Note to Students of Education

The ten documents presented here are, with one exception, the work of the Congregation for Catholic Education, in The Vatican.

The first is titled Gravissimum Educationis which in 1964, emerged from the Council Fathers of Vatican II. This foundational text is referenced frequently throughout the anthology.

The final publication, *A Renewed Passion,* (abbreviated) was published in 2014, thus marking 50 years since the appearance of *Grav. Ed.*

For several reasons *Ex Corde Ecclesia,* by Pope John Paul II has been omitted.

Students of further education, especially lay teachers, will be encouraged by the vision of their profession emerging from the anthology: Catholic lay teachers are ministers in the Church!

The inclusion of this anthology of documents in our Irish LaSallian website at this time is meant to mark the Tercentenary of the death of John Baptist de la Salle, Patron St of Teachers.
DECLARATION ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

GRAVISSIMUM EDUCATIONIS

PROCLAIMED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI

ON OCTOBER 28, 1965

Introduction

The Sacred Ecumenical Council has considered with care how extremely important education is in the life of man and how its influence ever grows in the social progress of this age. (1) Indeed, the circumstances of our time have made it easier and at once more urgent to educate young people and, what is more, to continue the education of adults. Men are more aware of their own dignity and position; more and more they want to take an active part in social and especially in economic and political life. (2) Enjoying more leisure, as they sometimes do, men find that the remarkable development of technology and scientific investigation and the new means of communication offer them an opportunity of attaining more easily their cultural and spiritual inheritance and of fulfilling one another in the closer ties between groups and even between peoples.

Consequently, attempts are being made everywhere to promote more education. The rights of men to an education, particularly the primary rights of children and parents, are being proclaimed and recognized in public documents. (3) As the number of pupils rapidly increases, schools are multiplied and expanded far and wide and other educational institutions are established. New experiments are conducted in methods of education and teaching. Mighty attempts are being made to obtain education for all, even though vast numbers of children and young people are still deprived of even rudimentary training and so many others lack a suitable education in which truth and love are developed together.

To fulfill the mandate she has received from her divine founder of proclaiming the mystery of salvation to all men and of restoring all things in Christ, Holy Mother the Church must be concerned with the whole of man's life, even the secular part of it insofar as it has a bearing on his heavenly calling. (4) Therefore she has a role in the progress and development of education. Hence this sacred synod declares certain fundamental principles of Christian education especially in schools. These principles will have to be developed at greater length by a special post-conciliar commission and applied by episcopal conferences to varying local situations.

1. The Meaning of the Universal Right to an Education

All men of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education (5) that is in keeping with their ultimate goal, (6) their ability, their sex, and the culture and tradition of their country, and also in harmony with their fraternal association with other peoples in the fostering of true unity and peace on earth. For a true education aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share.

Therefore children and young people must be helped, with the aid of the latest advances in psychology and the arts and science of teaching, to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual endowments so that they may gradually acquire a mature sense of responsibility in striving endlessly to form their own lives properly and in pursuing true freedom as they surmount the vicissitudes of life with courage and constancy. Let them be given also, as they advance in years, a positive and prudent sexual education. Moreover they should be so trained to take their part in social life that properly instructed in the necessary and opportune skills they can become actively involved in various community organizations, open to discourse with others and willing to do their best to promote the common good.

This sacred synod likewise declares that children and young people have a right to be motivated to appraise moral values with a right conscience, to embrace them with a personal adherence, together with a deeper knowledge and love of God. Consequently it earnestly entreats all those who hold a position of public authority or who are in charge of education to see to it that youth is never deprived of this sacred right. It further exhorts the sons of the Church to give their attention with generosity to the entire field of education,
having especially in mind the need of extending very soon the benefits of a suitable education and training to everyone in all parts of the world.(7)

2. Christian Education

Since all Christians have become by rebirth of water and the Holy Spirit a new creature(8) 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. 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.(9) 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.(10)

3. The Authors of Education

Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators.(11) This role in education is so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking. Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered. Hence the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs. It is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and office of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught from their early years to have a knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship Him, and to love their neighbor. Here, too, they find their first experience of a wholesome human society and of the Church. Finally, it is through the family that they are gradually led to a companionship with their fellowmen and with the people of God. Let parents, then, recognize the inestimable importance a truly Christian family has for the life and progress of God's own people.(12)

The family which has the primary duty of imparting education needs help of the whole community. In addition, therefore, to the rights of parents and others to whom the parents entrust a share in the work of education, certain rights and duties belong indeed to civil society, whose role is to direct what is required for the common temporal good. Its function is to promote the education of youth in many ways, namely: to protect the duties and rights of parents and others who share in education and to give them aid; according to the principle of subsidiarity, when the endeavors of parents and other societies are lacking, to carry out the work of education in accordance with the wishes of the parents; and, moreover, as the common good demands, to build schools and institutions.(13)

Finally, in a special way, the duty of educating belongs to the Church, not merely because she must be recognized as a human society capable of educating, but especially because she has the responsibility of announcing the way of salvation to all men, of communicating the life of Christ to those who believe, and, in her unfailing solicitude, of assisting men to be able to come to the fullness of this life.(14) The Church is bound as a mother to give to these children of hers an education by which their whole life can be imbued with the spirit of Christ and at the same time do all she can to promote for all peoples the complete perfection of the human person, the good of earthly society and the building of a world that is more human.(15)

4. Various Aids to Christian Education

In fulfilling its educational role, the Church, eager to employ all suitable aids, is concerned especially about those which are her very own. Foremost among these is catechetical instruction,(16) which enlightens and strengthens the faith, nourishes life according to the spirit of Christ, leads to intelligent and active participation in the liturgical mystery(17) and gives motivation for apostolic activity. The Church esteems highly and seeks to penetrate and ennoble with her own spirit also other aids which belong to the general
heritage of man and which are of great influence in forming souls and molding men, such as the media of communication,(18) various groups for mental and physical development, youth associations, and, in particular, schools.

5. The Importance of Schools

Among all educational instruments the school has a special importance.(19) It is designed not only to develop with special care the intellectual faculties but also to form the ability to judge rightly, to hand on the cultural legacy of previous generations, to foster a sense of values, to prepare for professional life. Between pupils of different talents and backgrounds it promotes friendly relations and fosters a spirit of mutual understanding; and it establishes as it were a center whose work and progress must be shared together by families, teachers, associations of various types that foster cultural, civic, and religious life, as well as by civil society and the entire human community.

Beautiful indeed and of great importance is the of all those who aid parents in fulfilling their duties and who, as representatives of the human community, undertake the task of education in schools. This demands special qualities of mind and heart, very careful preparation, and continuing readiness to renew and to adapt.

6. The Duties and Rights of Parents

Parents who have the primary and inalienable right and duty to educate their children must enjoy true liberty in their choice of schools. Consequently, the public power, which has the obligation to protect and defend the rights of citizens, must see to it, in its concern for distributive justice, that public subsidies are paid out in such a way that parents are truly free to choose according to their conscience the schools they want for their children.(20)

In addition it is the task of the state to see to it that all citizens are able to come to a suitable share in culture and are properly prepared to exercise their civic duties and rights. Therefore the state must protect the right of children to an adequate school education, check on the ability of teachers and the excellence of their training, look after the health of the pupils and in general, promote the whole school project. But it must always keep in mind the principle of subsidiarity so that there is no kind of school monopoly, for this is opposed to the native rights of the human person, to the development and spread of culture, to the peaceful association of citizens and to the pluralism that exists today in ever so many societies.(21)

Therefore this sacred synod exhorts the faithful to assist to their utmost in finding suitable methods of education and programs of study and in forming teachers who can give youth a true education. Through the associations of parents in particular they should further with their assistance all the work of the school but especially the moral education it must impart.(22)

7. Moral and Religious Education in all Schools

Feeling very keenly the weighty responsibility of diligently caring for the moral and religious education of all her children, the Church must be present with her own special affection and help for the great number who are being trained in schools that are not Catholic. This is possible by the witness of the lives of those who teach and direct them, by the apostolic action of their fellow-students,(23) but especially by the ministry of priests and laymen who give them the doctrine of salvation in a way suited to their age and circumstances and provide spiritual aid in every way the times and conditions allow.

The Church reminds parents of the duty that is theirs to arrange and even demand that their children be able to enjoy these aids and advance in their Christian formation to a degree that is abreast of their development in secular ss. Therefore the Church esteems highly those civil authorities and societies which, bearing in mind the pluralism of contemporary society and respecting religious freedom, assist families so that the education of their children can be imparted in all schools according to the individual moral and religious principles of the families.(24)

8. Catholic Schools

The influence of the Church in the field of education is shown in a special manner by the Catholic school. No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through
baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith. So indeed the Catholic school, while it is open, as it must be, to the situation of the contemporary world, leads its students to promote efficaciously the good of the earthly city and also prepares them for service in the spread of the Kingdom of God, so that by leading an exemplary apostolic life they become, as it were, a saving leaven in the human community.

Since, therefore, the Catholic school can be such an aid to the fulfillment of the mission of the People of God and to the fostering of the dialogue between the Church and mankind, to the benefit of both, it retains even in our present circumstances the utmost importance. Consequently this sacred synod proclaims anew what has already been taught in several documents of the magisterium, namely: the right of the Church freely to establish and to conduct schools of every type and level. And the council calls to mind that the exercise of a right of this kind contributes in the highest degree to the protection of freedom of conscience, the rights of parents, as well as to the betterment of culture itself.

But let teachers recognize that the Catholic school depends upon them almost entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs. They should therefore be very carefully prepared so that both in secular and religious knowledge they are equipped with suitable qualifications and also with a pedagogical skill that is in keeping with the findings of the contemporary world. Intimately linked in charity to one another and to their students and endowed with an apostolic spirit, may teachers by their life as much as by their instruction bear witness to Christ, the unique Teacher. Let them work as partners with parents and together with them in every phase of education give due consideration to the difference of sex and the proper ends Divine Providence assigns to each sex in the family and in society. Let them do all they can to stimulate their students to act for themselves and even after graduation to continue to assist them with advice, friendship and by establishing special associations imbued with the true spirit of the Church. The work of these teachers, this sacred synod declares, is in the real sense of the word an apostolate most suited to and necessary for our times and at once a true service offered to society. The Council also reminds Catholic parents of the duty of entrusting their children to Catholic schools wherever and whenever it is possible and of supporting these schools to the best of their ability and of cooperating with them for the education of their children.

9. Different Types of Catholic Schools

To this concept of a Catholic school all schools that are in any way dependent on the Church must conform as far as possible, though the Catholic school is to take on different forms in keeping with local circumstances. Thus the Church considers very dear to her heart those Catholic schools, found especially in the areas of the new churches, which are attended also by students who are not Catholics.

Attention should be paid to the needs of today in establishing and directing Catholic schools. Therefore, though primary and secondary schools, the foundation of education, must still be fostered, great importance is to be attached to those which are required in a particular way by contemporary conditions, such as: professional and technical schools, centers for educating adults and promoting social welfare, or for the retarded in need of special care, and also schools for preparing teachers for religious instruction and other types of education.

This Sacred Council of the Church earnestly entreats pastors and all the faithful to spare no sacrifice in helping Catholic schools fulfill their function in a continually more perfect way, and especially in caring for the needs of those who are poor in the goods of this world or who are deprived of the assistance and affection of a family or who are strangers to the gift of Faith.

10. Catholic Colleges and Universities

The Church is concerned also with schools of a higher level, especially colleges and universities. In those schools dependent on her she intends that by their very constitution individual subjects be pursued according to their own principles, method, and liberty of scientific inquiry, in such a way that an ever deeper understanding in these fields may be obtained and that, as questions that are new and current are raised and investigations carefully made according to the example of the doctors of the Church and especially of St. Thomas Aquinas, there may be a deeper realization of the harmony of faith and science. Thus there is accomplished a public, enduring and pervasive influence of the Christian mind in the furtherance of culture.
and the students of these institutions are molded into men truly outstanding in their training, ready to undertake weighty responsibilities in society and witness to the faith in the world. (32)

In Catholic universities where there is no faculty of sacred theology there should be established an institute or chair of sacred theology in which there should be lectures suited to lay students. Since science advances by means of the investigations peculiar to higher scientific studies, special attention should be given in Catholic universities and colleges to institutes that serve primarily the development of scientific research.

The sacred synod heartily recommends that Catholic colleges and universities be conveniently located in different parts of the world, but in such a way that they are outstanding not for their numbers but for their pursuit of knowledge. Matriculation should be readily available to students of real promise, even though they be of slender means, especially to students from the newly emerging nations.

Since the destiny of society and of the Church itself is intimately linked with the progress of young people pursuing higher studies, (33) the pastors of the Church are to expend their energies not only on the spiritual life of students who attend Catholic universities, but, solicitous for the spiritual formation of all their children, they must see to it, after consultations between ss, that even at universities that are not Catholic there should be associations and university centers under Catholic auspices in which priests, religious and laity, carefully selected and prepared, should give abiding spiritual and intellectual assistance to the youth of the university. Whether in Catholic universities or others, young people of greater ability who seem suited for teaching or research should be specially helped and encouraged to undertake a teaching career.

11. Faculties of Sacred Sciences

The Church expects much from the zealous endeavors of the faculties of the sacred sciences. (34) For to them she entrusts the very serious responsibility of preparing her own students not only for the priestly ministry, but especially for teaching in the seats of higher ecclesiastical studies or for promoting learning on their own or for undertaking the work of a more rigorous intellectual apostolate. Likewise it is the role of these very faculties to make more penetrating inquiry into the various aspects of the sacred sciences so that an ever deepening understanding of sacred Revelation is obtained, the legacy of Christian wisdom handed down by our forefathers is more fully developed, the dialogue with our separated brethren and with non-Christians is fostered, and answers are given to questions arising from the development of doctrine. (35) Therefore ecclesiastical faculties should reappraise their own laws so that they can better promote the sacred sciences and those linked with them and, by employing up-to-date methods and aids, lead their students to more penetrating inquiry.

12. Coordination to be Fostered in Scholastic Matters

Cooperation is the order of the day. It increases more and more to supply the demand on a diocesan, national and international level. Since it is altogether necessary in scholastic matters, every means should be employed to foster suitable cooperation between Catholic schools, and between these and other schools that collaboration should be developed which the good of all mankind requires. (36) From greater coordination and cooperative endeavor greater fruits will be derived particularly in the area of academic institutions. Therefore in every university let the various faculties work mutually to this end, insofar as their goal will permit. In addition, let the universities also endeavor to work together by promoting international gatherings, by sharing scientific inquiries with one another, by communicating their discoveries to one another, by having exchange of professors for a time and by promoting all else that is conducive to greater assistance.

Conclusion

The sacred synod earnestly entreats young people themselves to become aware of the importance of the work of education and to prepare themselves to take it up, especially where because of a shortage of teachers the education of youth is in jeopardy. This same sacred synod, while professing its gratitude to priests, Religious men and women, and the laity who by their evangelical self-dedication are devoted to the noble work of education and of schools of every type and level, exhorts them to persevere generously in the work they have undertaken and, imbuing their students with the spirit of Christ, to strive to excel in pedagogy and the pursuit of knowledge in such a way that they not merely advance the internal renewal of the Church but preserve and enhance its beneficent influence upon today's world, especially the intellectual world.
NOTES


15. The Church praises those local, national and international civic authorities who, conscious of the urgent necessity in these times, expend all their energy so that all peoples may benefit from more education and


23. The Church considers it as apostolic action of great worth also when Catholic teachers and associates work in these schools. Cf. Second Vatican Council's schema of the Decree on the Lay Apostolate (1965), nos. 12 and 16.


26. Cf. especially the document mentioned in the first note; moreover this law of the Church is proclaimed by many provincial councils and in the most recent declarations of very many of the episcopal conferences.


33. Cf. Pius XII's allocution to the academic senate and students of the University of Rome, June 15, 1952: Discourses and Radio Messages, 14, p. 208: "The direction of today's society principally is placed in the mentality and hearts of the universities of today."


THE SACRED CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Introduction

1. The Catholic school is receiving more and more attention in the Church since the Second Vatican Council, with particular emphasis on the Church as she appears in the Constitutions Lumen Gentium and Gaudium et Spes. In the Council's Declaration Gravissimum Educationis it is discussed in the wider sphere of Christian education. The present document develops the idea of this Declaration, limiting itself to a deeper reflection on the Catholic school.

2. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education is aware of the serious problems which are an integral part of Christian education in a pluralistic society. It regards as a prime duty, therefore, the focusing of any attention on the nature and distinctive characteristics of school which would present itself as Catholic. Yet the diverse situations and legal systems in which the Catholic school has to function in Christian and non-Christian countries demand that local problems be faced and solved by each Church within its own social-cultural context.

3. While acknowledging this duty of the local Churches, the Sacred Congregation believes that now is the opportune moment to offer its own contribution by re-emphasising clearly the educational value of the Catholic school. It is in this value that the Catholic school's fundamental reason for existing and the basis of its genuine apostolate is to be found. This document does not pretend to be an exhaustive treatment of the subject; it merely proposes to state the premises that will lead to further fruitful study and implementation.

