VALUES EDUCATION
(2/2)

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Values in education.

To begin with, we are not neutral nor is the school neutral. Even a pretended neutrality is actually taking a position (4). This non-neutrality is as true for the school and its program guidelines as it is for the teacher himself. There has always been a cosmic vision of man, woman, the world and history.

In our society, in our Venezuela, which seems to be without direction, without a national program, where we see leaders who are continually undecided, on what should we place the emphasis, what contribution can I make? What can I do to make the world a better place? I, too, am responsible for the world and I want to offer my small part of the solution.

- "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9).
- Yes, otherwise you probably are his assassin.

The fundamental attitude one must have with regard to the other can be summed up in the question: What can I contribute to the needs of others? and not: How can I take advantage of their weaknesses?

Willingness to help.

There is an unpleasantness with regard to wholesome dignity that violently rejects any reference to servility or to something that we have abolished many, many years ago in our country, the country of liberators, and it is slavery.

I am referring to a value that is very much rooted in the Gospel: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve" (Luke 22:25; Matthew 20:28).

In order to be of service, one has to be willing to serve and to be fit to serve. There are those who are very willing but they have no preparation, they have never performed a service for others that was worth the trouble. This value presupposes a radical attitude in the encounter with others and with society: What contribution can I make? What can I do to make the world a better place? I, too, am responsible for the world and I want to offer my small part of the solution.

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Work

Many say that this is not a value but a punishment! And if it really is true that no one wants to work, the reality is that only with work and creation that men and women daily carry out are we going to achieve better life conditions. All work is worthy of being done and different jobs are complementary and interdependent.

This is a radical criticism of the unjust evaluation of some jobs as compared to others.

Creativity

Faced with attitudes that are uniform and of the masses stimulating thoughts and actions that are divergent is very unusual. This action may even surprise or disturb us.

"Either we invent or we are mistaken" said Simón Rodríguez.

It is important to show appreciation for the variety of roads or responses to arrive at a result or solve a problem. It is good to feel like a creator of something new as a condition of advancing history and science.

Coexistence

Our young people are rooted in coexistence which is proper to our culture. On the other hand, there are alarms that invite individualism and forgetting about...
one's neighbors in order to be on the winning side.

Fostering the encounter, coexistence, relationships among our young people is to afford them the opportunity to get to know each other and to meet each other as members of a nation. In short, God does not offer us salvation as individuals but God does want to form a people.

In place of competition, it is necessary to foster responsible solidarity without neglecting affective goals in each academic subject. Fostering personal encounters where there is knowledge and mutual appreciation and where the heart may be taught and guided by all the creative force of love. There needs to be space for growth including dependence on the mother and the unique gifts of couples and the broadening of their emotions.

Austerity
This message is repeated over and over and it levels the playing field between the rich and the poor: "It is necessary to have it all, and the very latest model; otherwise, you are a nobody". The dilemma is not in "Having or being" but in the common belief that "the more I have, the more I am".

While a few continue to devour the planet - and then subsequently throw away the leftovers - the rest are satisfied with only seeing it in the store windows and in the omnipresent store window of our television sets.

Those who take on austerity will learn to live with many fewer material goods than the rest. The domination of the emotions, St. Ignatius said, is necessary to know how to live and to enjoy what one has. To appreciate the beauty of simple, free and everyday things. The classroom can stimulate this reconciliation with the simple, with the utilization of what is still useable and with the repair of what is able to be repaired.

All of this brings us to the four ecological "R's" facing the environmental consumer contamination:
- R, as in reuse
- R, as in reduce
- R, as in repair
- R, as in recycle

Personally I am astounded as to how people, institutions and I myself use a very simple resource such as paper. Paper is cellulose and, in short, uses trees and oxygen of our planet.

Interiority
Education need to address the issue of silence of finding oneself within oneself. It is appropriate to offer space for the expression of the interior world of each student. This is a moment of anthropological methodology that deals with discovering and deepening great motivations, interests, goals and programs.

Places are needed where there is an opportunity for interiorization, prayer, personal interview. What we could do so that each student could discover his/her own fundamental life option would be beneficial and it would enable the student to meet the challenges proposed by the Gospel in the very concrete situation of the student's own people in their attitudes and behavior in accord with the Gospel.

The agents of values education
Each person is responsible for his/her own education and we all are responsible for our own education. We adult educators should review the coherence between the values that each one of us values and those that are being proposed as beneficial. We should strive to be at peace with ourselves. In short, if we do not do what we say we will end up saying in accord with our own behavior.

The child and the adolescent have a dream of growing up. And so there is the importance of models. Not as someone to copy but as points of reference and significant ones at that. It is necessary to appeal to responsibility and the good fortune of assuming the responsibility for one's own growth as a person and a child of God.

The family participates, even unknowingly, in values education. The family educates in the home and it should become involved in educational areas that influence the children (8). In a special way the Christian family should become involved to assure that among the values that are offered to their children are the following:
- a just freedom concerning material goods,
- common sociability and participation,
- clear and sensitive sex education (9).

The school as a physical and relational structure is an agent for education. It is necessary to discover what the real values are and what is the hidden curriculum at the center. We see many schools that are spaces for exclusion if not repression instead of being areas for growth and relationship.

Let us convert our schools into places for salvation. We trust in God's help and the example of Jesus of Nazareth who also was concerned with and fought against institutions.

Today this is our task.
Let's get to work! •

(9) Huidobro, Faustino, Hacia un nuevo modo de presencia de los padres de familia en la escuela, Education today, number 17, CIEC (Bogotá), 1994, pp. 31-42.
(Translator's note: The idea here, which does not necessarily translate well into English, is that "values education" needs to be taught not just intellectually but from one's own personal experience).