

FOREWORD TO THE ORIGINAL (1967) EDITION

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 sensed 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 to 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 the *Motu Proprio "Ecclesiae Sanctae."* These tasks were summed up in the conciliar expression, "to promote an adapted renewal in the Institute." To accomplish this work meant 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 to meditate this Declaration, which your representatives at the General Chapter have pre-pared 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.

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