4. To Episcopal Conferences, pastorally concerned for all young Catholics whatever school they attend (1), the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education entrusts this present document in order that they may seek to achieve an effective system of education at all levels which corresponds to the total educational needs of young people today in Catholic schools. The Sacred Congregation also addresses itself to all who are responsible for education - parents, teachers, young people and school authorities - and urges them to pool all their resources and the means at their disposal to enable Catholic schools to provide a service which is truly civic and apostolic.

I. THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL AND THE SALVIFIC MISSION OF THE CHURCH
The Salvific Mission of the Church

5. In the fulness of time, in His mysterious plan of love, God the Father sent His only Son to begin the Kingdom of God on earth and bring about the spiritual rebirth of mankind. To continue His work of salvation, Jesus Christ founded the Church as a visible organism, living by the power of the Spirit.

6. Moved by the same Spirit, the Church is constantly deepening her awareness of herself and meditating on the mystery of her being and mission.(2) Thus she is ever rediscovering her living relationship with Christ "in order to discover greater light, energy, and joy in fulfilling her mission and determining the best way to ensure that her relationship with humanity is closer and more efficacious"(3) - that humanity of which she is a part and yet so undeniably distinct. Her destiny is to serve humanity until it reaches its fullness in Christ.

7. Evangelisation is, therefore, the mission of the Church; that is she must proclaim the good news of salvation to all, generate new creatures in Christ through Baptism, and train them to live knowingly as children of God.

Means available for the Mission of the Church

8. To carry out her saving mission, the Church uses, above all, the means which Jesus Christ has given her. She also uses other means which at different times and in different cultures have proved effective in achieving and, promoting the development of the human person. The Church adapts these means to the changing conditions and emerging needs of mankind(4). In her encounter with differing cultures and with man's progressive achievements, the Church proclaims the faith and reveals "to all ages the transcendent goal which alone gives life its full meaning"(5). She establishes her own schools because she considers them as a privileged means of promoting the formation of the whole man, since the school is a centre in which a specific concept of the world, of man, and of history is developed and conveyed.

Contribution of the Catholic school towards the Salvific Mission of the Church

9. The Catholic school forms part of the saving mission of the Church, especially for education in the faith. Remembering that "the simultaneous development of man's psychological and moral consciousness is demanded by Christ almost as a pre-condition for the reception of the befitting divine gifts of truth and grace"(6), the Church fulfills her obligation to foster in her children a full awareness of their rebirth to a new life(7). It is precisely in the Gospel of Christ, taking root in the minds and lives of the faithful, that the Catholic school finds its definition as it comes to terms with the cultural conditions of the times.

The Church's educational involvement and cultural pluralism

10. In the course of the centuries "while constantly holding to the fullness of divine truth"(8) the Church has progressively used the sources and the means of culture in order to deepen her understanding of revelation and promote constructive dialogue with the world. Moved by the faith through which she firmly believes herself to be led by the Spirit of the Lord, the Church seeks to discern in the events, needs and hopes of our era(9) the most insistent demands which she must answer if she is to carry out God's plan.

11. One such demand is a pressing need to ensure the presence of a Christian mentality in the society of the present day, marked, among other things, by cultural pluralism. For it is Christian thought which constitutes a sound criterion of judgment in the midst of conflicting concepts and behaviour: "Reference to Jesus Christ teaches man to discern the values which ennoble from those which degrade him"(10).

12. Cultural pluralism, therefore, leads the Church to reaffirm her mission of education to insure strong character formation. Her children, then, will be capable both of resisting the debilitating influence of relativism and of living up to the demands made on them by their Baptism. It also stimulates her to foster truly Christian living and apostolic communities, equipped to make their own positive contribution, in a spirit of cooperation, to the building up of the secular society. For this reason the Church is prompted to mobilise her educational resources in the face of the materialism, pragmatism and technocracy of contemporary society.

13. The Church upholds the principle of a plurality of school systems in order to safeguard her objectives in the face of cultural pluralism. In other words, she encourages the co-existence and, if possible, the cooperation of diverse educational institutions which will allow young people to be formed by value judgments based on a specific view of the world and to be trained to take an active part in the construction of a community through which the building of society itself is promoted.

14. Thus, while policies and opportunities differ from place to place, the Catholic school has its place in any national school system. By offering such an alternative the Church wishes to respond to the obvious need for
cooperation in a society characterised by cultural pluralism. Moreover, in this way she helps to promote that freedom of teaching which champions and guarantees freedom of conscience and the parental right to choose the school best suited to parents’ educational purpose.(11)

15. Finally, the Church is absolutely convinced that the educational aims of the Catholic school in the world of today perform an essential and unique service for the Church herself. It is, in fact, through the school that she participates in the dialogue of culture with her own positive contribution to the cause of the total formation of man. The absence of the Catholic school would be a great loss(12) for civilisation and for the natural and supernatural destiny of man.

II. PRESENT DIFFICULTIES OVER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

16. In the light of her mission of salvation, the Church considers that the Catholic school provides a privileged environment for the complete formation of her members, and that it also provides a highly important service to mankind. Nevertheless, she is aware of the many problems that exist and objections that are made against Catholic schools sometimes regarding the very validity of their existence and their functions. The issue is really part of a much wider problem which faces all institutions as such in a society as the present, characterised by rapid and profound change.

Objections raised against Catholic schools

17. In the debate about Catholic schools there are some easily identifiable central objections and difficulties. These need to be borne in mind if discussion is to be relevant to the actual situation and if teachers are to make a serious attempt to adapt their work to the needs of the contemporary world.

18. In the first place many people, both inside and outside the Church, motivated by a mistaken sense of the lay role in secular society, attack Catholic schools as institutions. They do not admit that, apart from the individual witness of her members, the Church also may offer witness by means of her institutions, e.g. those dedicated to the search for truth or to works of charity.

19. Others claim that Catholic schools make use of a human institution for religious and confessional purposes. Christian education can sometimes run into the danger of a so-called proselytism, of imparting a one-sided outlook. This can happen only when Christian educators misunderstand the nature and methods of Christian education. Complete education necessarily includes a religious dimension. Religion is an effective contribution to the development of other aspects of a personality in the measure in which it is integrated into general education.

20. According to others, Catholic schools have outlived their time; as institutions they were a necessary substitute in the past but have no place at a time when civil authority assumes responsibility for education. In fact, as the State increasingly takes control of education and establishes its own so-called neutral and monolithic system, the survival of those natural communities, based on a shared concept of life, is threatened. Faced with this situation, the Catholic school offers an alternative which is in conformity with the wishes of the members of the community of the Church.

21. In some countries Catholic schools have been obliged to restrict their educational activities to wealthier social classes, thus giving an impression of social and economic discrimination in education. But this occurs only where the State has not weighed the advantages of an alternative presence in their pluralistic society. From such nearsightedness considerable difficulties have arisen for Catholic schools.

22. Allied to these points, objections are raised concerning the educational results of the Catholic school. They are sometimes accused of not knowing how to form convinced, articulate Christians ready to take their place in social and political life. Every educational enterprise, however, involves the risk of failure and one must not be too discouraged by apparent or even real failures, since there are very many formative influences on young people and results often have to be calculated on a long-term basis.

23. Before concluding these comments on the objections raised against Catholic schools, one must remember the context in which contemporary work in the field of education is undertaken, and especially in the Church. The school problem in our rapidly changing society is serious for everyone. The Second Vatican Council has encouraged a more openminded approach which has sometimes been misrepresented in theory and practice. There are difficulties in the provision of adequate staff and finance. In such a situation should
the Church perhaps give up her apostolic mission in Catholic schools, as some people would like her to do, and direct her energy to a more direct work of evangelisation in sectors considered to be of higher priority or more suited to her spiritual mission, or should she make State schools the sole object of her pastoral activity? Such a solution would not only be contrary to the directives of the Vatican Council, but would also be opposed to the Church's mission and to what is expected of her by Christian people. What follows emphasises this fact.

_Some aspects of schools today_

24. To understand the real nature of the Catholic school one cannot divorce it from wider modern problems concerning schools in general. Apart from the ideas advanced by the promoters of de-schooling - a theory which now seems of minor significance - contemporary society tends to place greater importance than ever on the specific function of the school: its social significance (parental participation, increased democratization, equality of opportunity); its tendency to coordinate and eventually include the educational work of other institutions; the extension of the statutory duration of attendance at school.

**III. THE SCHOOL AS A CENTRE OF HUMAN FORMATION**

25. To understand fully the specific mission of the Catholic school it is essential to keep in mind the basic concept of what a school is; that which does not reproduce the characteristic features of a school cannot be a Catholic school.

_The general purpose of a school_

26. A close examination of the various definitions of school and of new educational trends at every level, leads one to formulate the concept of school as a place of integral formation by means of a systematic and critical assimilation of culture. A school is, therefore, a privileged place in which, through a living encounter with a cultural inheritance, integral formation occurs.

27. This vital approach takes place in the school in the form of personal contacts and commitments which consider absolute values in a life-context and seek to insert them into a life-framework. Indeed, culture is only educational when young people can relate their study to real-life situations with which they are familiar. The school must stimulate the pupil to exercise his intelligence through the dynamics of understanding to attain clarity and inventiveness. It must help him spell out the meaning of his experiences and their truths. Any school which neglects this duty and which offers merely pre-cast conclusions hinders the personal development of its pupils.

_School and attitudes of life_

28. From this it is clear that the school has to review its entire programme of formation, both its content and the methods used, in the light of that vision of the reality from which it draws its inspiration and on which it depends.

29. Either implicit or explicit reference to a determined attitude to life (Weltanschauung) is unavoidable in education because it comes into every decision that is made. It is, therefore, essential, if for no other reason than for a unity in teaching, that each member of the school community, albeit with differing degrees of awareness, adopts a common vision, a common outlook on life, based on adherence to a scale of values in which he believes. This is what gives teachers and adults authority to educate. It must never be forgotten that the purpose of instruction at school is education, that is, the development of man from within, freeing him from that conditioning which would prevent him from becoming a, fully integrated human being. The school must begin from the principle that its educational programme is intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person.

30. It is one of the formal tasks of a school, as an institution for education, to draw out the ethical dimension for the precise purpose of arousing the individual's inner spiritual dynamism and to aid his achieving that moral freedom which complements the psychological. Behind this moral freedom, however, stand those absolute values which alone give meaning and value to human life. This has to be said because the tendency to adopt present-day values as a yardstick is not absent even in the educational world. The danger is always to react to passing, superficial ideas and to lose sight of the much deeper needs of the contemporary world.

_The school in today's society_
31. Precisely because the school endeavours to answer the needs of a society characterised by
depersonalisation and a mass production mentality which so easily result from scientific and technological
developments, it must develop into an authentically formational school, reducing such risks to a minimum.
**It must develop persons who are responsible and inner-directed, capable of choosing freely in
conformity with their conscience.** This is simply another way of saying that the school is an institution
where young people gradually learn to open themselves up to life as it is, and to **create in themselves a
definite attitude to life as it should be.**

32. When seen in this light, a school is not only a place where one is given a choice of intellectual values,
but a place where one has presented an array of values which are actively lived. **The school must be a
community whose values are communicated through the interpersonal and sincere relationships of its
members and through both individual and corporative adherence to the outlook on life that permeates
the school.**

IV.
**THE EDUCATIONAL WORK OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

**Specific character of the Catholic school**

33. Having stated the characteristics of the Catholic school from the point of view of "school" we can now
examine its **Catholic quality, namely its reference to a Christian concept of life centred on Jesus
Christ.**

34. **Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school.** His revelation
gives new meaning to life and helps man to direct his thought, action and will according to the Gospel,
making the beatitudes his norm of life. **The fact that in their own individual ways all members of the
school community share this Christian vision, makes the school "Catholic"; principles of the Gospel in
this manner become the educational norms since the school then has them as its internal motivation
and final goal.

35. The Catholic school is committed thus to the development of the whole man, since in Christ, the Perfect
Man, all human values find their fulfilment and unity. Herein lies the specifically Catholic character of the
school. Its duty to cultivate human values in their own legitimate right in accordance with its particular
mission to serve all men has its origin in the figure of Christ. He is the One Who ennobles man, gives
meaning to human life, and is the Model which the Catholic school offers to its pupils.

36. If, like every other school, the Catholic school has as its aim the critical communication of human culture
and the total formation of the individual, it works towards this goal guided by its Christian vision of reality
"through which our cultural heritage acquires its special place in the total al life of man”(13). Mindful of the
fact that man has been redeemed by Christ, the Catholic school aims at forming in the Christian those
particular virtues which will enable him to live a new life in Christ and help him to play faithfully his part in
building up the Kingdom of God(14).

37. These premises indicate the duties and the content of the Catholic school. Its task is fundamentally a
synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all the
different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second in
the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian.

**Integration of faith and culture**

38. In helping pupils to achieve through the medium of its teaching an integration of faith and culture, the
Catholic school sets out with a deep awareness of the value of knowledge as such. Under no circumstances
does it wish to divert the imparting of knowledge from its rightful objective.

39. Individual subjects must be taught according to their own particular methods. It would be wrong to
consider subjects as mere adjuncts to faith or as a useful means of teaching apologetics. They enable the
pupil to assimilate skills, knowledge, intellectual methods and moral and social attitudes, all of which help to
develop his personality and lead him to take his place as an active member of the community of man. Their
aim is not merely the attainment of knowledge but the acquisition of values and the discovery of truth.

40. Since the educative mission of the Catholic school is so wide, the teacher is in an excellent position to
guide the pupil to a deepening of his faith and to enrich and enlighten his human knowledge with the data of
the faith. While there are many occasions in teaching when pupils can be stimulated by insights of faith, a Christian education acknowledges the valid contribution which can be made by academic subjects towards the development of a mature Christian. The teacher can form the mind and heart of his pupils and guide them to develop a total commitment to Christ, with their whole personality enriched by human culture.

41. The school considers human knowledge as a truth to be discovered. In the measure in which subjects are taught by someone who knowingly and without restraint seeks the truth, they are to that extent Christian. Discovery and awareness of truth leads man to the discovery of Truth itself. A teacher who is full of Christian wisdom, well prepared in his own subject, does more than convey the sense of what he is teaching to his pupils. Over and above what he says, he guides his pupils beyond his mere words to the heart of total Truth.

42. The cultural heritage of mankind includes other values apart from the specific ambient of truth. When the Christian teacher helps a pupil to grasp, appreciate and assimilate these values, he is guiding him towards eternal realities. This movement towards the Uncreated Source of all knowledge highlights the importance of teaching for the growth of faith.

43. The achievement of this specific aim of the Catholic school depends not so much on subject matter or methodology as on the people who work there. The extent to which the Christian message is transmitted through education depends to a very great extent on the teachers. The integration of culture and faith is mediated by the other integration of faith and life in the person of the teacher. The nobility of the task to which teachers are called demands that, in imitation of Christ, the only Teacher, they reveal the Christian message not only by word but also by every gesture of their behaviour. This is what makes the difference between a school whose education is permeated by the Christian spirit and one in which religion is only regarded as an academic subject like any other.

Integration of faith and life

44. The fundamental aim of teaching is the assimilation of objective values, and, when this is undertaken for an apostolic purpose, it does not stop at an integration of faith and culture but leads the pupil on to a personal integration of faith and life.

45. The Catholic school has as its specific duty the complete Christian formation of its pupils, and this task is of special significance today because of the inadequacy of the family and society. It knows that this integration of faith and life is part of a life-long process of conversion until the pupil becomes what God wishes him to be. Young people have to be taught to share their personal lives with God. They are to overcome their individualism and discover, in the light of faith, their specific role to live responsibly in a community with others. The very pattern of the Christian life draws them to commit themselves to serve God in their brethren and to make the world a better place for man to live in.

46. The Catholic school should teach its pupils to discern in the voice of the universe the Creator Whom it reveals and, in the conquests of science, to know God and man better. In the daily life of the school, the pupil should learn that he is called to be a living witness to God's love for men by the way he acts, and that he is part of that salvation history which has Christ, the Saviour of the world, as its goal.

47. Being aware that Baptism by itself does not make a Christian - living and acting in conformity with the Gospel is necessary - the Catholic school tries to create within its walls a climate(15) in which the pupil's faith will gradually mature and enable him to assume the responsibility placed on him by Baptism. It will give pride of place in the education it provides through Christian Doctrine to the gradual formation of conscience in fundamental, permanent virtues - above all the theological virtues, and charity in particular, which is, so to speak, the life-giving spirit which transforms a man of virtue into a man of Christ. Christ, therefore, is the teaching-centre, the Model on Whom the Christian shapes his life. In Him the Catholic school differs from all others which limit themselves to forming men. Its task is to form Christian men, and, by its teaching and witness, show non-Christians something of the mystery of Christ Who surpasses all human understanding (16).

48. The Catholic school will work closely with other Christian bodies (the family, the parish and Christian community, youth associations, etc.). But one must not overlook many other spheres of activity in society which are sources of information and in their various ways have an educational influence. Alongside this so-called "parallel school", the school proper is an active force through the systematic formation of the pupils' critical faculties to bring them to a measure of self control(17) and the ability to choose freely and conscientiously in the face of what is offered by the organs of social communication. They must be taught to
subject these things to a critical and personal analysis, take what is good, and integrate it into their Christian human culture.

