



**CONGREGATION OF HOLY CROSS**  
**Circular Letter of the Superior General No. 14**  
**December 9, 1994**

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***BROTHERS IN HOLY CROSS: A GIFT TO SHARE***  
***Reflection on the 175th Anniversary of the***  
***Brothers of St. Joseph***

Dear Confreres,

The year 1995 marks the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Brothers of St. Joseph. The last general chapter invited the entire congregation to celebrate this important event in the history of Holy Cross.

Celebrations have already been scheduled in some parts of Holy Cross. I encourage religious in every part of the congregation to observe this anniversary. As you determine suitable dates for gathering, you might consider these possibilities: February 17, anniversary of the death of Father Dujarié; March 19, St. Joseph, patronal feast of the brothers; July 15, arrival of the first postulant for the brothers in Ruillé; July 25, feast of St. James and the patronal feast of Father Dujarié; October 22, arrival of Brother André Mottais in Ruillé; December 9, anniversary of the birth of Father Dujarié.

Celebrations should focus on the brothers' vocation, the life of the man who gathered the first Brothers of St. Joseph, and the ministry of education, which has always been a significant aspect of the brothers' mission.

As we begin this year of celebration, I would like to share a few thoughts about these topics with you. This letter is simply a starting point, a sketch, a resource for further study, reflection and discussion.

**THE BROTHER'S VOCATION**

**A witness of the fraternal communion among the Apostles**

The twelve apostles were called to form a community centered around Jesus, a community that shared Jesus' call to witness to the good news of the kingdom. The twelve were those who would lead the community and continue the action of Jesus through the sharing of the bread of Eucharist and by forgiving sins. The double perspective of the apostles' call – being centered around Jesus and leading the community—is a biblical model for all vocations in the church. The vocation to form communities gathered around the risen Lord is a basic dimension in the life of every Christian.

One need not be a religious to live this call. But, from the very earliest periods of church history, groups of men and women have gathered together to live in an intense and radical way the brotherhood which all Christians are called to live. A religious vocation is a call to consecrate oneself fully to Jesus, to be a witness to his message and a prophet of his Kingdom. It is also a gift of the Spirit, which inspires the whole church to deeper fidelity to the Lord and more generous love of one another.

The call to religious consecration is given to both laypeople and clerics. “This form of life has its own place in relation to the divine and hierarchical structure of the Church. Not, however, as though it were a kind of middle way between the clerical and lay conditions of life. Rather it should be seen as a form of life to which some Christians, both clerical and lay, are called by God so they may enjoy a special gift of grace in the life of the Church and may contribute, each in his own way, to the saving mission of the Church.”<sup>1</sup>

What is said of the religious calling in general applies particularly well to the vocation of brothers. They are “those who, without having pastoral responsibilities in the hierarchical structure of the Church, imitate the apostles in their way of life and constitute a community ready to welcome the Kingdom, by their radical way of living the gospel call to renouncement. By their total obedience and by the way they accompany the Lord, they prolong in the life of the Church the absolute character of God's reign.”<sup>2</sup> The early Christian community, gathered around the apostles, will continue to be the model for this community of brotherhood. The community is now gathered anew to form a brotherhood around the risen Lord, to find its strength in the spirit of the Lord who is present within it as the Giver of life.

### **An apostle serving the Church's ministry of evangelization**

Originally, the brothers' mission was to give witness by living poorly, chastely and obediently in remote monasteries devoted to liturgical worship and private prayer. Almost immediately monasteries became centers of service to God's people, offering hospitality, alms, and healing. Later, groups of brothers like the early Franciscans gave witness by living dedicated lives among the people in expanding cities. Later still, as clerical institutes like the Jesuits arose, brothers were incorporated to provide domestic and auxiliary services.

Some brothers' institutes emerged in response to very specific needs in the world and the church. The Brothers of St. John of God, for example, began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to nurse the sick. From the time

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<sup>1</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 43b

<sup>2</sup> Victor Codina, *La view religieuse*, p. 167

Jean Baptist de la Salle founded the Brothers of the Christian Schools, institutes of brothers have been formed to educate the young. This focus on service brought a new dimension to the vocation of brothers. Also, it moved the emphasis of this vocation from the perspective of being and relating to that of doing.

This shift became very evident during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as religious groups were defined primarily from the perspective of what they were doing. In fact, in some social contexts, certain functions such as education in Catholic schools, responsibility of orphanages, care of the sick...were almost always entrusted to religious. Those who believed they were called to these ministries often automatically equated this with a call to religious life; thus, many were perplexed when they felt simultaneously the call to enter these ministries and the call to marriage and family life. Vatican II clarified the distinction between a call to ministry and a call to religious consecration, emphasizing that the church is called to ministry, to continue the mission of Jesus. The Council added that the religious life is complete in itself, apart from any specific ministry.

