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Vatican Council II and the Renewal of the De La Salle Brother's Consecration, Community Life, and Apostolic Mission

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1. Introduction

John Baptist de La Salle, a French priest who lived from 1651 to 1719, founded a group of laymen whom he invited to teach in schools. The schools were aimed toward the Christian education of the young, especially the poor of France. Eventually, he brought the teachers to live in a common home so that he might form them in how better to conduct the schools. In their togetherness, De La Salle felt the need to have a common life that was governed by a common understanding of their purpose and a common rule to follow.² Without yet being a formal religious congregation, this group of men, together with De La Salle as their Founder, defined their identity and their role in the world in which they lived by coming up with the *Rule* of 1705, which states that the group is a "Society in which profession is made of keeping schools gratuitously."³

It was a group of laymen who soon chose to call themselves Brothers and whose end was to give Christian education to children. More importantly, its primary target was to instruct the children of the artisans and of poor adults who had to labor all day and had no time to educate their children in the faith, a condition which left the children prone to different sources of misbehavior and misinformation and which made it necessary that others take the place of mothers and fathers in instructing children about the mysteries of religion and the principles of Christian life.⁴

The Brothers founded by De La Salle only received the approval of the Holy See of Rome in 1725 when Pope Benedict XIII approved the petition of the Institute to be recognized as a religious congregation in the Church.⁵ At that time, the rule in force was the *Rule* of 1718, which had been approved by the Brothers and the Founder in the 2nd General Chapter of the Institute in 1717. This *Rule* underwent several re-touchings in 1723 and then again in 1726 after the Institute's approval from the Pope in 1725. Guided by this *Rule*, the religious, community, and apostolic life of the De La Salle Brothers remained largely unchanged—albeit with some minor revisions—until the groundbreaking call in 1959 for *aggiornamento* by Pope John XXIII.⁶

The Brothers kept the *Rule* of 1718 largely unchanged because of the belief that it contained how the Founder lived and how he, with the early Brothers, perceived the life of the Brothers to be.⁷ Although it had been largely unchanged for three hundred years, there had been initiatives to revisit and revise many stipulations that had eventually fallen into desuetude and were in effect

obsolete.⁸ It was, however, in the 36th General Chapter in 1934 that the Brothers admitted the need to revise the *Rule* because of the outdated practices and traditions that were still being observed until that time. And so it was recommended that the *Rule* be revisited and a new rule be proposed in the 37th General Chapter (which was eventually held in 1946).⁹ That attempt to revise the rule proved to be futile because of the timidity of its revisions, and so the 38th General Chapter in 1956 called for a complete and substantial revamp of the Brother's Rule.¹⁰

This was also a time of renewal in the whole Church. As the Brothers planned to revamp their *Rule*, Pope John XXIII was calling for the Second Vatican Council (1962 to 1965). The Council was a remarkable gathering of the hierarchy of the Church, which was unprecedented because of the wide variety of topics covered in its discussions.¹¹ It was one of the few Councils called by the Church in her 2,000 year history, with Vatican Council I, which ended prematurely in 1869, and the Council of Trent, which ended in 1563, being the last two before it.¹² In the course of the Council's discussions, the delegates tackled a wide array of topics and concerns about the life of the Church, and its role in the modern world. At the end of the Council, the Church produced sixteen documents that defined different aspects of the life of the Church.¹³ One of these documents was Council document *Perfectae Caritatis*, which called for the renewal of the religious orders and the updating of their life in line with the Council's renewed vision of the universal Church.

It is with this call of renewal in the Church as backdrop that the Brothers of the Christian Schools assembled for a 39th General Chapter in 1966-1967, and that Chapter produced *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration*.¹⁴ The *Declaration* (1967)¹⁵ was a response to the three challenges of Vatican Council II posed in *Perfectae Caritatis*: a return to the Gospel, fidelity to the Founder, and reading the signs of the times.¹⁶

This article aims to explore the specific declarations (pathways) of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in response to specific invitations from the Church that greatly affected the consecration, community life, and apostolic mission of the Brothers. The article will first discuss the Vatican Council II document that is seen as a major contributor to the group's renewal and then view the response of the Brothers through the lens of articles from chapter 5 of the *Declaration* (1967).