Religious teaching

49. The specific mission of the school, then, is a critical, systematic transmission of culture in the light of faith and the bringing forth of the power of Christian virtue by the integration of culture with faith and of faith with living. Consequently, the Catholic school is aware of the importance of the Gospel-teaching as transmitted through the Catholic Church. It is, indeed, the fundamental element in the educative process as it helps the pupil towards his conscious choice of living a responsible and coherent way of life.

50. Without entering into the whole problem of teaching religion in schools, it must be emphasised that, while such teaching is not merely confined to "religious classes" within the school curriculum, it must, nevertheless, also be imparted explicitly and in a systematic manner to prevent a distortion in the child's mind between general and religious culture. The fundamental difference between religious and other forms of education is that its aim is not simply intellectual assent to religious truths but also a total commitment of one's whole being to the Person of Christ.

51. It is recognised that the proper place for catechesis is the family helped by other Christian communities, especially the local parish. But the importance and need for catechetical instruction in Catholic schools cannot be sufficiently emphasised. Here young people are helped to grow towards maturity in faith.

52. The Catholic school must be alert at all times to developments in the fields of child psychology, pedagogy and particularly catechetics, and should especially keep abreast of directives from competent ecclesiastical authorities. The school must do everything in its power to aid the Church to fulfil its catechetical mission and so must have the best possible qualified teachers of religion.

The Catholic school as the centre of the educative Christian community

53. For all these reasons, Catholic schools must be seen as "meeting places for those who wish to express Christian values in education". The Catholic school, far more than any other, must be a community whose aim is the transmission of values for living. Its work is seen as promoting a faith-relationship with Christ in Whom all values find fulfilment. But faith is principally assimilated through contact with people whose daily life bears witness to it. Christian faith, in fact, is born and grows inside a community.

54. The community aspect of the Catholic school is necessary because of the nature of the faith and not simply because of the nature of man and the nature of the educational process which is common to every school. No Catholic school can adequately fulfil its educational role on its own. It must continually be fed and stimulated by its Source of life, the Saving Word of Christ as it is expressed in Sacred Scripture, in Tradition, especially liturgical and sacramental tradition, and in the lives of people, past and present, who bear witness to that Word.

55. The Catholic school loses its purpose without constant reference to the Gospel and a frequent encounter with Christ. It derives all the energy necessary for its educational work from Him and thus "creates in the school community an atmosphere permeated with the Gospel spirit of freedom and love". In this setting the pupil experiences his dignity as a person before he knows its definition. Faithful, therefore, to the claims of man and of God, the Catholic school makes its own contribution towards man's liberation, making him, in other words, what his destiny implies, one who talks consciously with God, one who is there for God to love.

56. "This simple religious doctrine is the cornerstone of the existential, Christian metaphysic." This is the basis of a Catholic school's educational work. Education is not given for the purpose of gaining power but as an aid towards a fuller understanding of, and communion with man, events and things. Knowledge is not to be considered as a means of material prosperity and success, but as a call to serve and to be responsible for others.

Other aspects of the educational process in Catholic schools

57. Whether or not the Catholic community forms its young people in the faith by means of a Catholic school, a Catholic school in itself is far from being divisive or presumptuous. It does not exacerbate differences, but rather aids cooperation and contact with others. It opens itself to others and respects their way of thinking and of living. It wants to share their anxieties and their hopes as it, indeed, shares their present and future lot in this world.
58. Since it is motivated by the Christian ideal, the Catholic school is particularly sensitive to the call from every part of the world for a more just society, and it tries to make its own contribution towards it. It does not stop at the courageous teaching of the demands of justice even in the face of local opposition, but tries to put these demands into practice in its own community in the daily life of the school. In some countries, because of local laws and economic conditions, the Catholic school runs the risk of giving counter-witness by admitting a majority of children from wealthier families. Schools may have done this because of their need to be financially self-supporting. This situation is of great concern to those responsible for Catholic education, because first and foremost the Church offers its educational service to “the poor or those who are deprived of family help and affection or those who are far from the faith” (22). Since education is an important means of improving the social and economic condition of the individual and of peoples, if the Catholic school were to turn its attention exclusively or predominantly to those from the wealthier social classes, it could be contributing towards maintaining their privileged position, and could thereby continue to favour a society which is unjust.

59. It is obvious that in such a demanding educational policy all participants must be committed to it freely. It cannot be imposed, but is offered as a possibility, as good news, and as such can be refused. However, in order to bring it into being and to maintain it, the school must be able to count on the unity of purpose and conviction of all its members.

The participation of the Christian community in the Catholic schools' work

60. From the outset the Catholic school declares its programme and its determination to uphold it. It is a genuine community bent on imparting, over and above an academic education, all the help it can to its members to adopt a Christian way of life. For the Catholic school mutual respect means service to the Person of Christ. Cooperation is between brothers and sisters in Christ. A policy of working for the common good is undertaken seriously as working for the building up of the Kingdom of God.

61. The cooperation required for the realisation of this aim is a duty in conscience for all the members of the community: teachers, parents, pupils, administrative personnel. Each has his or her own part to play. Cooperation of all, given in the spirit of the Gospel, is by its very nature a witness not only to Christ as the corner-stone of the community, but also as the light Who shines far beyond it.

The Catholic school as a service to the Church and to society

62. The Catholic school community, therefore, is an irreplaceable source of service, not only to the pupils and its other members, but also to society. Today especially one sees a world which clamours for solidarity and yet experiences the rise of new forms of individualism. Society can take note from the Catholic school that it is possible to create true communities out of a common effort for the common good. In the pluralistic society of today the Catholic school, moreover, by maintaining an institutional Christian presence in the academic world, proclaims by its very existence the enriching power of the faith as the answer to the enormous problems which afflict mankind. Above all, it is called to render a humble, loving service to the Church by ensuring that she is present in the scholastic field for the benefit of the human family.

63. In this way the Catholic school performs "an authentic apostolate" (23). To work, therefore, in this apostolate "means apostolate performing a unique and invaluable work for the Church" (24).

V. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL TODAY

64. The real problem facing the Catholic school is to identify and lay down the conditions necessary for it to fulfil its mission. It is, therefore, a problem requiring clear and positive thinking, courage, perseverance and cooperation to tackle the necessary measures without being overawed by the size of the difficulties from within and without, nor "by persistent and outdated slogans" (25), which in the last analysis aim to abolish Catholic schools (26). To give into them would be suicidal. To favour in a more or less radical form a merely non-institutional presence of the Church in the scholastic field, is a dangerous illusion (27).

65. At great cost and sacrifice our forebears were inspired by the teaching of the Church to establish schools which enriched mankind and responded to the needs of time and place. While it recognises its own inadequacies, the Catholic school is conscious of its responsibility to continue this service. Today, as in the past, some scholastic institutions which bear the name Catholic do not appear to correspond fully to the principles of education which should be their distinguishing feature and, therefore, do not fulfil the duties
which the Church and the society has every right to expect of them. Without pretending to make an exhaustive enquiry into the factors which may explain the difficulties under which the Catholic school labours, here are a few points in the hope of encouraging some thought as a stimulus to courageous reform.

66. Often what is perhaps fundamentally lacking among Catholics who work in a school is a clear realisation of the identity of a Catholic school and the courage to follow all the consequences of its uniqueness. One must recognise that, more than ever before, a Catholic school's job is infinitely more difficult, more complex, since this is a time when Christianity demands to be clothed in fresh garments, when all manner of changes have been introduced in the Church and in secular life, and, particularly, when a pluralist mentality dominates and the Christian Gospel is increasingly pushed to the side-lines.

67. It is because of this that loyalty to the educational aims of the Catholic school demands constant self-criticism and return to basic principles, to the motives which inspire the Church's involvement in education. They do not provide a quick answer to contemporary problems, but they give a direction which can begin to solve them. Account has to be taken of new pedagogical insights and collaboration with others, irrespective of religious allegiance, who work honestly for the true development of mankind first and foremost with schools of other Christians - in the interests, even in this field, of Christian unity but also with State schools. In addition to meetings of teachers and mutual research, this collaboration can be extended to the pupils themselves and their families.

68. In conclusion it is only right to repeat what has been said above (28) about the considerable difficulties arising from legal and economic systems operating in different countries which hinder the activities of the Catholic school, difficulties which prevent them from extending their service to all social and economic classes and compel them to give the false impression of providing schools simply for the rich.

VI. PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS

69. After reflecting on the difficulties which the Catholic school encounters, we turn now to the practical possibilities open to those who work in, or are responsible for, these schools. The following more serious questions have been selected for special comment: organisation and planning, ensuring the distinctive Catholic character of the school, the involvement of religious in the school apostolate, the Catholic school in mission countries, pastoral care of teachers, professional associations, the economic question.

The organisation and planning of the Catholic school

70. Catholic education is inspired by the general principles enunciated by the Second Vatican Council concerning collaboration between the hierarchy and those who work in the apostolate. In consequence of the principle of participation and co-responsibility, the various groupings which constitute the educational community are, according to their several competencies, to be associated in decision-making concerning the Catholic school and in the application of decisions once taken (29). It is first and foremost at the stage of planning and of putting into operation an educational project that this principle of the Council is to be applied. The assigning of various responsibilities is governed by the principle of subsidiarity, and, with reference to this principle, ecclesiastical authority respects the competence of the professionals in teaching and education. Indeed, "the right and duty of exercising the apostolate is common to all the faithful, clerical and lay, and laypeople have their own proper competence in the building up of the Church" (30).

71. This principle enunciated by the Second Vatican Council is particularly applicable to the apostolate of the Catholic school which so closely unites teaching and religious education to a well-defined professional activity. It is here, above all, that the particular mission of the lay person is put into effect, a mission which has become "all the more imperative in view of the fact that many areas of human life have become very largely autonomous. This is as it should be, but it sometimes involves a certain withdrawal from ethical and religious influences and thereby creates a serious danger to Christian life" (31). Moreover, lay involvement in Catholic schools is an invitation "to cooperate more closely with the apostolate of the Bishops" (32), both in the field of religious instruction (33) and in more general religious education which they endeavour to promote by assisting the pupils to a personal integration of culture and faith and of faith and living. The Catholic school in this sense, therefore, receives from the Bishops in some manner the "mandate" of an apostolic undertaking (34).

72. The essential element of such a mandate is "union with those whom the Holy Spirit has assigned to rule God's Church"(35) and this link is expressed especially in overall pastoral strategy. "In the whole diocese or in given areas of it the coordination and close interconnection of all apostolic works should be fostered under
the direction of the Bishop. In this way all undertakings and organisation, whether catechetical, missionary, charitable, social, family, educational, or any other programme serving a pastoral goal will be coordinated. Moreover, the unity of the diocese will thereby be made more evident"(36). This is something which is obviously indispensable for the Catholic school, inasmuch as it involves "apostolic cooperation on the part of both branches of the clergy, as well as of the religious and the laity"(37).

**Ensuring the distinctive Catholic character of the school**

73. This is the framework which guarantees the distinctive Catholic character of the school. While the Bishop's authority is to watch over the orthodoxy of religious instruction and the observance of Christian morals in the Catholic schools, it is the task of the whole educative community to ensure that a distinctive Christian educational environment is maintained in practice. This responsibility applies chiefly to Christian parents who confide their children to the school. Having chosen it does not relieve them of a personal duty to give their children a Christian upbringing. They are bound to cooperate actively with the school - which means supporting the educational efforts of the school and utilising the structures offered for parental involvement, in order to make certain that the school remains faithful to Christian principles of education. An equally important role belongs to the teachers in safeguarding and developing the distinctive mission of the Catholic school, particularly with regard to the Christian atmosphere which should characterise its life and teaching. Where difficulties and conflicts arise about the authentic Christian character of the Catholic school, hierarchical authority can and must intervene.

**Involvement of religious in the school apostolate**

74 Some problems arise from the fact that certain Religious Institutes, founded for the school apostolate, have subsequently abandoned school work because of social or political changes and have involved themselves in other activities. In some cases they have given up their schools as a result of their efforts to adapt their lives and mission to the recommendations of the Second Vatican Council and to the spirit of their original foundation.

75. It is necessary, however, to re-assess certain arguments adopted against the teaching apostolate. Some would say they have chosen a "more direct" apostolate (38), forgetting the excellence and the apostolic value of educational work in the school (39). Others would appeal to the greater importance of individual over community involvement, of personal over institutional work. The advantages, however, of a community apostolate in the educational field are self evident. Sometimes the abandonment of Catholic schools is justified on the grounds of an apparent failure to gain perceptible results in pursuing certain objectives. If this were true, it would surely be an invitation to undertake a fundamental revision of the whole conduct of the school, reminding everyone who ventures into education of the need for humility and hope and the conviction that his work cannot be assessed by the same rationalistic criteria which apply to other professions(40).

76. It is the responsibility of competent local ecclesiastical authority to evaluate the advisability and necessity of any change to other forms of apostolic work whenever particular circumstances dictate the need for a re-assessment of the school apostolate, keeping in mind the observations above on overall pastoral strategy(41).

**The Catholic school in mission countries**

77. The importance of the Catholic school apostolate is much greater when it is a question of the foreign missions. Where the young Church still rely on the presence of foreign missionaries, the effectiveness of the Catholic school will largely depend on its ability to adapt to local needs. It must ensure that it is a true expression of the local and national Catholic community and that it contributes to the community's willingness to cooperate. In countries where the Christian community is still at its beginning and incapable of assuming responsibility for its own schools, the Bishops will have to undertake this responsibility themselves for the time being, but must endeavour little by little to fulfil the aims outlined above in connection with the organisation of the Catholic schools(42).

**Pastoral care of teachers**

78. By their witness and their behaviour teachers are of the first importance to impart a distinctive character to Catholic schools. It is, therefore, indispensable to ensure their continuing formation through some form of suitable pastoral provision. This must aim to animate them as witnesses of Christ in the classroom and tackle the problems of their particular apostolate, especially regarding a Christian vision of the world and of education, problems also connected with the art of teaching in accordance with the principles of the Gospel.
A huge field is thus opened up for national and international organisations which bring together Catholic teachers and educational institutions at all levels.

79. Professional organisations whose aim is to protect the interests of those who work in the educational field cannot themselves be divorced from the specific mission of the Catholic school. The rights of the people who are involved in the school must be safeguarded in strict justice. But, no matter what material interests may be at stake, or what social and moral conditions affect their professional development, the principle of the Second Vatican Council has a special application in this context: "The faithful should learn how to distinguish carefully between those rights and duties which are theirs as members of the Church, and those which they have as members of society. Let them strive to harmonize the two, remembering that in every temporal affair they must be guided by a Christian conscience" (43). Moreover, "even when preoccupied with temporal cares, the laity can and must perform valuable work for the evangelisation of the world" (44). Therefore, the special organisations set up to protect the rights of teachers, parents and pupils must not forget the special mission of the Catholic school to be of service in the Christian education of youth. "The layman is at the same time a believer and a citizen and should be constantly led by Christian conscience alone" (45).

80. In the light of what has been said, these associations, while being concerned for the rights of their members, must also be alive to the responsibilities which are part and parcel of the specific apostolate of the Catholic school. Catholic teachers who freely accept posts in schools, which have a distinctive character, are obliged to respect that character and give their active support to it under the direction of those responsible.

**Economic situation of Catholic schools**

81. From the economic point of view the position of very many Catholic schools has improved and in some countries is perfectly acceptable. This is the case where governments have appreciated the advantages and the necessity of a plurality of school systems which offer alternatives to a single State system. While at first Catholic schools received various public grants, often merely conceded, they later began to enter into agreements, conventions, contracts, etc. which guarantee both the preservation of the special status of the Catholic school and its ability to perform its function adequately. Catholic schools are thereby more or less closely associated with the national system and are assured of an economic and juridical status similar to State schools.

82. Such agreements have been reached through the good offices of the respective governments, which have recognised the public service provided by Catholic schools, and through the determination of the Bishops and the Catholic community at the national level. These solutions are an encouragement to those responsible for Catholic schools in countries where the Catholic community must still shoulder a very heavy burden of cost to maintain an often highly important network of Catholic schools. These Catholics need to be assured, as they strive to regularise the frequent injustices in their school situation, that they are not only helping to provide every child with an education that respects his complete development, but they are also defending freedom of teaching and the right of parents to choose an education for their children which conforms to their legitimate requirements (46).

**VII. COURAGEOUS AND UNIFIED COMMITMENT**

83. To commit oneself to working in accordance with the aims of a Catholic School is to make a great act of faith in the necessity and influence of this apostolate. Only one who has this conviction and accepts Christ's message, who has a love for and understands today's young people, who appreciates what people's real problems and difficulties are, will be led to contribute with courage and even audacity to the progress of this apostolate in building up a Catholic school, which puts its theory into practice, which renews itself according to its ideals and to present needs.