Today there are a number of ways of being a brother in the church. Brotherhood in monastic life, and among mendicant friars, evolved over the centuries into an auxiliary role. Brotherhood in institutes of clerical religious always meant auxiliary service. For most of the history of both these traditions, brothers have not had major responsibilities in apostolic service or community institutes. Some lay communities have introduced priestly ordination for a few members, though the clerical dimension in lay institutes remains intentionally minimal.

Brotherhood in Holy Cross has never paralleled any of these models; it is unique. In order to know why, we must explore its history.

## **FATHER DUJARIÉ AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE BROTHERS OF ST. JOSEPH**

The general chapter asked that we especially commemorate Father Dujarié. It is fitting to focus on him but we must also focus on those first brothers who journeyed with him toward the realization of his vision.

### **Father Dujarié**

Father Dujarié was a zealous pastor who saw the immense needs of the people around him. After the French Revolution there was much to be done to provide pastoral care and Catholic education for the people. Though he began this work single-handedly in Ruillé, Father Dujarié realized immediately the need to gather generous and dedicated persons around him and to prepare them for responding to these urgent needs. Among the most pressing needs was to provide a solid education to children in the villages. In 1812, he gathered a group of women, who eventually became the Sisters of Providence, to assist in this pastoral and educational work of the church. Similarly, in 1820, he organized a group of young men and gave them a basic formation before sending them to various parishes to serve as educators and to assist in other ways as needed.

## **Brother André Mottais**

Even with the numerous difficulties they encountered, a small group of the brothers remained faithful to this project. Among them, we recall particularly Brother André Mottais who was, with Father Dujarié, the central figure of the new foundation. He arrived in Ruillé as a postulant on October 22, 1820. In a very brief span of time, he became a central figure in the development of the group. Father Dujarié saw the need to have at least one brother initiated into the essential elements of religious life and who could thereby help to form others to this way of life. Thus, Father Dujarié sent André Mottais to the Brothers of the Christian School for five months to acquire a basic knowledge and familiarity with their way of life. Thereafter, Brother André assisted Father Dujarié in the formation and growth of the first community of brothers.

## **The Tradition of the Brothers of St. Joseph**

The early history of the Brothers of Saint Joseph tells of a small group of apostolic men who made many sacrifices for the mission. The needs of the time required brothers to live apart from one another more than they lived together. They were together for their initial formation; however, the time devoted to formation was often very short. Formation was followed quickly by assignment alone or in very small groups to parishes and schools in different parts of the diocese of Le Mans. The annual retreat was the one moment during the year when the brothers came together as community.

At the end of the annual retreat in 1831, when the difficulties encountered made it increasingly unlikely that the young group would survive, the brothers made a solemn pact of fidelity. They saw that fidelity to the mission for which they had united would be possible only if they were personally committed to remain bound together as community. Thus, on September 1, 1831, immediately after the retreat, realizing that “the seriousness of the present time which, so to speak, deprives us of all hope of expanding or even continuing to exist for any length of time...” and when there could have been the possibility for them to disband, Father Dujarié and thirteen brothers made a solemn commitment: “to remain attached to our holy Institute; to remain united as a Congregation and even as individual communities, as much and for so long a time as it will be possible for us to do so, following the same practices and Rules which we have practiced up until now; in case it should be necessary to dissolve our Congregation momentarily, to remain united in heart and affection, supporting and assisting one another.”<sup>3</sup>

We remember Father Dujarié with gratitude; he was the man who gathered the Brothers of St. Joseph and planted within them his own missionary spirit and his desire to respond to the pressing needs of Catholic education. But, we must also remember with gratitude those young men of faith who responded generously to the call to be educators and serve the church as needed in other ways. It is the fidelity of this small group of men, fidelity even when everything to which they had committed themselves appeared on the verge of collapse, which opened the door for the creation of another congregation that would prosper and become fruitful in many parts of the world.

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<sup>3</sup> Tony Catta, *Father Dujarié*; translated by Edward Heston, C.S.C.; p. 225.

## **The Brothers of St. Joseph become part of Holy Cross**

In 1837, the Brothers of St. Joseph became part of a new reality when they made a pact of union with the group of auxiliary priests founded by Father Basil Moreau and thus formed a new community, the Congregation of Holy Cross.

The Brothers of St. Joseph and the auxiliary priests retained their own identities. Father Moreau recognized the values brought to the new unity by both traditions. He established Holy Cross as one congregation, with two distinct societies, one of brothers and the other of priests. He symbolized the distinction by naming the brothers' society the "Josephites" and the priests' society the "Salvatorists." Later, when he founded the women's branch of the community, Father Moreau completed this novel design and formed a distinct society for them, the "Marianites." Distinct as each society was, unity was also proclaimed by adding to each title the words, "of Holy Cross." The brothers remained Josephites, but henceforth were also part of a larger entity: they were now the Josephites of Holy Cross.