2. The Religious, Community, and Apostolic Life of the De La Salle Brothers

2.1. Consecration

The Second Vatican Council declared that all members of the Church, whether lay, religious, or clergy, were called to holiness.¹⁷ One's vocation was rooted in one's baptism, and this is the source of the common call to live as People of God on earth. This meant that each member of the Church has a way of achieving holiness, which is defined as one's decision to follow the way of Christ. Council document *Lumen Gentium* further stated that all people in the Church are part of Christ because of one's baptism¹⁸ and that this call to holiness is seen in the many different forms of life present in the Church. For some, it is the call to live life as part of the clergy, wherein they serve the Church of Christ through the sacraments. For others, it is the call to be holy amidst their chosen way of life in the world as lay people. This creates for them many different ways of living in holiness or of following Christ in their chosen profession and in their state of life as

single individuals or as married couples. Still for others, the way to holiness is achieved through a life fashioned around the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. These counsels provide vowed religious men and women with a concrete set of values possessed by Christ whom they seek to imitate.

This universal call to holiness¹⁹ became both a source of inspiration and a difficulty for men and women who lived the religious life. With this decree, the Church had turned away from the previously held belief that those who lived the religious life had a more superior way of achieving holiness than those who did not.²⁰ For religious groups of men who were not ordained, this seemingly implied that their level of holiness was reduced to that of ordinary lay Catholics.²¹ However, far from the intention of reducing the religious state to mere ordinariness, the Council was actually calling religious groups of men and women to a renewal of their life and their way of following Christ.²²

With regard to their consecration, the Church prescribed that religious groups needed to strive to return to origins of all Christian life, be faithful to their group's founding sources and charism, and be able to adapt to contemporary realities in their present-day context, without losing their ultimate goal of living a life of following in the footsteps of Christ.²³

It was with these calls for renewal and the guiding documents of the Second Vatican Council that the Brothers of the Christian Schools redefined and reimagined what it meant to be a Brother in the world today. In the *Declaration* (1967) of the 39th General Chapter, the Brothers wrote about their consecration as religious men, finding their roots in baptism, finding meaning in their gift of self, and finding new elements of their religious life amidst the call for renewal of the Holy Mother Church.²⁴

Rooted in Baptism

The *Declaration* (1967) affirmed that the vocation of the De La Salle Brother is his way of responding to the demands and challenges of his baptism in the Church.²⁵ Baptism was further defined as the source of his inspiration in fulfilling his duties as a religious layman who is part of an Institute that is dedicated to the educational service of youth, especially those who are poor. In his baptism, the Brother finds a grounding element shared with all other Christians who profess the same creed.²⁶ His understanding of the creed of the Church is deepened through his religious profession in the Institute. Through his religious profession to live the vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, and association for the service of the poor through education and stability in the Institute, the Brother finds his unique and specific way of responding to the demands of his baptism to follow Christ.²⁷ Moreover, he promises to adhere to the love and will of the Father as the first rule of his life and to put all his faculties at the service of the Church.²⁸

Gift of Self

The *Declaration* (1967) also affirmed that the Brother consecrates himself to the Church and to the People of God by promising to live in the footsteps of Christ as priest, prophet, and king. The demand of the Gospel is ultimately to make a gift of oneself. The generosity that the Brother gives is a response to his baptismal promises and his religious profession. No longer should the

Brother aim to procure glory for himself, but he now aims to procure glory for the Kingdom of God. This is seen in his generosity to the mission, his faithfulness to the vows and to his Brothers in community, and ultimately when he surrenders the totality of himself to the Church and to God through the apostolate of teaching young people whose salvation might otherwise be neglected by the world.

New Elements of Religious Life

The *Declaration* (1967) affirmed that the Brother's vocation, as a consecrated layman, is worthy of the gift of the whole person and one's dedication to God. The Institute does not aim toward the ordination of its members, but rather it aims to form Brothers who are able to surrender themselves totally to God through the apostolic work of education. The vocation of the Brothers should be a free response to the Holy Spirit who stirs the hearts of many to God's service.

