence. It must provide "an

education in the prevailing manners of contemporary social life, and its characteristic ways of feeling and thinking" (PC, 18, 2).

6 – The community of brothers is the animating force of the school to which it gives life and direction according to its mission. It follows that the community not identify itself with the institution to the point of becoming its prisoner. If the brother is going to educate his students for life, it is necessary that the school itself not be the limit of his horizons, nor that it constitute the entirety of his existence. Consequently, the General Chapter invites superiors and regional and district chapters to respond to the desires of many brothers and to study prudently ways in which the community can become more independent of the school. This will guarantee a better apostolic service in and through the school. For the same reason the General Chapter invites all the communities [p64] to open themselves to the larger community of civil society and the Church.

7 – The formation and spirituality of the brother will prompt him to perceive and live his teaching career as the expression of his consecration as a lay religious. He will strive to understand and grasp the significance of his vows for his educational apostolate. He will call upon his faith by "being attentive to the way in which God speaks to the young of today" (Paul VI, speaking to the brothers on June 16, 1966). He will discover in his love for Christ and for his students the energy to renew - for their sake - the work of his own education, the development of his teaching skill, and the interest and joy he finds in life. The formation and the style of his religious life will tend to develop this "constant readiness to begin anew and adapt" (GEM, 5), demanded by the very nature of the teaching vocation. Finally, the meaning and the interpretation of the "separation from the world", which is part of the religious life, must be reconsidered: it cannot ignore the need for a real presence in the world, nor justify a lack of interest in the needs, anxieties and hopes of all mankind.

#### (49) *Reappraisal of our Educational Work*

1 – The renewal of the schools conducted by the brothers calls for a reappraisal of the policy for the opening of schools and of the nature of their programs. Without a sound policy in this regard the quality of the education provided by the brothers, as well as their own preparatory and continued education, becomes very difficult.

2 – It must be recognized that taking on too [p65] many commitments may result in an abbreviated or incomplete preparation for the young. For the brothers already teaching, such over-extension of our apostolic work means the impossibility of deepening and renewing the intellectual life; for the communities it causes difficulty in creating dialogue and reflection; for certain areas it results in the impossibility of giving sufficient attention to changing conditions and new opportunities. The General Chapter, then, urges the regional and district chapters to review the present state of their commitments and to make adaptations consonant with the Institute's purpose, which is not simply to maintain schools, but to work in the apostolate of education with the school as a privileged means.

3 – In this reappraisal it must be remembered that the influence of the Christian school will come more from quality and excellence than from mere numbers. The first objective, then, will not be to preserve existing schools, but to form excellent

communities staffed by qualified teachers in sufficient numbers to be the animating influence of a school.

4 – This option will sometimes oblige the Institute to change the character of programs already existing, to enter into joint projects with other teaching congregations, with diocesan or regional Catholic educational systems, and possibly to play a part in public education. The unsatisfied educational needs of the youth of the world forbid more than ever before any notion of withdrawal or isolation, much less any attitude of competition.

5 – The dynamism of an Institute becomes evident and is strengthened by the establishment [p66] of new work; each district is encouraged to achieve this development. Such endeavors, of course, must answer the real needs of today; for example, technical and professional education, advanced studies, remedial education, foundations on the behalf of the most neglected, or, following the traditions of the Institute, the work of teacher education in schools and training centers.

6 – In every case the decision to close, consolidate, or to open new schools must be made in the light of the total pastoral program of the various countries, according to plans that have been thoroughly prepared and guided by realistic possibilities and by the actual needs of the area. Attention will be given first of all to those places where there is the greatest lack of catechesis and general education.

#### WORK OF THE BROTHERS IN SCHOOLS NOT DIRECTED BY THEM AND IN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES APART FROM SCHOOLS

##### (50) *Teaching Outside of F.S.C. Schools*

Some brothers may be called upon to teach in schools or universities that are not conducted by the Institute, but by government agencies or private organizations. In these institutions the brothers hold teaching positions as individuals and in their own name. Such a contribution to education is certainly in accord with the purpose of the Institute. Brothers so engaged will be governed by the norms established by superiors and by local chapters and will give witness to the educational [p67] ideals which characterize the Brothers of the Christian Schools. They will also maintain membership in one of the communities of the Institute which will support them in their work and special interests.

##### (51) *Educational Work Apart from Schools*

1 – Apart from the school, or as an extension of it, the Institute has always provided for a variety of educational or apostolic activities. Today many of the brothers seem to desire a more determined openness on the part of the Institute to diversification in educational work and they expect the General Chapter to give clear direction in this matter.