## **Heritage**

We must keep this evolution in mind to understand the vocation of the Holy Cross Brother today.

Father Dujarié united a group of dedicated young men to serve the church as educators in a time of desperate need. He imparted to them values, which remain a significant component of the patrimony of those who now live the joint tradition of the Brothers of St. Joseph and the Josephites of Holy Cross: charity, humility, zeal, and dedication to the mission of Jesus. He prepared them to work closely with priests and laity in their service to the church. When he could no longer continue, Father Dujarié entrusted the direction of the brothers to a man whose dedication to the Lord Jesus was absolute and whose vision and commitment he could rely upon completely.

Father Moreau united lay and clerical religious, men and women, to live and work in community to continue the Lord's mission. Living his vision has not been easy. Even with all the difficulties the congregation has had living this ideal, it remains the inspiration we have received from our founder, and it is also the great gift of Holy Cross to the church now and for the future.

## **THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS TOWARD A NEW APPROACH**

The celebration of this anniversary of the Brothers of St. Joseph is a fitting moment to focus on "the ministry of education in collaboration with lay co-workers in our schools."<sup>4</sup> Education has been a principal ministry in Holy Cross from the beginning. Both priests and brothers have served, and now serve, in educational institutions throughout the world. Though this ministry is shared by all in our congregation, it has been of particular importance to the brothers from the beginning.

Though Holy Cross religious have rarely provided a preponderance of staffing for schools in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, there was a time when they were a majority presence in schools sponsored by Holy Cross in other areas. Lay teachers were seen as helpers or employees. Many schools were owned as well as operated by the congregation.

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<sup>4</sup> Proceedings of the General Chapter, 1992, p. 20

Both demographics and the impact of Vatican II compelled us to look for another paradigm. Our membership aged and declined in number. At the same time, the number of students desiring to attend many of our schools increased greatly, and the schools expanded to meet the demand. The Second Vatican Council encouraged religious to serve a variety of needs, and many religious who had served in schools moved to new ministries. The Council also inspired a new understanding of the dignity of the laity and of its right and responsibility to share in ministry. We read in *Lumen Gentium*:

All share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the body of Christ... Upon all the laity, therefore, rests the noble duty of working to extend the divine plan of salvation... Consequently, may every opportunity be given them to share diligently in the salvific work of the Church according to their ability and the needs of our times.<sup>5</sup>

In educational institutions, we see a reflection of how we have responded as a church to the ecclesiology, which emerged from the Second Vatican Council. We are among many; we are fellow workers who share with others in a common effort to foster the kingdom of God. Lay administrators, teachers, and staff are collaborators.

The changing modes we experience in our relationship with others in these institutions reflect the dynamic character of the changing situation we face. This transformation is constant, and it will continue to confront us with difficult questions about our future in the ministry of Christian education.

Several sectors of the congregation have already developed responses to this challenging reality: sharing institutional governance with the laity; working with other institutes to staff schools; encouraging and training lay leadership at all levels; developing ways to share the vision and values of Holy Cross with the entire school community. The ways in which this is implemented vary throughout the congregation, depending upon and responding to the diverse situations in which we live and minister.

Much remains to be done. How do we provide for a continuation of the Holy Cross charism in a school in which there are no longer active religious? How do we maintain our option for the poor when the schools least able to afford our presence are most in need of us? How do we incorporate the insights of our lay collaborators into our own tradition of education?

The year 1995 can be a time we renew and intensify our reflection on this important ministry. The invitation from the general chapter to reflect on our approach to education and collaboration with co-workers is a stimulus to look toward the future. The tradition of the brothers, of all in Holy Cross, in education is rich and dynamic. Yet today we face new challenges and we need to find creative ways of responding to the issues, which confront us. If we are to do this effectively, we need to analyze the situation as thoroughly as possible and then act. No doubt, this process will be painful at times, but it is also filled with promise for a bright and effective apostolic future.

Our continuing efforts to respond to the changing and challenging demands of educational ministry as well as our planning strategies for the future must be closely linked with serious and consistent efforts to promote the vocation of brothers in Holy Cross.