This consecration is lived through the renewal of the Brother toward the image of Christ by voluntary celibacy, which expresses the union of Christ and the Church.²⁹ By the vow of obedience, the Brother exercises his universal priesthood and the sacrifice of Christ; the paschal sacrifice of Christ inspires the Brother to carry on the disposition of Christ in offering himself to God.³⁰ By living in community, the Brother witnesses to that universal brotherhood started by Christ whose example with his apostles provides inspiration for the Brother to follow Christ and to spread the Good News.³¹

The *Declaration* (1967) affirmed that the mission of the Institute is a mission entrusted to it by the Church. This mission is to prepare humankind for salvation and to contribute to the building up of God's Kingdom in the present time, and this mission is uniquely done by the Brothers as one community of consecrated men who vow to live and serve the Church "together and by association."³²

2.2. Community Life

Pope John XXIII's call for *aggiornamento* ushered in a renewal in the Church and allowed the fathers of the Second Vatican Council to come up with an updated understanding of what it means to be a Church in the modern world.³³ Council document *Gaudium et Spes* affirmed that the Church lives in a changed world that has been developing through the years.³⁴ With the rise of artificial intelligence, technology, and the sciences, it is inevitable that what the Church used to live with and live by had been put in question; and that includes the values, traditions, and practices with which the Church has over the years become comfortable.³⁵

In the same document, the Church affirmed the interdependence of humankind. In chapter 2 of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Church goes to great lengths to define the importance of human communities in the world. It begins by establishing that God wills that all would live as one family and that all would treat one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. This statement leads to the understanding that it is God who calls persons and communities into oneness so that these persons and communities might truly live out what it means to love God and to love neighbor. These communities of persons, brought together by God, have for their goal the development of a personal and communal relationship with God. In these human communities, there flourishes

an opportunity to become faithful to God's commandments of loving God and one's neighbor, which should serve as the first and greatest commandment and which commandments should never be taken separately. Furthermore, the document stated that the prayer of Jesus, that "they may be one . . . as we are one," is to be a model for human communities of the generosity in spirit that allows the community to be united only insofar as they make of themselves a gift to the bigger community of the Church and of the world.³⁶

Gaudium et Spes also touched on several aspects of the human community: the equal treatment of all, the respect for human life, the involvement of Christians in the affairs of the world, reading the signs of the times, and respecting even those who have different vistas in life.³⁷ All of these are expressions of the way that Christ lived during his time when he followed the rules of society, when he was involved in the affairs of his time, when he participated in the wedding at Cana, when he brought his apostles together, when he visited the house of Zacchaeus, and when he lived with sinners and outcasts.³⁸ All of these point to the consummation of the communitarian character of the Church in the image of Christ.³⁹ It further clarified that God did not call together a community just for itself, but for the members of the community to be united under divine guidance, and for the community to be agents of social unity, not as individuals but as the People of God whose aim is the service of truth and the love of God.⁴⁰

Gaudium et Spes further explained that the communitarian character of the Church is seen best when Christ established one brotherhood and that He has given them the Spirit that enables them to work as one Body as a community endowed with many gifts bestowed to each member.⁴¹

The call for renewal also called religious families in the Church to be participants in the process of creating the future of the Church.⁴² Before Vatican Council II, religious life was known to be about the strict adherence of men and women to the rules and regulations of their communities.⁴³ With *Gaudium et Spes*, the Church called religious orders to examine the role that they had played in the history of the Church and the world and the role that these religious orders wanted to play in the present world and into the future.⁴⁴ With the developing idea that the Church must be able to dialogue, live, and thrive within the realities of today's world, *Gaudium et Spes* was breaking off from the centuries-old tradition of the Church separating itself off from a sinful world inhabited by sinful people.⁴⁵ This mindset had great implications for the life of religious men and women who had for so long been used to being separated from the world in order to seek the Divine.⁴⁶ Instead, the Church initiated a conversion of minds by stating that religious must involve themselves in the present situations and issues of the world; and this meant that religious communities had to begin to renew their mindset when engaging with the world as a community.

