

## AFTER THIRTY YEARS

### Foreword to the Revised English Translation

It was just about thirty years ago, on December 6, 1967, that the 39th General Chapter voted at near unanimity to approve and "make its own" the Declaration on the Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today. In an introductory letter, Brother Charles Henry, then Superior General, remarked among other things that it is "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." Ten years later, despite some discouraging developments in the life of the Church and the Institute, the 40th General Chapter in a formal vote reaffirmed "the validity of the Declaration and the Rules in all that concerns the mission of the Brother." In the present Rule, adopted by the 42nd General Chapter in 1986 and approved by the Vatican in 1987, the extensive citations from the Declaration attest that the remark of Brother Charles Henry about the fundamental importance of the document is still valid.

It is to be hoped that the anniversary of the first publication of the Declaration will excite new interest in rediscovering this foundational text or, in some cases, occasion its discovery for the first time. Although the Church, the Institute, and the educational world have all undergone profound changes in the last thirty years, it is heartening to find how well the fundamental thrust of the Declaration has stood the test of time; how far ahead of its own time it was; how much of the agenda it proposed has yet to be realized: with regard to the spiritual renewal of the Institute, the elements to be integrated in the identity of the Brother, and the priorities and policies for the educational mission to the poor and in the schools.

The Declaration was written by and for the Brothers at a time when the direction and the implementation of the mission of the Institute were for the most part in the hands of the Brothers. Even so, the text reflects an awareness of the emerging importance of our lay and clerical partners in accomplishing that mission. Since 1993, when the 42nd General Chapter affirmed the shared mission, not only as a fact but as a "grace," there is all the more reason for the Brothers to share the riches of this document with our partners and to seek together to interpret the text in this new and challenging context.

A word is in order to explain why, after thirty years, a new English translation of the Declaration is called for. The original translation was the work of Brothers Luke Salm and Augustine Loes, delegates to the 39th General Chapter in 1967 and members of the Chapter Commission on Apostolic Finality that produced the official French text. (The history of the text has been described in detail by Luke Salm in *Religious Institute in Transition: the Story of Three General Chapters*.) The two Brothers worked on the translation while the discussions in the commission and in general assembly were in the final stages. Their purpose was to produce a text that would be faithful to the original and at the same time read well in forceful idiomatic English, a rather different style from the prolix and tightly reasoned French text. The work had to be done hurriedly in order to have an English text ready for publication as soon as it was voted by the Chapter. Even so, the result was a lively English text that conveyed the thrust and the radicality of the official text. Brother Charles Henry, the Superior General, agreed to endorse the English text as the "official" translation in that language in order to forestall the multiplication of English versions, or

translations by persons not involved in the elaboration of the document and not imbued with the thinking of the Commission and the Chapter. That text has served the English-speaking Brothers well. It generated enthusiasm when it was first published and has served as the basis for fruitful reflection and discussion over the last thirty years.

In the translation process, however, something was lost. This became evident in 1994 when the Spirituality Seminar, sponsored by the Christian Brothers Conference of the USA/Toronto Region, turned its attention to the Declaration. (The texts of the papers and a summary of the discussions of the 1994 seminar have since been published by the Christian Brothers Conference under the title *The Declaration: Text and Contexts*.) It was in the process of preparing an English translation of the paper submitted by Brother Michel Sauvage that Luke Salm became aware of the extent to which the English translation of the text differed in several significant ways from the French original. In some cases, last minute additions or deletions made toward the end of the Chapter debate were not incorporated into the English text. In other cases, the attempt to keep the English sentences short resulted in the loss of the subordination in the French periodic style that provided the logic and the rationale for what was being proposed. Likewise, too many paraphrases in English sacrificed the characteristic "bite" of the French. A careful comparison with the official French text reveals that now and then words and whole phrases are missing in the English; and there are some places, fortunately few, where the translation is simply inaccurate. Such discrepancies point to the need for a more precise, and perhaps even more literal, translation of the official text. This also provides the opportunity to use more inclusive language wherever possible (recognizing that for the moment at least members of the Institute are all Brothers and all male). This re-translation is here presented in the hope that the Declaration will continue to be an instrument of vision and energy for the Institute, the Brothers, and the shared mission.

A special word of thanks is due to Brother Paul Grass of the Rome Generalate for meticulous copy- editing of the text and for valuable suggestions to improve the accuracy and the clarity of the translation.

Luke Salm, FSC December 6, 1996

Anniversary of the Promulgation of the Declaration