84. The validity of the educational results of a Catholic school, however, cannot be measured by immediate efficiency. In the field of Christian education, not only is the freedom-factor of teacher and pupil relationship with each other to be considered, but also the factor of grace. Freedom and grace come to fruition in the spiritual order which defies any merely temporal assessment. When grace infuses human liberty, it makes freedom fully free and raises it to its highest perfection in the freedom of the Spirit. It is when the Catholic school adds its weight, consciously and overtly, to the liberating power of grace, that it becomes the Christian leaven in the world.
85. In the certainty that the Spirit is at work in every person, the Catholic school offers itself to all, non-
Christians included, with all its distinctive aims and means, acknowledging, preserving and promoting the
spiritual and moral qualities, the social and cultural values, which characterise different civilisations(47).

86. Such an outlook overrides any question of the disproportion between resources available and the number
of children reached directly by the Catholic school; nothing can stop it from continuing to render its service.
The only condition it would make, as is its right, for its continued existence would be remaining faithful to
the educational aims of the Catholic school. Loyalty to these aims is, moreover, the basic motive which must
inspire any needed reorganisation of the Catholic school institution.

87. If all who are responsible for the Catholic school would never lose sight of their mission and the
apostolic value of their teaching, the school would enjoy better conditions in which to function in the present
and would faithfully hand on its mission to future generations. They themselves, moreover, would most
surely be filled with a deep conviction, joy and spirit of sacrifice in the knowledge that they are offering
innumerable young people the opportunity of growing in faith, of accepting and living its precious principles
of truth, charity and hope.

88. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, to foster the full realisation of the aims of the Catholic
school, extends once more its warmest and heartfelt encouragement to all who work in these
schools. There
can be no doubt whatever of the importance of the apostolate of teaching in the total saving mission of the
Church.

89. The Church herself in particular looks with confidence and trust to Religious Institutes which have
received a special charism of the Holy Spirit and have been most active in the education of the young. May
they be faithful to the inspiration of their founders and give their whole-heartet support to the apostolic work
of education in Catholic schools and not allow themselves to be diverted from this by attractive invitations to
undertake other, often seemingly more effective, apostolates.

90. A little more than ten years after the end of the Second Vatican Council the Sacred Congregation for
Catholic Education repeats the final exhortation of the Declaration on Christian Education to the priests,
religious and lay people who fulfil their mission in the Catholic school. It reads. "They are urged to
persevere generously in their chosen duty, continuing to instil into their pupils the spirit of Christ; let them
endeavour to excel in the art of teaching and in the advancement of knowledge. Thus they will not only
foster the internal renewal of the Church, but will safeguard and intensify her beneficial presence in the
modern world, and above all, in the world of the intellect"(48).

CONCLUSION

91. This document in no way wishes to minimise the value of the witness and work of the many Catholics
who teach in State schools throughout the world. In describing the task confided to the Catholic school it is
intended to encourage every effort to promote the cause of Catholic education, since in the pluralistic world
in which we live, the Catholic school is in a unique position to offer, more than ever before, a most valuable
and necessary service. With the principles of the Gospel as its abiding point of reference, it offers its
collaboration to those who are building a new world - one which is freed from a hedonistic mentality and
from the efficiency syndrome of modern consumer society.

92. We appeal to each Episcopal Conference to consider and to develop these principles which should
inspire the Catholic school and to translate them into concrete programmes which will meet the real needs of
the educational systems operating in their countries.

93. Realising that the problems are both delicate and highly complex, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic
Education also addresses itself to the whole People of God. In the economy of salvation we poor humans
must confront problems, suffer their consequences and work might and main to solve them. We are certain
that in the last analysis success in any venture does not come from trust in our own solutions but from trust
in Jesus Who allowed Himself to be called Teacher. May He inspire, guide, support and bring to a safe
conclusion all that is undertaken in His name.

Rome, March 19th, 1977, the Feast of St. Joseph
(3) Ibid. 13.
(7) Cf SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Declaration on Christian Education "Gravissimum Educationis", 3.
(8) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation "Dei Verbum", 8.
(9) Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "Gaudium et Spes", 11.
(11) Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Declaration on Christian Education "Gravissimum Educationis" 8.
(13) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "Gaudium et Spes", 57
(18) Cf. Ibid.
(20) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Declaration on Christian Education "Gravissimum Educationis ", 8.
(22) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Declaration on Christian Education "Gravissimum Educationis ", 9.
(24) PAUL VI, to Prof. Giuseppe Lazzati, Rector of the University of the Sacred Heart (Milano), in "The Teaching of Pope Paul VI", vol. 9, p. 1082.


(26) Cf. above, nn. 18, 20, 23.


(28) Cf. above, n. 58.


(32) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, "Lumen Gentium", 33.


(34) Ibid., 24.

(35) Ibid., 23.

(36) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on the Bishop's Pastoral Office in the Church "Christus Dominus", 17.

(37) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity "Apostolicam Actuositatem", 23.

(38) Cf. above, 23.


(40) Cf. above, n. 22.

(41) Cf. above, nn. 70-72.

(42) Cfr. above, nn. 70-72.

(43) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "Lumen Gentium", 36.

(44) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "Lumen Gentium", 35.

(45) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity "Apostolicam Actuositatem", 5.


(47) Cf SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-christian Religions "Nostra Aetate", 2.
INTRODUCTION
1. Lay Catholics, both men and women, who devote their lives to teaching in primary and secondary schools, have become more and more vitally important in recent years (1). Whether we look at schools in general, or Catholic schools in particular, the importance is deserved. For it is the lay teachers, and indeed all lay persons, believers or not, who will substantially determine whether or not a school realizes its aims and accomplishes its objectives (2). In the Second Vatican Council, and specifically in the Declaration on Christian Education, the Church recognized the role and the responsibility that this situation confers on all those lay Catholics who work in any type of elementary and secondary schools, whether as teachers, directors, administrators, or auxiliary staff. The Declaration invites us to expand on its contents and deepen them; in doing this, it is not our intention to ignore or minimize the significant accomplishments of Christians who belong to other Churches, or of non-Christians, in the field of education.

2. The most basic reason for this new role for Catholic laity, a role which the Church regards as positive and enriching, is theological. Especially in the course of the last century, the authentic image of the laity within the People of God has become increasingly clear; it has now been set down in two documents of the Second Vatican Council, which give profound expression to the richness and uniqueness of the lay: The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, and the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity.

3. Theological development has been reinforced by the social, economic, and political developments of recent years. The cultural level has progressively risen; because this is closely tied to advances in science and technology, every profession requires a more extensive preparation. To this must be added a more general awareness of the fact that every person has a right to an integral education, an education which responds to all of the needs of the human person. These two advances in human life have required, and in part have created, an extensive development of school systems everywhere in the world, together with an extraordinary increase in the number of people who are professionally trained in education. As a result, there is a corresponding growth in the number of Catholic laity who work in the field.

This process has coincided with a notable decrease in the number of priests and Religious, both men and women, dedicated to teaching. The decrease is due to a lack of s, to the urgent call of other apostolic needs, and - at times - to the erroneous opinion that a school is no longer an appropriate place for the Church's pastoral activity.(3) The efficacious work that so many different Religious Congregations have traditionnaly accomplished through teaching activities is greatly esteemed by the Church; and so she can do no less than regret the decline in Religious personnel which has had such a profound effect on Catholic schools, especially in some countries. The Church believes that, for an integral education of children and young people, both Religious and lay Catholics are needed in the schools.

4. This Sacred Congregation sees a genuine " sign of the times " for schools in the various facts and causes described above; it is an invitation to give special attention to the role of lay Catholics, as witnesses to the faith in what can only be described as a privileged environment for human formation. Without claiming to be exhaustive, but after serious and prolonged reflection on the importance of the theme, it desires to offer some considerations which will complete what has already been said in the document " The Catholic School ", and which will be of help to all those interested in the problem, inspiring them to undertake further and more extended developments of the same.

THE IDENTITY OF THE LAY CATHOLIC IN A SCHOOL

5. It seems necessary to begin by trying to delineate the identity of the lay Catholics who work in a school; the way in which they bear witness to the faith will depend on this specific identity, in the Church and in this...
particular field of labour. In trying to contribute to the investigation, it is the intention of this Sacred Congregation to offer a service to lay Catholics who work in schools (and who should have a clear idea of the specific character of their ), and also to the People of God (who need to have a true picture of the laity as an active element, accomplishing an important task for the entire Church through their labour).

THE LAITY IN THE CHURCH

6. The lay Catholic working in a school is, along with every Christian, a member of the People of God. As such, united to Christ through Baptism, he or she shares in the basic dignity that is common to all members. For, " they share a common dignity from their rebirth in Christ. They have the same filial grace and the same to perfection. They possess in common one salvation, one hope, and one undivided charity ".(4) Although it is true that, in the Church, " by the will of Christ, some are made teachers, dispensers of mysteries and shepherds on behalf of others, yet 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 ".(5) Every Christian, and therefore also every lay person, has been made a sharer in " the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ ",(6) and their apostolate " is a participation in the saving mission of the Church itself ... All are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself ".(7)

7. This call to personal holiness and to apostolic mission is common to all believers; but there are many cases in which the life of a lay person takes on specific characteristics which transform this life into a specific " wonderful " within the Church. The laity " seeks the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God ".(8) They live in the midst of the world's activities and professions, and in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life; and there they are called by God so that by exercising their proper function and being led by the spirit of the Gospel they can work for the sanctification of the world from within, in the manner of leaven. In this way they can make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope, and charity ".(9)

8. The renewal of the temporal order, giving it a Christian inspiration, is the special role of the laity; this should encourage them to heal " the institutions and conditions of the world "(10) when it is seen that these can be inducements to sin. In this way, human reality is raised up, and conformed to the Gospel as far as this is possible; and " the world is permeated by the Spirit of Christ, and more effectively achieves its purpose in justice, charity, and peace".(11) "Therefore, by their competence in secular fields, and by their personal activity, elevated from within by the grace of Christ, let them labour vigorously so that, by human labour, technical skill, and civic culture, created goods may be perfected for the benefit of every last person ... and be more suitably distributed among them ".(12)

9. The evangelization of the world involves an encounter with such a wide variety and complexity of different situations that very frequently, in concrete circumstances and for most people, only the laity can be effective witnesses of the Gospel. Therefore, " the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can she become the salt of the earth ".(13) In order to achieve this presence of the whole Church, and of the Saviour whom she proclaims, lay people must be ready to proclaim the message through their words, and witness to it in what they do.

10. Because of the experiences that lay people acquire in their lives, and through their presence in all of the various spheres of human activity, they will be especially capable of recognizing and clarifying the signs of the times that characterize the present historical period of the People of God. Therefore, as a proper part of their, they should contribute their initiative, their creativity, and their competent, conscious, and enthusiastic labour to this task. In this way, the whole People of God will be able to distinguish more precisely those elements of the signs that are Gospel values, or values contrary to the Gospel.

LAY CATHOLICS IN THE SCHOOLS

11. All those elements proper to the lay in the Church are, surely, also true of those lay people who live their in a school. But the fact that lay people can concretize their specific in a variety of different sectors and areas of human life would seem to imply that the one common will receive different specific characteristics from the different situations and states of life in which it is lived.

If, then, we are to have a better understanding of the school of the lay Catholic, we must first look more precisely at the school.

The School
12. While it is true that parents are the first and foremost educators of their children (14) and that the rights and duties that they have in this regard are "original and primary with respect to the educational role of others" (15) it is also true that among the means which will assist and complement the exercise of the educational rights and duties of the family, the school has a value and an importance that are fundamental. In virtue of its mission, then, the school must be concerned with constant and careful attention to cultivating in students the intellectual, creative, and aesthetic faculties of the human person; to develop in them the ability to make correct use of their judgement, will, and affectivity; to promote in them a sense of values; to encourage just attitudes and prudent behaviour; to introduce them to the cultural patrimony handed down from previous generations; to prepare them for professional life, and to encourage the friendly interchange among students of diverse cultures and backgrounds that will lead to mutual understanding. (16) For all of these reasons, the school enters into the specific mission of the Church.

13. The function exercised by the school in society has no substitute; it is the most important institution that society has so far developed to respond to the right of each individual to an education and, therefore, to full personal development; it is one of the decisive elements in the structuring and the life of society itself. In today's world, social interchange and mass media grow in importance (and their influence is sometimes harmful or counter-productive); the cultural milieu continues to expand; preparation for professional life is becoming ever more complex, more varied, and more specialized. The family, on its own, is less and less able to confront all of these serious problems; the presence of the school, then, becomes more and more necessary.

14. If the school is such an important educational instrument, then the individual being educated has the right to choose the system of education - and therefore the type of school - that he or she prefers. (17) When a person does not yet have the capacity to do this, then the parents, who have the primary rights in the education of their children, (18) have the right to make this choice. From this it clearly follows that, in principle, a State monopoly of education is not permissible, (19) and that only a pluralism of school systems will respect the fundamental right and the freedom of individuals - although the exercise of this right may be conditioned by a multiplicity of factors, according to the social realities of each country. The Church offers the Catholic school as a specific and enriching contribution to this variety of school possibilities. The lay Catholic, however, exercises the role of evangelization in all the different schools, not only in the Catholic school, to the extent that this is possible in the diverse socio-political contexts of the present world.

**The Lay Catholic as an Educator**

15. The Second Vatican Council gives specific attention to the role of an educator, a role which is as proper to the laity (20) as to those who follow other states of life in the Church. Every person who contributes to integral human formation is an educator; but teachers have made integral human formation their very profession. When, then, we discuss the school, teachers deserve special consideration: because of their number, but also because of the institutional purpose of the school. But everyone who has a share in this formation is also to be included in the discussion: especially those who are responsible for the direction of the school, or are counsellors, tutors or coordinators; also those who complement and complete the educational activities of the teacher or help in administrative and auxiliary positions. While the present analysis of the lay Catholic as an educator will concentrate on the role of the teacher, the analysis is applicable to all of the other roles, each according to their own proper activity. The material can be a basis for deep personal reflection.

16. The teacher under discussion here is not simply a professional person who systematically transmits a body of knowledge in the context of a school; "teacher" is to be understood as "educator" - one who helps to form human persons. The task of a teacher goes well beyond transmission of knowledge, although that is not excluded. Therefore, if adequate professional preparation is required in order to transmit knowledge, then adequate professional preparation is even more necessary in order to fulfill the role of a genuine teacher. It is an indispensable human formation, and without it, it would be foolish to undertake any educational work. One specific characteristic of the educational profession assumes its most profound significance in the Catholic educator: the communication of truth. For the Catholic educator, whatever is true is a participation in the Truth; the communication of truth, therefore, as a professional activity, is thus fundamentally transformed into a unique participation in the prophetic mission of Christ, carried on through one's teaching.

17. The integral formation of the human person, which is the purpose of education, includes the development of all the human faculties of the students, together with preparation for professional life, formation of ethical and social awareness, becoming aware of the transcendental, and religious education. Every school, and
every educator in the school, ought to be striving "to form strong and responsible individuals, who are capable of making free and correct choices", thus preparing young people "to open themselves more and more to reality, and to form in themselves a clear idea of the meaning of life". (21)

18. Each type of education, moreover, is influenced by a particular concept of what it means to be a human person. In today's pluralistic world, the Catholic educator must consciously inspire his or her activity with the Christian concept of the person, in communion with the Magisterium of the Church. It is a concept which includes a defence of human rights, but also attributes to the human person the dignity of a child of God; it attributes the fullest liberty, freed from sin itself by Christ, the most exalted destiny, which is the definitive and total possession of God Himself, through love. It establishes the strictest possible relationship of solidarity among all persons; through mutual love and an ecclesial community. It calls for the fullest development of all that is human, because we have been made masters of the world by its Creator. Finally, it proposes Christ, Incarnate Son of God and perfect Man, as both model and means; to imitate Him, is, for all men and women, the inexhaustible source of personal and communal perfection. Thus, Catholic educators can be certain that they make human beings more human. (22) Moreover, the special task of those educators who are lay persons is to offer to their students a concrete example of the fact that people deeply immersed in the world, living fully the same secular life as the vast majority of the human family, possess this same exalted dignity.

19. The role of every Catholic educator includes the work of ongoing social development: to form men and women who will be ready to take their place in society, preparing them in such a way that they will make the kind of social commitment which will enable them to work for the improvement of social structures, making these structures more conformed to the principles of the Gospel. Thus, they will form human beings who will make human society more peaceful, fraternal, and communitarian. Today's world has tremendous problems: hunger, illiteracy and human exploitation; sharp contrasts in the standard of living of individuals and of countries; aggression and violence, a growing drug problem, legalization of abortion, along with many other examples of the degradation of human life. All of this demands that Catholic educators develop in themselves, and cultivate in their students, a keen social awareness and a profound sense of civic and political responsibility. The Catholic educator, in other words, must be committed to the task of forming men and women who will make the "civilization of love" (23) a reality.

But lay educators must bring the experience of their own lives to this social development and social awareness, so that students can be prepared to take their place in society with an appreciation of the specific role of the lay person - for this is the life that nearly all of the students will be called to live.