Ultimately, the call for the renewal of the Church was also a call for the renewal of the community life of religious orders, whose aim was to manifest concretely the life of the Church as a community dedicated to following the footsteps of Christ by living the evangelical counsels, the ultimate goal of which is communion with God through the Holy Spirit.⁴⁷ This time, however, the following of Christ, the communion with God, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit were to be seen, felt, and experienced amidst the modern world in which the Church finds herself.

This call for renewal entailed the revisiting of the religious congregation's charism, the community values that each religious family held, the structures and the rules and regulations that governed each group. *Perfectae Caritatis* specifically prescribed that religious communities were to undergo a renewal in understanding and applying several principles⁴⁸:

First, that the religious congregation takes the Gospel as its first rule in the community.⁴⁹ *Second*, that the original charism of the founder be revisited by communities.⁵⁰ *Third*, that all Institutes share in the life of the Church, particularly implementing what the Church teaches about dogma, liturgy, dialogue and ministry.⁵¹ *Fourth*, that religious groups provide adequate support to their members in the understanding of social realities and reflecting on such with the eyes of faith.⁵² *Fifth*, that they keep as their priority the renewal of their members' following of Christ, and the interiority of the evangelical counsels that they profess.⁵³

Furthermore, the Church made it clear that the structures of community life are not ends in themselves, but rather they must serve the purpose of allowing the consecrated person to reach his or her full potential.⁵⁴ It goes to the extent of expressing that structures, rules, practices, and traditions that are already obsolete must be discarded and that the renewal of religious life is an invitation to live out the spirit of the existing laws and not to create more laws.⁵⁵

For the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, this meant a return to the founding story of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the early Brothers who were formed into a community for the service of the poor through education.⁵⁶ Such is the inspiration of the Brothers at the 39th General Chapter in 1966-1967 when they reimagined the way that the Brothers should understand the concept of community life in the Institute.⁵⁷

In the preparation for the 39th General Chapter in 1966, the central leadership of the Institute sent out materials to seek the notes and reflections of the Brothers in the communities around the world. In the said document of preparation, the Brothers wrote a section on the points of renewal that must be revisited in community life. First, it established that the Institute has been strongly marked by community life since the time of De La Salle and his early Brothers.⁵⁸ Next, the preparatory document encouraged the Brothers to look at their day-to-day life and the *Rule* that governs the Institute and identify if there were discrepancies. Next, it encouraged the Brothers to assess the charity that is present in the community, and whether that charity is something that authentically gives witness to the love of the Gospel. Next, it encouraged the Brothers to re-assess if the community was a source of inspiration that flows out and into the apostolic mission in the schools. And lastly, it encouraged the Brothers to revisit the spirituality of the community and its role in breathing new life into the mission.

The 39th General Chapter in 1966-1967 was a time of renewal for the Brothers in response to the call of the Second Vatican Council. At the time of the Chapter's convocation, the Brothers had already experienced a diminishment of the number of vocations in the Institute; this had sounded the alarm for the need for an intense renewal of identity and religious life.⁵⁹ With many aspects for renewal, the General Chapter included in the *Declaration* (1967) an extensive portion to define what community life means for the life of the Institute.

What follows are the important points of understanding with regard to what it means to belong to a community of the De La Salle Brothers as affirmed in the *Declaration* (1967).

Community Spirit

The *Declaration* (1967) affirmed that the consecration of the Brother to God cannot be separated from the commitment he has made to the community. It is in the community that he makes a commitment to live with other persons who have responded to the call to announce the Gospel to the poor. It is in the community that he finds the means to live out his commitment to God through religious vows and discovers the will to live in association with others who labor to do the same.

The community life of the Brothers is a manifestation of God's will to call people to communities so that they might live under the same one spirit and inspiration as that of the Apostles.⁶⁰ It is through these communities of persons that the covenant and will of God is and will be manifested. Through them, God is able to create witnesses of divine love, whose goal is to sanctify humans and make of them a people for Godself, in service of God's salvific mission.⁶¹ The community is to be a place where the Brothers seek the will of God by praying together and celebrating the Eucharist, which is the source and summit of their community life.