2 – The questions put by the brothers on this subject are not contrived. Most of the time actual situations give rise to them. Sometimes the brothers find themselves in relatively permanent circumstances that make it impossible to maintain schools; sometimes they are prevented from any teaching at all. In some countries, because of the progress of socialization, it seems inevitable that the whole approach to Christian

education will have to be revised. New educational and apostolic needs are making themselves felt in many places; these will require new educational ideas, new teaching methods, new ways by which the Church can make her presence felt among the young. Millions of adults in the developing countries cannot read or write and millions of their children do not attend school. This very fact shows the need to find new educational methods that are different from those that have been used in the developed countries. Then again, many people [p68] also wonder how the Church can remain uninterested in the ever-increasing number of young Catholics who do not attend Catholic schools. It is incontestable that some brothers are being called by external circumstances and by personal desire to exercise the apostolate of education in these special areas.

3 – Needless to say, an unintelligent proliferation of different forms of the apostolate will involve certain dangers. There is the danger that the apostolate of the school will be abandoned despite the fact that this is the main work of the Institute and that its essential importance remains. There is the danger of scattering out forces. The Institute cannot do every possible good and it is better to have a solid core of activity than spend energy in every direction. There is perhaps also the danger of self-deception and individualism, the temptation to escape to something that seems to be easy.

4 – Nevertheless, it is the mind of the General Chapter that the Institute not limit the interpretation of its educational apostolate so as to refuse all apostolic activity unrelated to the school. Such a narrow point of view would not conform to the traditions of the Institute. It would run the risk of opposing the action of the Holy Spirit among us, and it would paralyze the very initiative that is capable of renewing the schools themselves.

5 – For this reason the General Chapter desires to help local and regional superiors to "discern the Spirit" by formulating certain criteria which would serve as guidelines for these new forms of the apostolate. It has confidence that the brothers will understand that there is no intention here of minimizing the importance of the school, nor of drawing up a list of apostolic activities which are not allowed in the Institute.

#### (52) *Criteria for These Activities*

1 – It is clear from the outset that all our apostolic activities should be consistent with the specific purpose of the Institute, that is, oriented in some way toward Christian education, especially of the poor. Similarly, these activities should foster a concern for the development of persons which is aimed ultimately at communicating the Word of God. In certain cases, the catechetical apostolate will be given preference: catechesis of the young outside the school, catechetical activity on a regional level, vocational work. Even in this case brothers will be careful to relate the day-to-day life of the young with their total education and with the Word of God. In other cases, the brothers will assume direction of educational activities in the broader sense of the word: training centers, residences for students or young men who are employed, movie clubs, centers for vocational and professional guidance. Care should be taken that these activities also be oriented to the communication of the message of the Gospel, with full respect for the freedom of the individual conscience.

2 – Those engaged in educational work apart from a school should do this work as members of a community and with the consent of their superior. They represent the

Institute; it is important that they think of themselves in this way, and be accepted and supported in their work by the other brothers. They should return regularly to this community [p70] to share its life and thought, to engage in dialogue with their brothers about their own work, and to manifest their interest in the work of the others. In this way the specific good of the individual contributes to the enrichment of all. Moreover, when it is appropriate, they will become known as brothers in the places where they work and so help establish a relationship between the brothers and other educators.

3 – It may often be advantageous to the cause of education of youth for a brother to hold a key position in educational administration, publishing, television, or even a trade union. Such positions have value for the individual and the Institute in providing an extended area of disinterested service.

4 – Superiors and brothers will see that the activities carried on apart from the school emanate from specific educational needs and not from a mistaken disregard for the value of the school itself, much less from an unfortunate experience with teaching, inadequate preparation, or poor school organization. Very often the school itself can become a center to bring together people not in school whether for evening classes, cultural activities, or friendly gatherings. Finally, the brothers will remember that instead of doing everything themselves, they can involve their students and alumni in some of these educational or apostolic activities (AA, 12).

5 – The training of the brother should regularly be directed to the fundamental apostolate of the school. If this formation is genuine and as comprehensive as it should be, it will be a sound [p71] initial preparation for all the different kinds of apostolate he may be called to exercise.

[p72]

## CONCLUSION

(53) 1 – At the end of this Declaration the General Chapter repeats its invitation to a renewal in depth. It addresses this call to the Institute as a whole, to regional and district chapters, and to each individual brother, whatever his assignment.

2 – Societies, like individuals, grow old and die once the habit inherited from the past outweigh the will to renewal. It is not easy to balance fidelity to the intuitions that sparked our origins and the requirements of life today. The destiny of the Institute is in the hands of the brothers. They must not expect those in authority to give ready-made solutions to the new problems that come from a world in evolution. It is up to each brother in the presence of God to start out along the path of spiritual conversion and determine to have a personal share in the great community work of renewal and adaptation. This is the price each must pay if the threat of stagnation is to be warded off and the Institute is to live in youth and vigor.

3 – The General Chapter is well aware of the difficulties, both present and future, that lie in the way of the renewal of the Institute. However, it reaffirms its confidence in the brothers and in their mission in the world today. It invites all to turn to the Holy Spirit, who renews the face of the earth; to Our Blessed Lady, whose motherly love cooperates in the generation and education [p73] of believers; to Saint John Baptist de La Salle, who derived the efficacy of his life and work from men from his faith and charity;

and to St. Benilde who, like so many other brothers before us, reminds us that God loves young people to the extent of providing them with saints.