20. A school uses its own specific means for the integral formation of the human person: the communication of culture. It is extremely important, then, that the Catholic educator reflect on the profound relationship that exists between culture and the Church. For the Church not only influences culture and is, in turn, conditioned by culture; the Church embraces everything in human culture which is compatible with Revelation and which it needs in order to proclaim the message of Christ and express it more adequately according to the cultural characteristics of each people and each age. The close relationship between culture and the life of the Church is an especially clear manifestation of the unity that exists between creation and redemption.

For this reason, if the communication of culture is to be a genuine educational activity, it must not only be organic, but also critical and evaluative, historical and dynamic. Faith will provide Catholic educators with some essential principles for critique and eval faith will help them to see all of human history as a history of salvation which culminates in the fulness of the Kingdom. This puts culture into a creative context, constantly being perfected.

Here too, in the communication of culture, lay educators have a special role to play. They are the authors of, and the sharers in, the more lay aspects of culture; their mission, then, is to help the students come to understand, from a lay point of view, the global character that is proper to culture, the synthesis which will join together the lay and the religious aspects of culture, and the personal contribution which those in the lay state can be expected to make to culture.

21. The communication of culture in an educational context involves a methodology, whose principles and techniques are collected together into a consistent pedagogy. A variety of pedagogical theories exist; the choice of the Catholic educator, based on a Christian concept of the human person, should be the practice of a pedagogy which gives special emphasis to direct and personal contact with the students. If the teacher undertakes this contact with the conviction that students are already in possession of fundamentally positive values, the relationship will allow for an openness and a dialogue which will facilitate an understanding of the witness to faith that is revealed through the behaviour of the teacher.
22. Everything that the Catholic educator does in a school takes place within the structure of an educational community, made up of the contacts and the collaboration among all of the various groups - students, parents, teachers, directors, non-teaching staff - that together are responsible for making the school an instrument for integral formation. Although it is not exhaustive, this concept of the scholarly institution as an educational community, together with a more widespread awareness of this concept, is one of the most enriching developments for the contemporary school. The Catholic educator exercises his or her profession as a member of one of the constitutive elements of this community. The professional structure itself offers an excellent opportunity to live - and bring to life in the students the communitarian dimension of the human person. Every human being is called to live in a community, as a social being, and as a member of the People of God. Therefore, the educational community of a school is itself a “school”. It teaches one how to be a member of the wider social communities; and when the educational community is at the same time a Christian community - and this is what the educational community of a Catholic school must always be striving toward - then it offers a great opportunity for the teachers to provide the students with a living example of what it means to be a member of that great community which is the Church.

23. The communitarian structure of the school brings the Catholic educator into contact with a wide and rich assortment of people; not only the students, who are the reason why the school and the teaching profession exist, but also with one’s colleagues in the work of education, with parents, with other personnel in the school, with the school directors. The Catholic educator must be a source of spiritual inspiration for each of these groups, as well as for each of the scholastic and cultural organizations that the school comes in contact with, for the local Church and the parishes, for the entire human ambience in which he or she is inserted and, in a variety of ways, should have an effect on. In this way, the Catholic educator is called to display that kind of spiritual inspiration which will manifest different forms of evangelization.

24. To summarize: The Lay Catholic educator is a person who exercises a specific mission within the Church by living, in faith, a secular in the communitarian structure of the school: with the best possible professional qualifications, with an apostolic intention inspired by faith, for the integral formation of the human person, in a communication of culture, in an exercise of that pedagogy which will give emphasis to direct and personal contact with students, giving spiritual inspiration to the educational community of which he or she is a member, as well as to all the different persons related to the educational community. To this lay person, as a member of this community, the family and the Church entrust the school's educational endeavour. Lay teachers must be profoundly convinced that they share in the sanctifying, and therefore educational mission of the Church; they cannot regard themselves as cut off from the ecclesial complex.

II. HOW TO LIVE ONE’S PERSONAL IDENTITY

25. The human person is called to be a worker; work is one of the characteristics which distinguish human beings from the rest of creatures.(24) From this it is evident that it is not enough to possess a al identity, an identity which involves the whole person; it must be lived. More concretely, if, through their work, human beings must contribute “ above all to elevating unceasingly the cultural and moral level of society “,(25) then the educator who does not educate can no longer truly be called an educator. And if there is no trace of Catholic identity in the education, the educator can hardly be called a Catholic educator. Some of the aspects of this living out of one's identity are common and essential; they must be present no matter what the school is in which the lay educator exercises his or her . Others will differ according to the diverse nature of various types of schools.

COMMON ELEMENTS OF AN IDENTITY THAT IS BEING LIVED

Realism combined with hope

26. The identity of the lay Catholic educator is, of necessity, an ideal; innumerable obstacles stand in the way of its accomplishment. Some are the result of one's own personal situation; others are due to deficiencies in the school and in society; all of them have their strongest effect on children and young people. Identity crisis, loss of trust in social structures, the resulting insecurity and loss of any personal convictions, the contagion of a progressive secularization of society, loss of the proper concept of authority and lack of a proper use of freedom - these are only a few of the multitude of difficulties which, in varying degrees, according to the diverse cultures and the different countries, the adolescents and young people of
today bring to the Catholic educator. Moreover, the lay state in which the teacher lives is itself seriously threatened by crises in the family and in the world of labour. These present difficulties should be realistically recognized. But they should, at the same time, be viewed and confronted with a healthy optimism, and with the forceful courage that Christian hope and a sharing in the mystery of the Cross demand of all believers. Therefore, the first indispensable necessity in one who is going to live the identity of a lay Catholic educator is to sincerely share in, and make one's own, the statements that the Church, illuminated by Divine Revelation, has made about the identity of an educator. The strength needed to do this should be found through a personal identification with Christ.

Professionalism. A Christian Concept of Humanity and of Life

27. Professionalism is one of the most important characteristics in the identity of every lay Catholic. The first requirement, then, for a lay educator who wishes to live out his or her ecclesial life, is the acquisition of a solid professional formation. In the case of an educator, this includes competency in a wide range of cultural, psychological, and pedagogical areas. However, it is not enough that the initial training be at a good level; this must be maintained and deepened, always bringing it up to date. This can be very difficult for a lay teacher, and to ignore this fact is to ignore reality: salaries are often inadequate, and supplementary employment is often a necessity. Such a situation is incompatible with professional development, either because of the time required for other work, or because of the fatigue that results. In many countries, especially in those less developed, the problem is insoluble at the present time. Even so, educators must realize that poor teaching, resulting from insufficient preparation of classes or outdated pedagogical methods, is going to hinder them severely in their call to contribute to an integral formation of the students; it will also obscure the life witness that they must present.

28. The entire effort of the Catholic teacher is oriented toward an integral formation of each student. New horizons will be opened to students through the responses that Christian revelation brings to questions about the ultimate meaning of the human person, of human life, of history, and of the world. These must be offered to the students as responses which flow out of the profound faith of the educator, but at the same time with the greatest sensitive respect for the conscience of each student. Students will surely have many different levels of faith response; the Christian vision of existence must be presented in such a way that it meets all of these levels, ranging from the most elementary evangelization all the way to communion in the same faith. And whatever the situation, the presentation must always be in the nature of a gift: though offered insistently and urgently, it cannot be imposed. On the other hand, the gift cannot be offered coldly and abstractly. It must be seen as a vital reality, one which deserves the commitment of the entire person, something which is to become a part of one's own life.

Synthesis of Faith, Culture and Life

29. For the accomplishment of this vast undertaking, many different educational elements must converge; in each of them, the lay Catholic must appear as a witness to faith. An organic, critical, and value-oriented communication of culture (27) clearly includes the communication of truth and knowledge: while doing this, a Catholic teacher should always be alert for opportunities to initiate the appropriate dialogue between culture and faith - two things which are intimately related - in order to bring the interior synthesis of the student to this deeper level. It is, of course, a synthesis which should already exist in the teacher.

30. Critical transmission also involves the presentation of a set of values and counter-values. These must be judged within the context of an appropriate concept of life and of the human person. The Catholic teacher, therefore, cannot be content simply to present Christian values as a set of abstract objectives to be admired, even if this be done positively and with imagination; they must be presented as values which generate human attitudes, and these attitudes must be encouraged in the students. Examples of such attitudes would be these: a freedom which includes respect for others; conscientious responsibility; a sincere and constant search for truth; a calm and peaceful critical spirit; a spirit of solidarity with and service toward all other persons; a sensitivity for justice; a special awareness of being called to be positive agents of change in a society that is undergoing continuous transformation. Since Catholic teachers frequently have to exercise their mission within a general atmosphere of secularization and unbelief, it is important that they not be limited to a mentality that is merely experimental and critical; thus, they will be able to bring the students to an awareness of the transcendental, and dispose them to welcome revealed truth.

31. In the process of developing attitudes such as these, the teacher can more easily show the positive nature of the behaviour that flows from such attitudes. Ideally, attitudes and behaviour will gradually be motivated by, and flow out of, the interior faith of the individual student. In this way, the fulness of faith will be achieved; it will then extend to such things as filial prayer, sacramental life, love for one another, and a
following of Jesus Christ - all of the elements that form a part of the specific heritage of the faithful. Knowledge, values, attitudes, and behaviour fully integrated, with faith will result in the student’s personal synthesis of life and faith. Very few Catholics, then, have the opportunity that the educator has to accomplish the very purpose of evangelization: the incarnation of the Christian message in the lives of men and women.

**Personal Life Witness. Direct and Personal Contact with Students**

32. Conduct is always much more important than speech; this fact becomes especially important in the formation period of students. The more completely an educator can give concrete witness to the model of the ideal person that is being presented to the students, the more this ideal will be believed and imitated. For it will then be seen as something reasonable and worthy of being lived, something concrete and realizable. It is in this context that the faith witness of the lay teacher becomes especially important. Students should see in their teachers the Christian attitude and behaviour that is often so conspicuously absent from the secular atmosphere in which they live. Without this witness, living in such an atmosphere, they may begin to regard Christian behaviour as an impossible ideal. It must never be forgotten that, in the crises "which have their greatest effect on the younger generations", the most important element in the educational endeavour is "always the individual person: the person, and the moral dignity of that person which is the result of his or her principles, and the conformity of actions with those principles". (28)

33. In this context, what was said above about direct and personal contact between teachers and students becomes especially significant: it is a privileged opportunity for giving witness. A personal relationship is always a dialogue rather than a monologue, and the teacher must be convinced that the enrichment in the relationship is mutual. But the mission must never be lost sight of: the educator can never forget that students need a companion and guide during their period of growth; they need help from others in order to overcome doubts and disorientation. Also, rapport with the students ought to be a prudent combination of familiarity and distance; and this must be adapted to the needs of each individual student. Familiarity will make a personal relationship easier, but a certain distance is also needed: students need to learn how to express their own personality without being pre-conditioned; they need to be freed from inhibitions in the responsible exercise of their freedom.

It is good to remember here that a responsible use of freedom also involves the choice of one’s own state of life. In contacts with those students who are believers, Catholic teachers should not be hesitant to discuss the question of one’s personal life in the Church. They should try to discover and cultivate a vocation to priesthood or religious life, or the call to live a private commitment in a Secular Institute or Catholic apostolic organization; these latter possibilities are areas which are often neglected. And they should also help students to discern a vocation to marriage or to celibacy, including consecrated celibacy, within the lay state. This direct and personal contact is not just a methodology by which the teacher can help in the formation of the students; it is also the means by which teachers learn what they need to know about the students in order to guide them adequately. The difference in generation is deeper, and the time between generations is shorter, today more than ever before; direct contact, then, is more necessary than ever.

**Communitarian aspects**

34. Along with a proper development of their individual personalities, and as an integral part of this process, students should be guided by their Catholic teachers toward the development of an attitude of sociability: toward others in the educational community, in the other communities that they may belong to, and with the entire human community. Lay Catholic educators are also members of the educational community; they influence, and are influenced by, the social ambience of the school. Therefore, close relationship should be established with one’s colleagues; they should work together as a team. And teachers should establish close relationships with the other groups that make up the educational community, and be willing to contribute their share to all of the diverse activities that make up the common educational endeavour of a scholastic institution.

The family is "the first and fundamental school of social living" (30) therefore, there is a special duty to accept willingly and even to encourage opportunities for contact with the parents of students. These contacts are very necessary, because the educational task of the family and that of the school complement one another in many concrete areas; and they will facilitate the "serious duty" that parents have "to commit themselves totally to a cordial and active relationship with the teachers and the school authorities". (31) Finally, such contacts will offer to many families the assistance they need in order to educate their own children properly; and thus fulfill the "irreplaceable and inalienable" (32) function that is theirs.

35. A teacher must also be constantly attentive to the socio-cultural, economic, and political environment of the school: in the immediate area that the school is located in, and also in the region and the nation. Given today’s means of communication, the national scene exerts a great influence on the local situation. Only
close attention to the global reality - local, national, and international - will provide the data needed to give the kind of formation that students need now, and to prepare them for the future that can now be predicted.

36. While it is only natural to expect lay Catholic educators to give preference to Catholic professional associations, it is not foreign to their educational role to participate in and collaborate with all educational groups and associations, along with other groups that are connected with education. They should also lend support to the struggle for an adequate national educational policy, in whatever ways such support is possible. Their involvement may also include Trade Union activity, though always mindful of human rights and Christian educational principles. Lay teachers should be reminded that professional life can sometimes be very remote from the activities of associations; they should realize that if they are never involved in or even aware of these activities, this absence could be seriously harmful to important educational issues.

It is true that there is often no reward for such activities; success or failure depends on the generosity of those who participate. But when there are issues at stake so vital that the Catholic teacher cannot ignore them, then generosity is urgently needed.

A , rather than a Profession

37. The work of a lay educator has an undeniably professional aspect; but it cannot be reduced to professionalism alone. Professionalism is marked by, and raised to, a super-natural Christian . The life of the Catholic teacher must be marked by the exercise of a personal in the Church, and not simply by the exercise of a profession. In a lay , detachment and generosity are joined to legitimate defence of personal rights; but it is still a , with the fulness of life and the personal commitment that the word implies. It offers ample opportunity for a life filled with enthusiasm.

It is, therefore, very desirable that every lay Catholic educator become fully aware of the importance, the richness, and the responsibility of this . They should fully respond to all of its demands, secure in the knowledge that their response is vital for the construction and ongoing renewal of the earthly city, and for the evangelization of the world.

ELEMENTS OF THE CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL WHICH ARE SPECIFIC TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF SCHOOLS

In the Catholic School

38. The distinctive feature of the Catholic school is ” to create for the school community an atmosphere enlivened by the gospel spirit of freedom and charity. It aims to help the adolescent in such a way that the development of his or her own personality will be matched by the growth of that new creation which he or she becomes by baptism. It strives to relate all human culture eventually to the news of salvation, so that the light of faith will illumine the knowledge which students gradually gain of the world, of life and of the human race “.(34) From all this, it is obvious that the Catholic school ” fully enters into the salvific niission of the Church, especially in the need for education in the faith ”,(35) and involves a sincere adherence to the Magisterium of the Church, a presentation of Christ as the supreme model of the human person, and a special care for the quality of the religious education in the school.

The lay Catholic who works in a Catholic school should be aware of the ideals and specific objectives which constitute the general educational philosophy of the institution, and realize that it is because of this educational philosophy that the Catholic school is the school in which the of a lay Catholic teacher can be lived most freely and most completely. It is the model for the apostolic activity of lay Catholics in all other schools, according to the possibilities that each one of them offers. This realization will inspire lay Catholics in Catholic schools to commit themselves sincerely and personally to share in the responsibility for the attainment of these ideals and objectives. This is not to deny that difficulties exist; among them we mention, because of the great consequences that it has, the great heterogeneity of both students and teachers within the Catholic schools of many countries today.

39. Certain elements will be characteristic of all Catholic schools. But these can be expressed in a variety of ways; often enough, the concrete expression will correspond to the specific charism of the Religious Institute that founded the school and continues to direct it. Whatever be its origin - diocesan, Religious, or lay - each Catholic school can preserve its own specific character, spelled out in an educational philosophy, rationale, or in its own pedagogy. Lay Catholics should try to understand the special characteristics of the school they are working in, and the reasons that have inspired them. They should try to so identify themselves with these characteristics that their own work will help toward realizing the specific nature of the school.
40. As a visible manifestation of the faith they profess and the life witness they are supposed to manifest,(36) it is important that lay Catholics who work in a Catholic school participate simply and actively in the liturgical and sacramental life of the school. Students will share in this life more readily when they have concrete examples: when they see the importance that this life has for believers. In today's secularized world, students will see many lay people who call themselves Catholics, but who never take part in liturgy or sacraments. It is very important that they also have the example of lay adults who take such things seriously, who find in them a source and nourishment for Christian living.

41. The educational community of a Catholic school should be trying to become a Christian community: a genuine community of faith. This will not take place, it will not even begin to happen, unless there is a sharing of the Christian commitment among at least a portion of each of the principal groups that make up the educational community: parents, teachers, and students. It is highly desirable that every lay Catholic, especially the educator, be ready to participate actively in groups of pastoral inspiration, or in other groups capable of nourishing a life lived according to the Gospel.