Community Life

The *Declaration* (1967) affirmed that the Brothers meet God in community. When listening to his Brothers, the Brother hears the voice of God. When the Brother serves his fellow Brothers, he serves Christ. When the Brother seeks the common good and surrenders his will to the will of the Superior whose function is to lead the community in service of the common good, it is really God whom the Brother obeys.

In the community, the Brothers gather to listen to God and help each other be attentive to the movement and invitation of the Lord. There is an examination of their community's response and an effort to remedy shortcomings. Furthermore, it is in the same community that the Brothers spontaneously speak of God and God's Kingdom, which gives meaning to their apostolic commitments and ministries.

Another important understanding of community is that it is the community, as a representative of the Church, that sustains, empowers, and commissions the Brother for mission.⁶² Therefore, the Brothers affirm that one's participation in the work of the Institute and of the Church is not a personal occupation independent of the community. This highlights the vow of the Institute to work "together and by association" for the educational service of the poor through education.

Community Structures

The *Declaration* (1967) affirmed that the Institute does all it can to help the Brother reach self-actualization in the community. It recognized that the community is a place where the Brother lives out his consecration to God and through which the Brother is able to respond to the needs of the world, most especially through his contribution to the apostolic mission. It further defined

community life as the place where the dialogue between the Lord who calls and the Brother who responds happens. Therefore, the Brother, when entering into this dialogue expects that the Institute shall provide whatever means are necessary for him to fully and freely respond to God's call.

The manifestation of this declaration (pathway) is seen in the affirmation that community structures of the Brothers are not an end in themselves. It is further affirmed that the purpose of the structures in the community is to provide freedom to the Brothers to enable them to respond to the call of God to live in faith, hope, and love and that all of this is renewed in the authentic life of personal and community prayer. The structures, therefore, ought to serve as reminders to the Brothers of their promise to live generously in service of God and the Church. In turn the Brother is expected to keep in mind the common good and to see the structures as necessary in religious life.

2.3. Apostolic Purpose

The Second Vatican Council's document *Ad Gentes*, on the missionary nature of the Church, has brought great direction to the life and mission of the De La Salle Brothers. In this document on the missionary activity of the Church, the Council affirmed that the ultimate goal of missionary work is to bring people closer to God.⁶³ This is founded on the desire of God to reconcile people to Godself. This is why God sent the prophets, and eventually Christ the Redeemer, to bring about the divine Kingdom in the midst of God's people, whose mission is to bring people into communion with God. The principle of missionary work is also founded on the Person of Jesus Christ, who lived among the poor, healed the sick, forgave sinners, gave sight to the blind, made the paralytic walk, dined with sinners and publicans, and gave the dead life as his manifestation of the salvific love of the Father.⁶⁴

Christ's principle of missionary work is the same that inspired his Apostles and inspires his Church through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁵ The Apostles, as commissioned by Christ to "preach the Good News to the ends of the world," built and extended the Church to all, most especially to those whose lands had not yet been planted with the seeds of the faith. The mission of the Church, therefore, is fulfilled when she participates in the affairs of all and is present to all nations, so that by her activities and her presence, people and places might see the mystery of Christ and might be brought back to the awaiting love of the Father.⁶⁶ The understanding of "mission" is that it is undertaken by those sent by the Church to announce the Gospel to those who have not yet believed, and in areas where the faith has not yet taken root.⁶⁷

Although missionary work is defined as going out to other nations to proclaim the Gospel and to bring people into a community, the Church also invited men and women religious, in their own capacities of prayer and active work, to participate in the propagation of the Gospel in the hearts of those they encounter in ministry.⁶⁸ This is affirmed by the flourishing of religious congregations whose main work is to be gathered together as a community so that as one family they might be able to seek Christ in the world through their apostolic ministries.⁶⁹ Such is the case for the De La Salle Brothers, whose mission is to serve the poor through education.