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<sup>5</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 32-33

## **RESOURCES**

With this circular letter, you have received a prayer booklet prepared for the celebration of the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I encourage you to use it and to adapt it as yet another resource during 1995. Other resources include the special issue of *CSC Internazionale*, which focuses on Father Dujarié, the Brothers of St. Joseph, and the vocation and ministry of the brothers today. Additional materials in English have been published and will be available to the membership. Among these is the biography of Brother Ephrem O'Dwyer written by Brother Philip Armstrong, *A MORE PERFECT LEGACY; A Portrait of Brother Ephrem O'Dwyer, C.S.C., 1888-1978*. A folder of materials has also been sent to the provincials and district superiors, which includes the vow formula used by the Brothers of St. Joseph, and some articles about or by the Brothers of Holy Cross. I encourage you to use these resources and to develop them on your local level so this anniversary can be a time for us to celebrate the rich heritage, which is ours.

## **GRIEVING THE LOSS OF A LEADER AMONG THE BROTHERS**

With the death of Brother Elmo Bransby, a member of the Eastern Province of Brothers, on November 19, 1993 we lost a member of the community who was a role model and a source of inspiration for many. Brother Elmo was trained as a scientist and an educator. He held key positions in education, particularly as President of St. Edward's university in Austin, Texas, U.S.A., from 1952 to 1957. He also influenced an entire generation of brothers as director of novices from 1963 to 1968. He served for many years in provincial and general administration, as assistant provincial, provincial, and from 1974 to 1980 as first assistant general. When he returned to the United States in 1980, he continued to work in education in various schools throughout his province. Serious problems with his eyes obliged him to reduce his workload; he then moved to the University of Notre Dame where he had a very active retirement.

Brother Elmo's example gives us a deeper glimpse into the life and vocation of a Brother of Holy Cross. He truly lived as a disciple of the Lord, always loving and attentive to those around him. He understood the importance of education and always searched for the education approach, which would genuinely respond to the changing needs of the people. We will remember him as a true disciple of the Lord, a great man of Holy Cross, and educator in the faith.

## **ANOTHER ANNIVERSARY 150 YEARS SINCE THE BIRTH OF BLESSED BROTHER ANDRÉ**

Blessed Brother André was born on August 9, 1845. In 1995, we commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth. The event will be celebrated solemnly at St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal. I invite you, during this year, to remember this confrere of ours in a special way. By his life, Brother André has shown a marvelous example of the brother's life as a man of faith, dedicated to the service of the people in need around him. He cared for the people and their suffering but always understood his encounters with those who came to him as a way to lead them to God. He knew how to use the very

special gift of healing the Lord had given him as a means to awaken in the people a greater sense of God's presence in their lives.

The sanctuary he began in Montreal has become an important center of devotion to Saint Joseph. For the pilgrims who come to the shrine every year, it is a place where they can deepen their faith and their prayer. Brothers, Priests, and Sisters of Holy Cross continue to serve at the Oratory in a variety of ministries. Like Brother André, they strive to be attentive to the needs of all who come to help them make their visit to the Shrine a true experience of faith.

### **GRIEVING THE LOSS OF SIX OF OUR CONFRERES**

Before concluding this letter, I want to add a few words on the tragedy in Rwanda and in particular on the tragic loss for Holy Cross in Rwanda. A few months ago, you received news about the disappearance of five Holy Cross Brothers. We now know that Eulade Gasasira, Jean-Baptist Mundeli, Janvier Murenzi, Leonard Karemangingo, and Venant Kayitana were killed during the first months of the disturbance. All the others, except for Father Claude Simard, left the country. During the night of October 17, Father Simard was brutally killed in his parish in Ruyenzi.

Father Simard, a member of the French Canadian Province of Priests, spent almost thirty years of his life in Rwanda. When the expatriates were asked to leave the country, he chose to remain with the people of Rwanda. In recent years, Fr. Simard wrote about the violence and destruction he had seen but also expressed his confidence that the situation would gradually improve. In his own way, he wanted to cooperate in the efforts to bring about a climate of peace and reconciliation. His desire to stay with the Rwandan people and his commitment to them cost him his life.

### **CLOSING THOUGHTS**

The general chapter invited us to designate 1995 as a year of remembrance but above all as a time to reflect on the meaning of the vocation of brothers in Holy Cross. This reflection is particularly important at this moment in history. The call to brotherhood in the broadest sense is especially significant for our world today. We all need to discover more deeply, what it means to share this gift as men who have chosen to live together and to join one another in a common mission at the service of others.

The death of our confreres in Rwanda challenges us with the reality that building brotherhood in a world marked by violence and destruction is not simple. Our willingness to dedicate ourselves to this task requires a constant and complete giving of ourselves to others.

During the year, as we reflect and celebrate, let us also pray to Saint Joseph, through the intercession of Blessed Brother André, asking that more young men will hear and respond to the call to dedicate themselves to God and to continue the mission of Jesus as Brothers of Holy Cross.

Claude Grou, C.S.C., Superior General  
December 9, 1994

Anniversary of the birth of Jacques-François Dujarié