42. At times there are students in Catholic schools who do not profess the Catholic faith, or perhaps are without any religious faith at all. Faith does not admit of violence; it is a free response of the human person to God as He reveals Himself. Therefore, while Catholic educators will teach doctrine in conformity with their own religious convictions and in accord with the identity of the school, they must at the same time have the greatest respect for those students who are not Catholics. They should be open at all times to authentic dialogue, convinced that in these circumstances the best testimony that they can give of their own faith is a warm and sincere appreciation for anyone who is honestly seeking God according to his or her own conscience.(37)

43. Education in the faith is a part of the finality of a Catholic school. The more fully the educational community represents the richness of the ecclesial community, the more capable it will be of fulfilling this mission. When priests, men and women Religious, and lay people are all present together in a school, they will present students with a living image of this richness, which can lead to a better understanding of the reality of the Church. Lay Catholics should reflect on the importance of their presence, from this point of view, alongside the priests and Religious. For each of these types of ecclesial presents to the students its own distinct incarnational model: lay Catholics, the intimate dependence of earthly realities on God in Christ, the lay professional as one who disposes the world toward God; the priest, the multiple sources of grace offered by Christ to all believers through the sacraments, the revealing light of the Word, and the character of service which clothes the hierarchical structure of the Church; Religious, the radical spirit of Beatitudes, the continuous call of the Kingdom as the single definitive reality, the love of Christ, and the love of all men and women in Christ.

44. If each has its own distinct characteristics, then all should be aware of the fact that a mutual and complementary presence will be a great help in ensuring the character of the Catholic school. This means that each one should be dedicated to the search for unity and coordination. Furthermore, the attitude of the lay people should be one which will help to insert the Catholic school into pastoral activities, in union with the local Church - a perspective which must never be forgotten - in ways that are complementary to the activities of parish ministry. The initiatives and experiences of lay people should also help to bring about more effective relationships and closer collaboration among Catholic schools, as well as between Catholic schools and other schools - especially those which share a Christian orientation - and with society as a whole.

45. Lay Catholic educators must be very aware of the real impoverishment which will result if priests and Religious disappear from the Catholic schools, or noticeably decline in number. This is to be avoided as far as is possible; and yet, the laity must prepare themselves in such a way that they will be able to maintain Catholic schools on their own whenever this becomes necessary or at least more desirable, in the present or in the future. Historical forces at work in the schools of today lead to the conclusion that, at least for the immediate future, continued existence of Catholic schools in many traditionally Catholic countries is going to depend largely on the laity, just as that existence has depended and does depend, with great fruit, on lay people - in so many of the young Churches. This responsibility cannot be assumed with passive attitudes of fear and regret; it is a responsibility that offers a challenge to firm and effective action. And this action should even now look to and plan for the future with the help of the Religious Institutes who see their possibilities diminishing in the days immediately ahead.
46. There are times in which the Bishops will take advantage of the availability of competent lay persons who wish to give clear Christian witness in the field of education, and will entrust them with complete direction of Catholic schools, thus incorporating them more closely into the apostolic mission of the Church. (38)

47. In today's pluralistic and secularized world, it will frequently happen that the presence of lay Catholics in these schools is the only way in which the Church is present. This is a concrete example of what was said above: that the Church can only reach out to certain situations or institutions through the laity. (40) A clear awareness of this fact will be a great help to encourage lay Catholics to assume the responsibility that is theirs.

48. Lay Catholic teachers should be influenced by a Christian faith vision in the way they teach their course, to the extent that this is consistent with the subject matter, and the circumstances of the student body and the school. In doing this, they will help students to discover true human values; and even though they must work within the limitations proper to a school that makes no attempt to educate in the faith, in which many factors will actually work directly against faith education, they will still be able to contribute to the beginnings of a dialogue between faith and culture. It is a dialogue which may, one day, lead to the students' genuine synthesis of the two. This effort can be especially fruitful for those students who are Catholics; it can be a form of evangelization for those who are not.

49. In a pluralistic school, living according to one's faith must be joined to careful respect for the ideological convictions and the work of the other educators, assuming always that they do not violate the human rights of the students. Mutual respect should lead to constructive dialogue, especially with other Christians, but with all men and women of good will. In this way it can become clearly evident that religious and human freedom, the logical fruit of a pluralistic society, is not only defended in theory by Christian faith, but also concretely practised.

50. Active participation in the activities of colleagues, in relationships with other members of the educational community; and especially in relationships with parents of the students, is extremely important. In this way the objectives, programs, and teaching methods of the school in which the lay Catholic is working can be gradually impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel.

51. Professional commitment; support of truth, justice and freedom; openness to the point of view of others, combined with an habitual attitude of service; personal commitment to the students, and fraternal solidarity with everyone; a life that is integrally moral in all its aspects. The lay Catholic who brings all of this to his or her work in a pluralist school becomes a living mirror, in whom every individual in the educational community will see reflected an image of one inspired by the Gospel.

In Other Schools

52. Here we consider more specifically the situation in schools of what are called mission countries, or countries where the practice of Christianity has almost totally disappeared. The lay Catholic may be the only
presence of the Church, not only in the school, but also in the place in which he or she is living. The call of faith makes this situation especially compelling: the lay Catholic teacher may be the only voice that proclaims the message of the Gospel: to students, to other members of the educational community, to everyone that he or she comes in contact with, as an educator or simply as a person. (41) Everything that has been said above about awareness of responsibility, a Christian perspective in teaching (and in education more generally), respect for the convictions of others, constructive dialogue with other Christians as well as with those who do not believe in Christianity, active participation in various school groups, and, most important of all, personal life witness all of these things become crucially important in this type of school situation.

54. Finally, we cannot forget those lay Catholics who work in schools in countries where the Church is persecuted, where one who is known to be a Christian is forbidden to function as an educator. The orientation of the school is atheist; laity who work in them must conceal the fact that they are believers. In this difficult situation simple presence, if it is the silent but vital presence of a person inspired by the Gospel, is already an efficacious proclamation of the message of Christ. It is a counterbalance to the pernicious intentions of those who promote an atheistic education in the school. And this witness, when joined to personal contact with the students, can, in spite of the difficulties, lead to opportunities for more explicit evangelization. Although forced to live his or her Catholicism anonymously, the lay educator can still be (because of regrettable human and religious motives) the only way that many of the young people in these countries can come to some genuine knowledge of the Gospel and of the Church, which are distorted and attacked in the school.

55. In every kind of school, the Catholic educator will not infrequently come in contact with non-Catholic students, especially in some countries. The attitude should not only be one of respect, but also welcoming, and open to dialogue motivated by a universal Christian love. Furthermore, they should always remember that true education is not limited to the imparting of knowledge; it promotes human dignity and genuine human relationships, and prepares the way for opening oneself to the Truth that is Christ.

The Lay Catholic Educator as a Teacher of Religion

56. Religious instruction is appropriate in every school, for the purpose of the school is human formation in all of its fundamental dimensions, and the religious dimension is an integral part of this formation. Religious education is actually a right - with the corresponding duties - of the student and of the parents. It is also, at least in the case of the Catholic religion, an extremely important instrument for attaining the adequate synthesis of faith and culture that has been insisted on so often. Therefore, the teaching of the Catholic religion, distinct from and at the same time complementary to catechesis properly so-called, (42) ought to form a part of the curriculum of every school.

57. The teaching of religion is, along with catechesis, "an eminent form of the lay apostolate". (43) Because of this, and because of the number of religion teachers needed for today's vast school systems, lay people will have the responsibility for religious education in the majority of cases, especially at the level of basic education.

58. Lay Catholics, therefore, in different places and according to different circumstances, should become aware of the great role that is offered to them in this field of religious education. Without their generous collaboration, the number of religious teachers will not be adequate to meet the need that exists; this is already the situation in some countries. In this respect, as in so many others, the Church depends on lay collaboration. The need can be especially urgent in young Churches.

59. The role of the religion teacher is of first importance; for "what is asked for is not that one impart one's own doctrine, or that of some other teacher, but the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself". (44) In their teaching, therefore, taking into account the nature of the group being taught, teachers of religion (and also catechists) should take advantage of every opportunity to profit from the fruits of theological research, which can shed light on their own reflections and also on their teaching, always taking care ... to be faithful to the genuine sources, and to the light of the Magisterium", on which they depend for the proper fulfillment of their role; and they should refrain from upsetting the minds of children and young people ... with outlandish theories". (45) The norms of the local bishop should be faithfully followed in everything that has to do with their own theological and pedagogical formation, and also in the course syllabi; and they should remember that, in this area above all, life witness and an intensely lived spirituality have an especially great importance.

III.
THE FORMATION THAT IS NEEDED IF LAY CATHOLICS ARE TO GIVE WITNESS TO THE FAITH IN A SCHOOL

60. The concrete living out of a as rich and profound as that of the lay Catholic in a school requires an appropriate formation, both on the professional plane and on the religious plane. Most especially, it requires the educator to have a mature spiritual personality, expressed in a profound Christian life. "This calling"
says the Second Vatican Council, speaking about educators, requires "extremely careful preparation". (46) "(Teachers) should therefore be trained with particular care, so that they may be enriched with both secular and religious knowledge, appropriately certified, and may be equipped with an educational skill which reflects modern day findings ".(47) The need for an adequate formation is often felt most acutely in religious and spiritual areas; all too frequently, lay Catholics have not had a religious formation that is equal to their general, cultural, and, most especially, professional formation.

AWARENESS AND STIMULATION

61. Generally speaking, lay Catholics preparing themselves for work in a school have a genuine human; they are very aware of the good professional formation that they need in order to become educators. But an awareness that is limited only to the professional level is not what ought to characterize a lay Catholic, whose educational work is the basic instrument for personal sanctification and the exercise of an apostolic mission. What is being asked of lay Catholics who work in schools is precisely an awareness that what they are doing is exercising a . To what extent they actually do have such an awareness is something that these lay people should be asking themselves.

62. The need for religious formation is related to this specific awareness that is being asked of lay Catholics; religious formation must be broadened and be kept up to date, on the same level as, and in harmony with, human formation as a whole. Lay Catholics need to be keenly aware of the need for this kind of religious formation; it is not only the exercise of an apostolate that depends on it, but even an appropriate professional competence, especially when the competence is in the field of education.

63. The purpose of these reflections is to help awaken such a consciousness, and to help each individual to consider his or her own personal situation in an area which is so fundamental for the full exercise of the lay of a Catholic educator. What is at stake is so essential that simply to become aware of it should be a major stimulus toward putting forth the effort needed: to acquire whatever may have been lacking in formation, and to maintain at an adequate level all that has been already acquired. Lay Catholic educators also have a right to expect that, within the ecclesial community, bishops, priests, and Religious, especially those dedicated to the apostolate of education, and also various groups and associations of lay Catholic educators, will help to awaken them to their personal needs in the area of formation, and will find the means to stimulate them so that they can give themselves more totally to the social commitment that such a formation requires.

PROFESSIONAL AND RELIGIOUS FORMATION

64. It may be worth noting that centers of teacher formation will differ in their ability to provide the kind of professional training that will best help Catholic educators to fulfill their educational mission. The reason for this is the close relationship that exists between the way a discipline (especially in the humanities) is taught, and the teacher's basic concept of the human person, of life, and of the world. If the ideological orientation of a center for teacher formation is pluralist, it can easily happen that the future Catholic educator will have to do supplementary work in order to make a personal synthesis of faith and culture in the different disciplines that are being studied. It must never be forgotten, during the days of formation, that the role of a teacher is to present the class materials in such a way that students can easily discover a dialogue between faith and culture, and gradually be led to a personal synthesis of these. If we take all of this into account, it follows that it would be better to attend a center for teacher formation under the direction of the Church where one exists, and to create such centers, if possible, where they do not yet exist.

65. For the Catholic educator, religious formation does not come to an end with the completion of basic education; it must be a part of and a complement to one's professional formation, and so be proportionate to adult faith, human culture, and the specific lay . This means that religious formation must be oriented toward both personal sanctification and apostolic mission, for these are two inseparable elements in a Christian . "Formation for apostolic mission means a certain human and well-rounded formation, adapted to the natural abilities and circumstances of each person" and requires "in addition to spiritual formation, ... solid doctrinal instruction ... in theology, ethics and philosophy".(48) Nor can we forget, in the case of an educator, adequate formation in the social teachings of the Church, which are " an integral part of the Christian concept of life ".(49) and help to keep intensely alive the kind of social sensitivity that is needed.(50)

With regard to the doctrinal plane, and speaking more specifically of teachers, it may be worth recalling that the Second Vatican Council speaks of the need for religious knowledge guaranteed by appropriate certification.(51) It is highly recommended, therefore, that all Catholics who work in schools, and most especially those who are educators, obtain the necessary qualifications by pursuing programs of religious formation in Ecclesiastical Faculties or in Institutes of Religious Science that are suitable for this purpose, wherever this is possible.

66. With appropriate degrees, and with an adequate preparation in religious pedagogy, they will have the basic training needed for the teaching of religion. Bishops will promote and provide for the necessary training, both for teachers of religion and for catechists; at the same time, they will not neglect the kind of dialogue with the corps of teachers being formed that can be mutually enlightening.
UPDATING. PERMANENT FORMATION
67. Recent years have witnessed an extraordinary growth in science and technology; every object, situation, or value is subjected to a constant critical analysis. One effect is that our age is characterized by change; change that is constant and accelerated, that affects every last aspect of the human person and the society that he or she lives in. Because of change, knowledge that has been acquired, and structures that have been established, are quickly outdated; the need for new attitudes and new methods is constant.
68. Faced with this reality, which lay people are the first to experience, the Catholic educator has an obvious and constant need for updating: in personal attitudes, in the content of the subjects, that are taught, in the pedagogical methods that are used. Recall that the of an educator requires "a constant readiness to begin anew and to adapt". (.52) If the need for updating is constant, then the formation must be permanent. This need is not limited to professional formation; it includes religious formation and, in general, the enrichment of the whole person. In this way, the Church will constantly adapt its pastoral mission to the circumstances of the men and women of each age, so that the message of Jesus Christ can be brought to them in a way that is understandable and adapted to their condition.
69. Permanent formation involves a wide variety of different elements; a constant search for ways to bring it about is therefore required of both individuals and the community. Among the variety of means for permanent formation, some have become ordinary and virtually indispensable instruments: reading periodicals and pertinent books, attending conferences and seminars, participating in workshops, assemblies and congresses, making appropriate use of periods of free time for formation. All lay Catholics who work in schools should make these a habitual part of their own human, professional, and religious life.
70. No one can deny that permanent formation, as the name itself suggests, is a difficult task; not everyone succeeds in doing it. This becomes especially true in the face of the growing complexity of contemporary life and the difficult nature of the educational mission, combined with the economic insecurity that so often accompanies it. But in spite of all these factors, no lay Catholic who works in a school can ignore this present-day need. To do so would be to remain locked up in outdated knowledge, criteria, and attitudes. To reject a formation that is permanent and that involves the whole person - human, professional, and religious - is to isolate oneself from that very world that has to be brought closer to the Gospel.
IV.
THE SUPPORT THAT THE CHURCH OFFERS TO LAY CATHOLICS WORKING IN SCHOOLS
71. The different circumstances in which lay Catholics have to carry out their work in schools can often create feelings of isolation or misunderstanding, and as a result lead to depression, or even to the giving up of teaching responsibilities. In order to find help in overcoming such difficulties; in order, more generally, to be helped to fulfill the to which they are called, lay Catholics who work in schools should always be able to count on the support and aid of the entire Church.
SUPPORT IN THE FAITH, IN THE WORD, AND IN SACRAMENTAL LIFE
72. Above all else, lay Catholics will find support in their own faith. Faith is the unfailing source of the humility, the hope, and the charity needed for perseverance in their. (.53) For every educator is in need of humility in order to recognize one's own limitations, one's mistakes, along with the need for constant growth, and the realization that the ideal being pursued is always beyond one's grasp. Every educator needs a firm hope, because the teacher is never the one who truly reaps the fruits of the labour expended on the students. And, finally, every educator is in need of a permanent and growing charity, in order to love each of the students as an individual created in the image and likeness of God, raised to the status of a child of God by the redemption of Jesus Christ.
This humble faith, this hope, and this charity are supported by the Church through the Word, the life of the Sacraments, and the prayer of the entire People of God.
For the Word will speak to educators, and remind them of the tremendous greatness of their identity and of their task; Sacramental life will give them the strength they need to live this career, and bring support when they fail; the prayer of the whole Church will present to God, with them and for them, with the assured response that Jesus Christ has promised, all that the human heart desires and pleads for, and even the things that it does not dare to desire or plead for.
COMMUNITY SUPPORT
73. The work of education is arduous, and very important; for that reason, its realization is delicate and complex. It requires calm, interior peace, freedom from an excessive amount of work, continuous cultural and religious enrichment. In today's society, it is seldom that conditions can all be met simultaneously. The nature of the educational of lay Catholics should be publicized more frequently and more profoundly among the People of God by those in the Church most capable of doing it. The theme of education, with all that is implied in this term, should be developed more insistently; for education is one of the great opportunities for the salvific mission of the Church.
74. From this knowledge will logically flow understanding and proper esteem. All of the faithful should be conscious of the fact that, without lay Catholics as educators, the Church's education in the faith would lack one of its important basic elements. As far as they can, therefore, all believers should actively collaborate in the work of helping educators to reach the social status and the economic level that is their due, together with the stability and the security that they must have if they are to accomplish their task. No members of the Church can be considered exempt from the struggle to ensure that, in each of their countries, both the legislation of educational policy and the practical carrying out of this legislation reflect, as far as possible, Christian educational principles.