The Church, through the documents of the Second Vatican Council, expressed its role in the Christian education of all of her children in the document *Gravissimum Educationis*. The Church affirmed that, as the world progresses and great changes are present in society, the role of education is of utmost importance to enable the proper development of peoples and their capacity to engage with the world.⁷⁰ Furthermore, it established that people are more aware of their dignity and their capacity to be involved in social affairs of the time. This makes it more important to educate people so that they might use their capacities in the world to live out their mission as members of Christ's family.⁷¹ It was in this context that the Church proclaimed that it is her mission to proclaim the Gospel to all and that she has the obligation to be concerned with the whole of her children's life, including their education.⁷²

The Church affirmed that each person has the right to education, which for itself is not the goal, but rather has the development of societies as its ultimate aim.⁷³ Therefore, education of peoples must be done in a holistic way that aids in the development of the person and enables the same to become more capable of thriving amidst the difficulties of life.⁷⁴ In addition to this, the education of the person is not geared only toward self-improvement, but has for its ultimate goal a deeper knowledge and love for God.⁷⁵

The goal of knowing and loving God more was the goal set by the Church for the Christian education of people:

Since all Christians have become by rebirth of water and the Holy Spirit a new creature so that they should be called and should be children of God, they have a right to a Christian education. A Christian education does not merely strive for the maturing of a human person as just now described, but has as its principal purpose this goal: that the baptized, while they are gradually introduced to the knowledge of the mystery of salvation, become ever more aware of the gift of Faith they have received, and that they learn in addition how to worship God the Father in spirit and truth (cf. John 4:23) especially in liturgical action, and be conformed in their personal lives according to the new man created in justice and holiness of truth (Eph 4:22-24); also that they develop into perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ (cf. Eph 4:13) and strive for the growth of the Mystical Body; moreover, that aware of their calling, they learn not only how to bear witness to the hope that is in them (cf. 1 Peter 3:15) but also how to help in the Christian formation of the world that takes place when natural powers viewed in the full consideration of man redeemed by Christ contribute to the good of the whole society. Wherefore this sacred synod recalls to pastors of souls their most serious obligation to see to it that all the faithful, but especially the youth who are the hope of the Church, enjoy this Christian education.⁷⁶

To this ministry in the Church have the Brothers of the Christian Schools found their purpose and calling as religious laymen and professional teachers. Since the foundation of the Institute by John Baptist de La Salle, the Brothers have found themselves in communion with the Church's mission to provide human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor and the children of the artisans.⁷⁷ Although not yet recognized as an official religious congregation at that time, De La Salle and the early Brothers had already established that the purpose of the Institute was toward the salvation of souls through education.⁷⁸ Eventually, the band of teachers that was

formed by De La Salle was, as mentioned previously, given the approval of the Pope and the acceptance in the Church as a religious congregation.⁷⁹ This marked the monumental union of the group to the Church and her mission of proclaiming the Good News to the ends of the earth and to areas where the Gospel had not yet taken root.

With the call of the Second Vatican Council for religious congregations to return to their founding story and to be faithful to their founder's charism, the De La Salle Brothers reviewed through the 39th General Chapter in 1966-1967 their apostolate as a congregation, ensuring that the work they do is still in line with the ministry of the Church, particularly in education. The crisis and renewal of the Church also spurred the De La Salle Brothers to come up with articles in the *Declaration* (1967) regarding their apostolate, proclaiming with certainty the apostolic and missionary identity of the congregation and the primacy of young people in the ministry of education.

An Apostolic Vocation

The *Declaration* (1967) affirmed that the main purpose of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is the salvation of persons and the procurement of God's glory.⁸⁰ It further explained that the Institute's Founder, John Baptist de La Salle, in his initial gathering of laymen and forming them as teachers, inevitably made of these layman apostles of Christ by making them aware of the apostolic nature of their work as educators. This new understanding of the profession of the educator has led Brothers through the years to offer themselves totally to God, who has employed them in this service. In addition to this, the *Declaration* (1967) further stated that similar to the Apostolic spirit of responding to Christ's call to follow Him, the Institute imbibes a twofold movement of faith and zeal. It defined that it is faith that makes the Brother attentive to the presence of God and the unrelenting call to follow God's will. This is followed by a free response of the Brother and is translated into an apostolic zeal that sustains his commitment to the ministry. This apostolic zeal for the ministry is an integral part of the consecration of the Brother to God because, through this ministry, the Brother participates in the mission of Christ for the salvation of humankind. The Brother participates in this salvation when he teaches and inspires young people to build their relationship with God, most especially when they have gone astray.

