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## Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the 46<sup>th</sup> General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools

Pope Francis

Dear brothers, good morning and welcome!

I thank the Superior General for his words – also for “*Lolo Kiko*”<sup>2</sup> [Filipino greeting: “Grandfather Francis”] – and I offer my best wishes to him and to his council. I am happy to meet you on the occasion of your 46<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, which has as its theme: “Building new paths to transform lives.” It is beautiful to understand the Chapter in this way, on the move, as a construction site of a new path which leads to meet the brethren, especially the poorest. But we know that the “Way,” the truly new way, is Jesus Christ. By following him, by walking with him, our lives are transformed; and we, in turn, become leaven, salt, and light.

For you, according to the charism of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, these “new paths” are first and foremost *educational pathways*, to be carried out in the schools, colleges and universities for which you are responsible in about one hundred countries in which you are present. A great responsibility! I thank the Lord for it with you, because educational work is a great gift, first of all for those who do it. It is work that demands a lot, but gives a lot! The constant relationships with educators, with parents, and especially with children and young people is an ever-living source of humanity, despite all the hardships and problems that it entails.

In these relationships, on this pathway you take with them, you offer the values of your rich pedagogical tradition. You educate in responsibility, creativity, coexistence, justice, and peace. You educate to the inner life, to being open to the transcendent, to the sense of wonder and contemplation before the mystery of life and creation. You live all of this and you interpret it in Christ, and translate it into the fullness of humanity. I am reminded of the motto of Saint John Paul II in *Redemptor Hominis*: “Man is the way for the Church.”<sup>3</sup> You put this motto into practice in your educational mission. It is your way of realizing what Saint Paul writes: “Christ be formed in you” (*Gal 4:19*).<sup>4</sup> To educate in this way is your apostolate, your specific contribution to evangelization: to make humanity grow according to Christ. In this sense, your schools are “Christian”: not because of an external label, but because they are following this path.

We are aware that the world is experiencing an educational emergency. The educational compact has been broken. It is broken, and now the State, educators and the family are separated. We have to look for a new compact, which is communication, working together.<sup>5</sup> This educational emergency is made more acute by the consequences of the pandemic. The two great challenges of our time, the challenge of *fraternity*<sup>6</sup> and the challenge of *caring for the common home*,<sup>7</sup> cannot be answered except through education. Both are primarily *educational challenges*. And thank God, the Christian community is not only aware of this, but is committed to this work and, for some time now, has been trying to “build new paths to transform” the way of life. And you, brothers, are part of this construction site. Indeed, you are at the forefront, educating so as to move from a

closed world to an open world; from a throwaway culture to a culture of care; from a culture of rejection to a culture of integration; from the pursuit of vested interests to the pursuit of the common good. As educators, you know very well that this transformation must start from the conscience, or it will only be a façade. And you also know that you cannot do this work alone, but by cooperating in an “educational alliance” with families, with ecclesial communities and agencies, with the formative realities in the places where you are present.

This, dear brothers, is your field of work. But to be good workers, you must not neglect yourselves! You cannot give to the young what you do not have within yourselves. The Christian educator, in the school of Christ, is above all a witness, and a teacher to the extent of bearing witness. I have nothing to teach you in this, but only, as a brother, I want to remind you: bear witness. And above all I pray for you, that you may be brothers not only in name but in fact. And for your schools to be Christian not in name but in fact.

Thank you for who you are and what you do! Go forward with the joy of *evangelizing by educating* and of *educating by evangelizing*. I bless you and all your communities. And you, please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!

## Endnotes

1. These remarks were addressed by Pope Francis to the participants of the 46<sup>th</sup> General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools on Saturday, 21 May 2022, in the Consistory Hall in Vatican City. Endnotes have been added to the text as points of reference or context, and a word of special thanks goes to Brother John Guasconi for his help with the English translation of the remarks, which are available in the original Italian on the website of the Vatican: <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2022/may/documents/20220521-fratelli-scuole-cristiane.html>

2. Prior to the address of Pope Francis, the newly elected Superior General of the Institute, Brother Armin Luistro of the Philippines, in his opening remarks, referred to a visit of the Pope to the Philippines: “On a personal note, I am still deeply moved as I remember the power of your presence in the Philippines when you visited the survivors of Typhoon Haiyan in January 2015. Despite the inclement weather, you were emboldened to travel to Tacloban where you wore a thin rain poncho over your papal garb. You were drenched in heavy rain but also with the tears that freely flowed. Still, my people’s undiminished spirit resounded with the endearing greeting, this time with tears of joy: ‘Viva, Lolo Kiko!’”

3. *Encyclical Letter Redemptoris Hominis: The Redeemer of Man by Pope John Paul II (Vatican City, 1979), #14*: “Man in the full truth of his existence, of his personal being and also of his community and social being – in the sphere of his own family, in the sphere of society and very diverse contexts, in the sphere of his own nation or people (perhaps still only that of his clan or tribe), and in the sphere of the whole of mankind – this man is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission. He is the primary and fundamental way for the Church, the way traced out by Christ himself, the way that leads invariably through the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption . . . .”

4. For the whole verse of *Gal 4:19*: “My children, for whom I am again in labor until Christ be formed in you!”

5. The *Global Compact on Education* is an initiative of Pope Francis that calls all of the Church’s teaching Orders and educators to renew their commitment to a more open and inclusive education of young people. The outgoing Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Brother Robert Schieler, signed a commitment to this compact on behalf of the Lasallian Family during the 46<sup>th</sup> General Chapter.

6. Cf. *Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship* by Pope Francis (Vatican City, 2020).

7. Cf. *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home* by Pope Francis (Vatican City, 2015).