75. Contemporary world conditions should be an inducement for the hierarchy, along with those Religious Institutes that have a commitment to education, to give their support to existing groups, movements, and Catholic Associations of lay believers engaged in education; and also to create other, new groups, always searching for the type of association that will best respond to the needs of the times and the different situations in different countries. The of the lay Catholic educator requires the fulfillment of many educational objectives, along with the social and religious objectives that flow from them. These will be virtually impossible to bring into reality without the united strength of strong associations.

THE SUPPORT OF THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS THEMSELVES.

THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL AND THE LAITY

76. The importance of the Catholic school suggests that we reflect specifically on this case; it can serve as a concrete example of how other Catholic institutions should support the lay people who work in them. In speaking about lay people, this Sacred Congregation has declared without hesitation that “by their witness and behaviour, teachers are of the first importance to impart a distinctive character to Catholic schools” .(54)

77. Before all else, lay people should find in a Catholic school an atmosphere of sincere respect and cordiality; it should be a place in which authentic human relationships can be formed among all of the educators. Priests, men and women Religious, and lay persons, each preserving their specific identity,(55) should be integrated fully into one educational community; and each one should be treated as a fully equal member of that community.

78. If the directors of the school and the lay people who work in the school are to live according to the same ideals, two things are essential. First, lay people must receive an adequate salary, guaranteed by a well defined contract, for the work they do in the school: a salary that will permit them to live in dignity, without excessive work or a need for additional employment that will interfere with the duties of an educator. This may not be immediately possible without putting an enormous financial burden on the families, or making the school so expensive that it becomes a school for a small elite group; but so long as a truly adequate salary is not being paid, the laity should see in the school directors a genuine preoccupation to find the resources necessary to achieve this end. Secondly, laity should participate authentically in the responsibility for the school; this assumes that they have the ability that is needed in all areas, and are sincerely committed to the educational objectives which characterize a Catholic school. And the school should use every means possible to encourage this kind of commitment; without it, the objectives of the school can never be fully realized. It must never be forgotten that the school itself is always in the process of being created, due to the labour brought to fruition by all those who have a role to play in it, and most especially by those who are teachers.(56) To achieve the kind of participation that is desirable, several conditions are indispensable: genuine esteem of the lay , sharing the information that is necessary, deep confidence, and, finally, when it should become necessary, turning over the distinct responsibilities for teaching, administration, and government of the school, to the laity. s

79. As a part of its mission, an element proper to the school is solicitous care for the permanent professional and religious formation of its lay members. Lay people should be able to look to the school for the orientation and the assistance that they need, including the willingness to make time available when this is needed. Formation is indispensable; without it, the school will wander further and further away from its objectives. Often enough, if it will join forces with other educational centers and with Catholic professional organizations, a Catholic school will not find it too difficult to organize conferences, seminars, and other meetings which will provide the needed formation. According to circumstances, these could be expanded to include other lay Catholic educators who do not work in Catholic schools; these people would thus be offered an opportunity they are frequently in need of, and do not easily find elsewhere.

80. The ongoing improvement of the Catholic school, and the assistance which the school, joined to other educational institutions of the Church, can offer to lay Catholic educators, depend heavily on the support that Catholic families offer to the school - families in general, and most especially those that send their children to these schools. Families should recognize the level of their responsibility for a support that extends to all aspects of the school: interest, esteem, collaboration, and economic assistance. Not everyone can collaborate to the same degree or in the same way; nonetheless, each one should be ready to be as generous as possible, according to the resources that are available. Collaboration of the families should extend to a share in
accomplishing the objectives of the school, and also sharing in responsibility for the school. And the school should keep the families informed about the ways in which the educational philosophy is being applied or improved on, about formation, about administration, and, in certain cases, about the management.

CONCLUSION

81. Lay Catholic educators in schools, whether teachers, directors, administrators, or auxiliary staff, must never have any doubts about the fact that they constitute an element of great hope for the Church. The Church puts its trust in them entrusting them with the task of gradually bringing about an integration of temporal reality with the Gospel, so that the Gospel can thus reach into the lives of all men and women. More particularly, it has entrusted them with the integral human formation and the faith education of young people. These young people are the ones who will determine whether the world of tomorrow is more closely or more loosely bound to Christ.

82. This Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education echoes the same hope. When it considers the tremendous evangelical resource embodied in the millions of lay Catholics who devote their lives to schools, it recalls the words with which the Second Vatican Council ended its Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, and "earnestly entreats in the Lord that all lay persons give a glad, generous, and prompt response to the voice of Christ, who is giving them an especially urgent invitation at this moment: ... they should respond to it eagerly and magnanimously ... and, recognizing that what is His is also their own (Phil 2, 5), to associate themselves with Him in His saving mission ... Thus they can show that they are His co-workers in the various forms and methods of the Church's one apostolate, which must be constantly adapted to the new needs of the times. May they always abound in the works of God, knowing that they will not labour in vain when their labour is for Him (Cf. I Cor 15, 58)". (57)

Rome, October 15, 1982, Feast of St. Teresa of Jesus, in the Fourth Centenary of her death

WILLIAM Cardinal BAUM
Prefect

Antonio M. Javierre, Secretary
Titular Archbishop of Meta

(1) Second Vatican Council: Const. Lumen Gentium, n. 31: "The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in a religious state sanctioned by the Church".
(4) Second Vatican Council: Const. Lumen Gentium, n. 32.
(5) Ibid.
(6) Ibid., n. 31.
(7) Ibid., n. 33.
(8) Ibid., n. 31.
(9) Ibid.
(12) Ibid.
(13) Ibid., n. 33.
(17) Ibid., n. 3.
(18) Ibid., n. 6; Universal Declaration on Human Rights, art. 26, 3.
(20) Ibid., n. 5; Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi, December 8, 1975, AAS 68 (1976) n. 70, pp. 59-60.
(26) Cf. above, n. 16.
(27) Cf. above, n. 20.
SACRED CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE IN HUMAN LOVE

Outlines for sex education

INTRODUCTION
1. The harmonious development of the human person progressively reveals in each of us the image of a child of God. " True education aims at the formation of the human person with respect to his ultimate goal ".(1) Treating christian education, Vatican Council II drew attention to the necessity of offering " a positive and prudent sex education " to children and youth.(2)

The Congregation for Catholic Education, within the sphere of its competence, considers it proper to make its contribution for the application of the Conciliar Declarations, as some Episcopal Conferences have done already.

2. This document, drawn up with the help of educational experts and submitted to wide consultation, sets itself a precise objective: to examine the pedagogic aspect of sex education, indicating appropriate guidelines for the integral formation of a christian, according to the of each.

Also, though it does not make explicit citations at every turn, it always presupposes the doctrinal principles and moral norms pertaining to the matter as proposed by the Magisterium.

3. The Congregation for Catholic Education is aware of the cultural and social differences existing in different countries. These guidelines, therefore, should be adapted by the respective Episcopates to the pastoral necessities of each local Church.

SIGNIFICANCE OF SEXUALITY
4. Sexuality is a fundamental component of personality, one of its modes of being, of manifestation, of communicating with others, of feeling, of expressing and of living human love. Therefore it is an integral part of the development of the personality and of its educative process: "It is, in fact, from sex that the human person receives the characteristics which, on the biological, psychological and spiritual levels, make that person a man or a woman, and thereby largely condition his or her progress towards maturity and insertion into society ".(3)

5. Sexuality characterises man and woman not only on the physical level, but also on the psychological and spiritual, making its mark on each of their expressions. Such diversity, linked to the complementarity of the two sexes, allows thorough response to the design of God according to the to which each one is called. Sexual intercourse, ordained towards procreation, is the maximum expression on the physical level of the communion of love of the married. Divorced from this context of reciprocal gift - a reality which the christian enjoys, sustained and enriched in a particular way by the grace of God - it loses its significance, exposes the selfishness of the individual, and is a moral disorder.(4)

6. Sexuality oriented, elevated and integrated by love acquires truly human quality. Prepared by biological and psychological development, it grows harmoniously and is achieved in the full sense only with the realisation of affective maturity, which manifests itself in unselfish love and in the total gift of self.

**THE ACTUAL SITUATION**

7. One can see - among christians, too - that there are notable differences with regard to sex education. In today's climate of moral disorientation a danger arises, whether of a harmful conformism or prejudice, which falsifies the intimate nature of being human, ushered whole from the hands of the Creator.

8. In order to respond to such a situation one looks for a suitable sex education from every source. But if the conviction of its necessity is fairly widely held in theory, in practice there remain uncertainties and significant differences, either with regard to the persons and institutions who must assume the educational responsibility, or in connection with the contents and methodologies.

9. Educators and parents are often aware of not being sufficiently prepared to impart adequate sex education. The school is not always in a position to offer that integral vision of the matter which would remain incomplete with the scientific information alone.

10. Particular difficulties are found in those countries where the urgency of the problem is not recognised, or where perhaps it is thought that it resolves itself without specific education.

11. In general, there is need to recognise that one treats of a difficult undertaking by reason of the complexity of the diverse elements (physical, psychological, pedagogic, socio-cultural, juridical, moral and religious) which come together in educational action.

12. Some catholic organisations in different parts - with the approval and encouragement of the local Episcopal - have begun to carry out a positive work of sex education; it is directed not only to help children and adolescents on the way to psychological and spiritual maturity, but also and above all, to protect them from the dangers of ignorance and widespread degradation.

13. Also praiseworthy are the efforts of many who, with scientific seriousness, dedicate themselves to study the problem, moving from the human sciences and integrating the results of such research in a project which conforms with human dignity, a project by the light of the Gospel.

**DECLARATIONS OF THE MAGISTERIUM**

14. The Magisterium's declarations on sex education mark out a course which satisfies the just requirements of history on the one hand and fidelity to tradition on the other.(5) Vatican Council II in the " Declaration on Christian Education " presents the perspective in which sex education must be set,(6) affirming the right of young people to receive an education adequate to their personal requirements.

The Council states: "With the help of advances in psychology and in the art and science of teaching, children and young people should be assisted in the harmonious development of their physical, moral and intellectual endowments. Surmounting hardships with a gallant and steady heart, they should be helped to acquire gradually a more mature sense of responsibility towards ennobling their own lives through constant effort, and toward pursuing authentic freedom. As they advance in years they should be given positive and prudent sex education ".(7)

15. The Pastoral Constitution " Gaudium et spes ", in speaking of the dignity of marriage and the family presents the latter as the preferential place for the education of young people in chastity.(8) But since this is an aspect of education as a whole, the co-operation of teachers with parents is needed in the accomplishment of their mission.(9) Such education, therefore, must be offered within the family to children and adolescents in a gradual manner, always considering the total formation of the person (10)

16. In the Apostolic Exhortation on the mission of the christian family in the world as it is, John Paul II reserves an important place to sex education as valuable to the person. " Education to love as self-giving, ” says the Holy Father, “also constitutes the indispensable premise for parents called to offer their children a clear and delicate sex education. Faced with a culture which largely reduces human sexuality to the level of
something commonplace, since it interprets and lives it in a reductive and impoverished way by linking it solely with the body and with selfish pleasure, the educational service of parents must aim firmly at a training in the area of sex that is truly and fully personal: for sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person - body, emotions and soul - and manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love ".(11)

17. The Holy Father immediately goes on to speak of the school, which is responsible for this education in service of and in harmony with parents. " Sex education, which is a basic right and duty of parents, must also be carried out under their attentive guidance, whether at home or in educational centres chosen and controlled by them. In this regard, the Church reaffirms the law of subsidiarity, which the school is bound to observe when it cooperates in sex education, by entering into the same spirit that animates the parents ".(12)

18. In order for the value of sexuality to reach its full realisation, " education for chastity is absolutely essential, for it is a virtue that develops a person's authentic maturity and makes him or her capable of respecting and fostering the "nuptial meaning " of the body ".(13) It consists in self-control, in the capacity of guiding the sexual instinct to the service of love and of integrating it in the development of the person. Fruit of the grace of God and of our cooperation, chastity tends to harmonise the different components of the human person, and to overcome the frailty of human nature, marked by sin, so that each person can follow the to which God has called.

In the commitment to an enlightened education in chastity, "Christian parents, discerning the signs of God's call, will devote special attention and care to education in virginity or celibacy as the supreme form of that self-giving that constitutes the very meaning of human sexuality " (14)

19. In the teaching of John Paul II, the positive consideration of values, which one ought to discover and appreciate, precedes the norm which one must not violate. This norm, nevertheless, interprets and formulates the values for which people must strive.

" In view of the close links between the sexual dimension of the person and his or her ethical values, education must bring the children to a knowledge of and respect for the moral norms as the necessary and highly valuable guarantee for responsible personal growth in human sexuality. For this reason the Church is firmly opposed to an often widespread form of imparting sex information dissociated from moral principles. That would merely be an introduction to the experience of pleasure and a stimulus leading to the loss of serenity - while still in the years of innocence - by opening the way to vice ".(15)

20. This document, therefore, starting from the christian vision of man and woman and appealing to the principles enunciated recently by the Magisterium, desires to present to educators some fundamental guidelines for sex education and for the conditions and mode of presenting it at the operative level.

I.

SOME FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

21. Every type of education is inspired by a specific conception of man and woman. Christian education aims to promote the realisation of man and woman through the development of all their being, incarnate spirits, and of the gifts of nature and of grace by which they are enriched by God. Christian education is rooted in the faith which " throws a new light on all things and makes known the full ideal which God has set for man ".(16)

CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF SEXUALITY

22. In the christian vision of man and woman, a particular function of the body is recognised, because it contributes to the revealing of the meaning of life and of the human . Corporeality is, in fact, a specific mode of existing and operating proper to the human spirit: This significance is first of all of an anthropological nature: the body reveals man,(17) " expresses the person " (18) and is therefore the first message of God to the same man and woman, almost a species of " primordial sacrament, understood as a sign which efficaciously transmits in the visible world the invisible mystery hidden in God from all eternity ".(19)

23. There is a second significance of a theological nature: the body contributes to revealing God and his creative love, in as much as it manifests the creatureliness of man and woman, whose dependence bestows a fundamental gift, which is the gift of love. " This is the body: a witness to creation as a fundamental gift, and so a witness to love as the source from which this same giving springs ".(20)

24. The body, in as much as it is sexual, expresses the of man and woman to reciprocity, which is to love and to the mutual gift of self.(21) The body, in short, calls man and woman to the constitutive to fecundity as one of the fundamental meanings of their being sexual.(22)

25. The sexual distinction, which appears as a determination of human being, is diversity, but in equality of nature and dignity.(23)

The human person, through his or her intimate nature, exists in relation to others, implying a reciprocity of love. The sexes are complementary: similar and dissimilar at the same time; not identical, the same, though, in dignity of person; they are peers so that they may mutually understand each other, diverse in their reciprocal completion.
26. Man and woman constitute two modes of realising, on the part of the human creature, a determined participation in the Divine Being: they are created in the “image and likeness of God” and they fully accomplish such not only as single persons, but also as couples, which are communities of love.(25) Oriented to unity and fecundity, the married man and woman participate in the creative love of God, living in communion with Him through the other.(26)

27 The presence of sin obscures original innocence, rendering less easy to man and woman the perception of these truths: their decapitement has become an ethical task, the object of a difficult engagement entrusted to man and woman: “After original sin the man and the woman will lose the grace of original innocence. The discovery of the nuptial meaning of the body will cease to be for them a simple reality of revelation and of grace. This meaning will remain as a commitment given to man by the ethos of the gift, inscribed in the depths of the human heart, as a distant echo of original innocence.”(27) Faced with this capacity of the body to be at the same time sign and instrument of ethical, one can establish an analogy between the body itself and sacramental economy, which is the concrete means through which grace and salvation reach us.

28. Since men and women in their time have been inclined to reduce sexuality to genital experience alone, there have been reactions tending to devalue sex, as though by its nature men and women were defiled by it. These present guidelines intend to oppose such devaluation.

29. “It is only in the Mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear”, (28) and human existence acquires its full meaning in the to the divine life. Only by following Christ does man respond to this and become so fully man, growing finally to reach the perfect man in the measure approaching the full maturity of Christ.(29)

30. In the light of the Mystery of Christ, sexuality appears to us as a to realise that love which the Holy Spirit instills in the hearts of the redeemed. Jesus Christ has enriched such with the Sacrament of Marriage. 31. Furthermore, Jesus has pointed out by word and example the to virginity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven,(30) Virginity is a to love: it renders the heart more free to love God.(31) Free of the duties of conjugal love, the virgin heart can feel, therefore, more disposed to the gratuitous love of one's brothers and sisters.