A Missionary Vocation

The *Declaration* (1967) also affirmed that, at the time of its writing, there was a major need in the world for renewal. The Brothers recognized that the Church at that time was also undergoing a renewal of her awareness of her missionary vocation as a Church. The Brothers affirmed that, while the Institute is not exclusively missionary, it has been founded to bring salvation within reach most especially to young people who lack the necessary education about the faith. Furthermore, the *Declaration* (1967) affirmed that the original intention of the Founder when he gathered the Brothers together is translated in the present times as a generous missionary spirit.⁸¹ This led the Brothers to reflect, as an Institute, about the possibility of going into new areas of ministry but at the expense of handing over some ministries to others.

Primacy of the Youth

The *Declaration* (1967) affirmed that young people should be prioritized in the dispensing of services of the Institute.⁸² This is in fidelity to the founding charism of John Baptist de La Salle, who gathered laymen to teach in the schools, which had the ultimate goal of teaching the faith to young people. The *Declaration* (1967) further affirmed that young people are major sources of concern; and at the same time, they are seen as the hope of the world and of the Church. With this understanding, the *Declaration* (1967) resolved to put importance in identifying and understanding the challenges of the young people so that it might give direction to the services of the Institute that are being carried out by the Brothers in different parts of the world.

3. Conclusion

In response to the Second Vatican Council's call for renewal, the Brothers of the Christian Schools reviewed their way of life and produced a document that declared their role in the modern world. *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration* (1967) explained and responded to the invitation of the Second Vatican Council to return to the sources of all Christian life, to revisit the founder's charism, and to reimagine how consecrated persons can continue to engage with the modern world.

The Brother's declarations (pathways) on their consecrated life echoed the Council's call for renewal in religious life. Wanting to be of service to the Mother Church, the De La Salle Brothers went through a thorough review of their consecration as Brothers in order to be updated according to the signs of the times and to be able to live as true servants of Christ in the world. This renewal of the consecration of men called by God led them to be re-enlivened as a community of men who have come together by the grace of God in order to form one Brotherhood under Christ.

The declarations (pathways) of the Brothers on their community life echoed the call of the Second Vatican Council to reimagine the community of Christ's people on earth—the Church—and how that community relates with the modern world. It affirmed that the community of the De La Salle Brothers is a community called by God to be of service to the Church. Men who perceive this call attach themselves to a community whose goal is the salvation of souls through education. To do this, the Brothers have declared that the community is a place where the Brother expresses his consecration, where he is able to dwell with God, where he is able to love God and his neighbor, and where he is valued as a member of the Institute who continuously desires to follow Christ through the evangelical counsels.

These declarations (pathways) on the apostolic purpose of the Brothers echoed the call for renewal of the Mother Church and her missionary purpose in the world. The declarations (pathways) of the Brothers affirmed that the goal of the Institute is for the salvation of souls through education. This made the purpose truly missionary in nature as missionary work is defined as the propagation of the Gospel in areas where it has not taken root. The educational service of the Brothers does exactly that missionary aim as it teaches young people about the faith and hopes that God allows the Gospel to take root in their lives and in their hearts.

Moreover, the Brothers affirmed that their vocation is truly apostolic as it declared that it is Christ who calls the Brother and sends him out to teach the Good News to the ends of the earth, particularly in his work in the school and with young people. Lastly, the Brothers affirmed that the educational service that they dispense is geared toward the Christian education of the young, as proposed by the Church, and that this service to young people is what motivates them to go proclaim the Gospel to them, in order to bring to them the possibility of having the fullness of a life that is lived in communion with God.

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