



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE 48th GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS**

*Consistory Hall
Monday, 22 April 2024*

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers,

I welcome you on the occasion of your General Chapter. I greet the Superior and every one of you, and I express my closeness to all the Brothers throughout the world.

I give thanks to the Lord for the work of His Spirit, manifested in your charism, namely *the evangelization of children and the young through education*. This Chapter of yours comes in the wake of the bicentennial celebrations of the Institute, and offers you the opportunity to return to the fundamental insights that guided Venerable Jean-Marie de La Mennais and Father Gabriel Dashayes. Today, their work is present in several countries of the world, because they believed that everything is possible for those who entrust themselves totally to the Lord and put themselves at the service of the integral human development of each person. We must never forget where we come from and always keep in mind the motivations for our actions.

Dear brothers, you work in regions of the world where poverty, youth unemployment and social crises of every type are rife. I therefore urge you to be fathers for those to whom you are sent, fathers who reflect the loving and compassionate face of God. In a world in continual change, you generously put yourselves at the service of the young, attentive to their aspirations and at the same time always focused on Christ, the supreme rule of your life. Your vocation drives you to go

where others do not, in the periphery, towards people who form the category of the rejected, those who are wounded by life, and victims. May your presence be a wellspring of hope for many. In your spirit of fraternity and welcome, may they recognize another face of the humanity disfigured by wars, indifference and rejection of the weakest. Those children, those youngsters, those people also have dreams, but nowadays, for many reasons, those dreams are shattered. May you help them to revive their dreams, to believe in them and to fulfil them!

Children play, even beneath bombs, in countries at war. When we see photographs of those countries, there are children who play. But one thing that strikes me, when children from Ukraine come to Rome, those who have moved here and live here, these children do not smile; they have lost their smile. The war does this: it makes children lose their smile. Work to make them recover their capacity to smile!

Dear brothers, the Church is a family and, in the variety of charisms and vocations, we all cooperate for the salvation of humanity. In this wondrous mystery of communion, I can count on your filial trust and your attachment to the ministry of the Successor of Peter. I encourage you to work in close collaboration with the dioceses where you are in mission and with the faithful People of God; to banish from your life any spirit of pride, closed-mindedness, division and gossip. Gossip does a great deal of harm to religious communities. A good resolution for a religious brother and a religious sister would be to bite their tongue every time they feel like gossiping about each other. It would be a good resolution, wouldn't it? Indeed, "being Church means being God's people, in accordance with the great plan of His fatherly love. This means that we are to be God's leaven in the midst of humanity" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 114).

At the end of your Chapter, you will renew the consecration of the Institute to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. May your pedagogy always be inspired by She who, with her total "Yes", consented that God's salvific plan for humanity be fulfilled in her person. May she help you to cultivate the zeal to set out to serve, to cultivate humility, trust in God and the joy of being servants of his tenderness and mercy. Please do not lose your joy!

I heartily bless you and your confreres all over the world, as well as the young people you accompany. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!