In consequence, virginity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven better expresses the gift of Christ to the Father on behalf of us and prefigures with greater precision the reality of eternal life, all substantiated in charity.(32) Virginity, certainly is a renunciation of the form of love which typifies marriage, but committed to undertaking in greater profundity the dynamism, inherent in sexuality, of self-giving openness to others. It seeks to obtain its strengthening and transfiguring by the presence of the Spirit, who teaches us to love the Father and the brethren, after the example of the Lord Jesus.

32. In synthesis, sexuality is called to express different values to which specific moral exigencies correspond. Orientated towards interpersonal dialogue, it contributes to the integral maturation of people, opening them to the gift of self in love; furthermore, linked to the order of creation, to fecundity and to the transmission of life, it is called to be faithful to this inner purpose also. Love and fecundity are meanings and values of sexuality which include and summons each other in turn, and cannot therefore be considered as either alternatives or opposites.

33. The affective life, proper to each sex, expresses itself in a characteristic mode in the different states of life: conjugal union, consecrated celibacy chosen for the sake of the kingdom, the condition of the Christian who has not yet reached marriage, or who remains celibate, or who has chosen to remain such. In all these cases the affective life must be gathered and integrated in the human person.

NATURE, PURPOSE AND MEANS OF SEX EDUCATION

34. A fundamental objective of this education is an adequate knowledge of the nature and importance of sexuality and of the harmonious and integral development of the person towards psychological maturity, with full spiritual maturity in view, to which all believers are called.(33) To this end, the Christian educator will remember the principles of faith and the different methods of educational aid, taking account of the positive evaluation which actual pedagogy makes of sexuality.

35. In the Christian anthropological perspective, affective-sex education must consider the totality of the person and insist therefore on the integration of the biological, psycho-affective, social and spiritual elements. This integration has become more difficult because the believer also bears the consequences of sin from the beginning. A true “formation” is not limited to the informing of the intellect, but must pay particular attention to the will, to feelings and emotions. In fact, in order to move to maturation in affective-sexual life, self-control is necessary, which presupposes such virtues as modesty, temperance, respect for self and for others, openness to one's neighbour.

All this is not possible if not in the power of the salvation which comes from Jesus Christ.
36. Also, if the modes are diverse which sexuality assumes in single people, education must first of all promote that maturity which "entails not only accepting sex as part of the totality of human values, but also seeing it as giving a possibility for "offering", that is, a capacity for giving pure love, altruistic love. When such a capacity is sufficiently acquired, an individual becomes capable of spontaneous contacts, emotional self-control and commitment of his free will ".(34)

37. Contemporary pedagogy of christian inspiration sees in the person being educated, considered in all his or her totality and complexity, the principle subject of education. He or she must be helped to develop capacities for good, above all in a trustworthy relationship. This is very easily forgotten when excessive weight is given to simple information, at the expense of other dimensions of sex education. In education, in fact, a knowledge of new notions is of utmost importance, but enlivened by the assimilation of corresponding values and by a lively grasp of understanding of the personal responsibilities associated with entry into adulthood.

38. Given the repercussions which sexuality has in the whole person, it is necessary that multiple aspects be kept in mind: conditions of health, the influence of the family and the social environment, impressions received and the reaction of the pupil, education of the will, and the degree of development of spiritual life sustained with the help of grace.

39. All that has been stated so far serves educators in helping and guiding the formation of personality in the young. They must stimulate them to a critical reflection on received impressions, and, while they propose values, must give testimony of an authentic spiritual life, both personal and communal.

40. Having seen the close links existing between morality and sexuality, it is necessary that the knowledge of moral norms be accompanied by clear motivation, so as to bring a sincere personal adherence to maturity.

41. Contemporary pedagogy has full consciousness of the fact that human life is characterised by a constant evolution and that personal formation is a permanent process. This is also according to age true for sexuality, which expresses itself with particular characteristics in the different phases of life. It evidently brings riches and notable difficulties at every stage of maturation.

42. Educators will have to bear in mind the fundamental stages of such evolution: the primitive instinct, which in the beginning is manifested in a rudimentary state, meets in its turn the ambivalence of good and evil. Then with the help of education, the feelings are stabilised and at the same time augment the sense of responsibility. Gradually selfishness is eliminated, a certain asceticism is stabilised, others are accepted and loved for themselves, the elements of sexuality are integrated: genitality, eroticism, love and charity. Also if the result is not always fully attained, they are more numerous than may be thought who come near the goal to which they aspire.

43. Christian educators are persuaded that sex education is realised in full in the context of faith. Incorporated by Baptism into the Risen Christ, the christian knows that his or her body, too, has been vivified and purified by the Spirit which Jesus communicates.(35)

Faith in the mystery of the Risen Christ, which through his Spirit actualises and prolongs in the faithful the paschal mystery, uncovers in the believer the to the resurrection of the flesh, already begun thanks to the Spirit who dwells in the just as pledge and seed of the total and definitive resurrection.

44. The disorder provoked by sin, present and operating in the individual as well as in the culture which characterises society, exercises a strong pressure to conceive and live sexuality in a manner opposed to the law of Christ, according to that which St. Paul called the law of sin.(36) At times, economic structures, state laws, mass media and systems of life in the great metropoloi are factors which negatively impinge on people. Christian education takes note of this and indicates guidelines for responsibly opposing such influences.

45. This constant endeavour is sustained and rendered possible by divine grace through the Word of God received in faith, through prayer and through participation in the sacraments. In first place is the Eucharist, communion with Christ in the same act as his sacrifice, where effectively the young believer finds the bread of life as viaticum in order to face and overcome the obstacles on his or her earthly pilgrimage. The Sacrament of Reconciliation, through the grace that is proper to it and with the help of spiritual direction, not only reinforces the capacity for resistance to evil but also gives the courage to pick oneself up after a fall. These sacraments are offered and celebrated in the ecclesial community. Those who are vitally involved in such community draw from the sacraments the strength to realise a chaste life, according to their state.

46 Personal and community prayer is the indispensable means for obtaining from God the necessary strength to keep faith with one's baptismal obligations, for resisting the impulses of human nature wounded by sin, and for balancing the emotions provoked by negative influences in the environment. The spirit of prayer helps us to live coherently the practice of the evangelical virtues of faithfulness and sincerity of heart, of poverty and humility in the daily effort of work and of commitment to one's neighbour. The interior life gives rise to christian joy which wins the battle against evil, beyond every moralism and psychological aid.
From frequent and intimate contact with the Lord, everyone, especially the young, will derive the strength and enthusiasm for a pure life and they will realise their human and Christian in peaceful self-control and in generous giving to others. 

The importance of these considerations can escape no one. Today, in fact, many people, implicitly or explicitly, hold a pessimistic interpretation of the capacity of human nature to accomplish a life-long commitment, especially in marriage. Christian education should raise the confidence of the young so that their understanding of and preparation for life-long commitment be secured with the certainty that God will help them with His grace to accomplish His purposes.

47. Imitation of and union with Christ, lived and handed on by the saints, are the most profound motivation for our hope of realising the highest ideal of a chaste life, unattainable by human effort alone. The Virgin Mary is the eminent example of Christian life. The Church, through centuries of experience is convinced that the faithful, especially the young, by devotion to her, have known how to realise this ideal.

II. RESPONSIBILITY IN PUTTING SEX EDUCATION INTO EFFECT

FUNCTION OF THE FAMILY

48. Education, in the first place, is the duty of the family, which "is the school of richest humanity". (37) It is, in fact, the best environment to accomplish the obligation of securing a gradual education in sexual life. The family has an affecting dignity which is suited to making acceptable without trauma the most delicate realities and to integrating them harmoniously, in a balanced and rich personality.

49. The affection and reciprocal trust which exist in the family are necessary for the harmonious and balanced development of the child right from birth. So that the affective natural bonds which unite parents to children be positive in the highest degree, parents are in pride of place in realising a peaceful sexual balance, and in establishing a relationship of trust and of dialogue with their children in a manner appropriate to their age and development.

50. In order to be able to give efficacious guidance, which is necessary for resolving the problems which arise, prior to any theoretical knowledge, adults are to be exemplary in their conduct. Christian parents must know that their example represents the most valid contribution in the education of their children. These, in their turn, can come to certainty that the Christian ideal is a reality experienced within the family itself.

51. Openness and collaboration of parents with other educators who are co-responsible for formation, will positively influence the maturation of young people. The theoretical preparation and the experience of parents will help their children to understand the value and specific role of the reality of man and woman.

52. The full realisation of conjugal life and, in consequence, the sanctity and stability of the family, depend on the formation of conscience and on values assimilated during the whole formative cycle of the parents themselves. Moral values seen in the family are transmitted to the children more easily. (38) Among these moral values, respect for life in the womb and, in general, respect for people of every age and condition have great importance. The young must be helped to understand, appreciate and respect these fundamental values of existence.

In view of the importance of these elements for Christian life, and also in the perspective of a divine call to the children to the priesthood or consecrated life, sex education acquires an ecclesial dimension.

THE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY

53. The Church, mother of the faithful born of her to the faith in Baptism, has an educative mission entrusted by Christ, which is realised especially through proclamation, full communion with God and one's fellows, conscientious and active participation in the eucharistic liturgy and through apostolic activity. (39) By being open to life the ecclesial community constitutes an environment adequate to the assimilation of the Christian ethic in which the faithful learn to witness to the Good News.

54. The difficulties which sex education often encounters within the bosom of the family solicit a major commitment on the part of the Christian community and, in particular, of priests to collaborate in the education of the baptised. In this field, the Catholic school, the parish and other ecclesial institutions are called to collaborate with the family.

55. From the ecclesial character of the faith derives the co-responsibility of the Christian community in helping the baptised to live coherently and knowledgeably the obligations taken on with baptism. It is the responsibility of the Bishops to establish norms and guidelines adapted to the necessities of the individual churches.

CATECHESIS AND SEX EDUCATION

56. Catechesis is called to be the fertile field for the renewal of all the ecclesial community. Therefore, in order to lead the faithful to maturity of faith, it must illustrate the positive values of sexuality, integrating them with those of virginity and marriage, in the light of the mystery of Christ and of the Church. This catechesis should bring into relief that the first of the Christian is to love, and that the love is realised in two diverse ways: in marriage, or in a life of celibacy for love of the kingdom. (40) "Marriage and
virginity are the two modes of expressing and living the one mystery of the Covenant of God with His people”.(41)

57. So that families may be certain that catechesis is by no means apart from the Magisterium, pastors are to be involved both in the selection and preparation of responsible Magisterium personnel and in the determination of content and method.

58. From what has been said above in n. 48, the fact remains ever valid that with regard to the more intimate aspects, whether biological or affective, an individual education should be bestowed, preferably within the sphere of the family.

59. It being understood that catechesis realised in the family constitutes a privileged form, if parents do not feel able to perform this duty, they may have recourse to others who enjoy their confidence. A wise initiative, prudent and adapted to age and environment, can avoid traumas for children and render to them more easy the solution of sexual problems.

PRE-MARRIAGE CATECHESIS

60. A fundamental aspect of the preparation of the young for marriage consists in giving them an exact vision of the Christian ethic regarding sexuality. Catechesis offers the advantage of facing sexuality in the immediate prospect of marriage. But for its full success, this catechesis must be conveniently continued by developing a true and proper catechumenate. It aspires therefore to sustain and strengthen the chastity proper to the engaged in preparation for conjugal life viewed in a Christian manner, and to the specific mission which the married have amongst the People of God.

61. Future spouses must know the profound significance of marriage, understood as a union of love for the realisation of the couple and for procreation. The stability of marriage and of conjugal love requires as indispensable conditions: chastity and self-control, the formation of character and the spirit of sacrifice. With regard to certain difficulties of married life, rendered more acute by the conditions of our time, chastity during one’s youth as an adequate preparation for marital chastity will be a decisive help to the married. They will need therefore to be informed about the divine law, declared by the ecclesiastical Magisterium, necessary for the formation of their consciences.(42)

62 Instructed in the value and greatness of the Sacrament of Matrimony, which specifies for them the grace and of Baptism, Christian spouses will know how to live conscientiously the values and specific obligations of their moral lives as requirement and fruit of the grace and action of the Spirit, “fortified and, as it were, consecrated for the duties and dignity of their state by a special sacrament “.(43) Therefore, in order to live their sexuality and to carry out their responsibilities in accord with God’s plan,(44) it is important that spouses have knowledge of the natural methods of regulating their fertility. As John Paul II has said, “every effort must be made to render such knowledge accessible to all married people and also to young adults before marriage, through clear, timely and serious instruction and education given by married couples, doctors and experts “.(45) Evidently, contraception, insistently propagated today, constrasts with these Christian ideals and these moral norms of which the Church is teacher. This fact renders still more urgent the necessity of transmitting to the young at an appropriate age the teaching of the Church on artificial means of contraception, and the reasons for such teaching, so that the young may be prepared for responsible marriage, full of love and open to life.

GUIDELINES FOR ADULTS

63. A solid catechetical preparation of adults on human love establishes the foundations for the sex education of children. Thus the possession of human maturity illumined by faith in secured, which will be decisive in the dialogue which adults are called to establish with the new generations. Further to indications concerning methods to be used, such catechesis will favour an appropriate exchange of ideas on particular problems, will make the teaching aids for use better known, and will permit eventual encounters with experts, whose collaboration could be particularly useful in difficult cases.

TASK OF CIVIL SOCIETY

64. The person should find in society existing expressions and experiences of values which exercise an influence not secondary on the formative process. Therefore, it will be the task of civil society, in as much as it treats the common good,(46) to be watchful so that a wise physical and moral environment be secured in schools, and conditions which respond to the positive requests of parents, or receive their free support, be promoted.

65. It is the task of the State to safeguard its citizens against injustices and moral disorders, such as the abuse of minors and every form of sexual violence, degrading dress, permissiveness and pornography, and the improper use of demographic information.

RESPONSIBILITY IN EDUCATION IN THE USE OF THE INSTRUMENTS OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

66. In the actual world, the instruments of social communication, by their intrusiveness and suggestion, display to youth and the very young - also and above all in the field of sex education - a continuous and
conditioning stream of information and training, which is very much more trenchant than that of one's own family. John Paul II has indicated the situation in which children find themselves confronted by the instruments of social communication: "Fascinated and devoid of defence before the world and adults, children are naturally ready to accept whatever is offered to them, whether good or bad... They are attracted by the "small screen", they follow each gesture which is portrayed and they perceive, before and better than every other person, the emotions and feelings which result."(47)

67. It is therefore to be noted that by the same technological evolution, the necessary control is rendered less easy and opportune. There is an urgency - for proper sex education, too - that "those who are at the receiving end of the media, and especially the young, should learn moderation and discipline in their use of them. They should aim to understand fully what they see, hear and read. They should discuss them with their teachers and with experts in such matters and should learn to reach correct judgements ".(48)

68 In defence of the rights of the child in this area, John Paul II stimulates the consciences of all responsible christians, especially parents and operators of the instruments of social communication, so that they do not hide behind the pretext of neutrality and respect for the spontaneous development of the child, since in reality this is behaviour of preoccupying indifference.(49)

 TASK OF THE SCHOOL WITH REGARD TO SEX EDUCATION

69. It being understood from what has been said on the primary duty of the family, the rôle of the school should be that of assisting and completing the work of parents, furnishing children and adolescents with an evaluation of "sexuality as value and task of the whole person, created male and female in the image of God ".(51)

70. Interpersonal dialogue required by sex education, tends to kindle in the pupil an interior disposition suited to motivating and guiding personal behaviour. Such a point of view is strictly connected to the values inspired by the concept of life. Sex education is not reducible to simple teaching material, nor to theoretical knowledge alone, nor does it consist of a programme to be carried out progressively, but it has a specific objective in view: that affective maturation of the pupil, of self-control, and of correct behaviour in social relationships.

71. The school can contribute to the realisation of this objective in various ways. All matters can offer an opportunity to treat themes in their relation to sexuality; the teacher will do so always in a positive key and with great delicacy, concretely evaluating the opportunity and the methods. Individual sex education always retains prior value and can not be entrusted indiscrimately to just any member of the school community. In fact, as will be specified in what follows, as well as right judgement, sense of responsibility, professional competence, affective and decent maturity, this education requires from the teacher outstanding sensitivity in initiating the child and adolescent in the problems of love and life without disturbing their psychological development.

72 Also, though the teacher possess the necessary qualities for sex education in groups, it is necessary always to consider the concrete situation of such groups. This applies above all in mixed groups, since these require special precautions. In each case, the responsible authorities must examine with parents the propriety of proceeding in such a manner. Given the complexity of the problem, it is good to reserve for the pupil a time for personal dialogue in order to accomodate the seeking of advice or clarification - which a natural sense of decency would not allow to arise in front of others. Only a strict collaboration between the school and the family will be able to guarantee an advantageous exchange of experience between parents and teachers for the good of the pupils.(52) It is the responsibility of Bishops, taking account of school legislation and local circumstances, to establish guidelines for sex education in groups, above all if they are mixed.

73 It can sometimes happen that particular events in the life of the school render a timely intervention necessary. In such cases, the school authorities, in accordance with the principle of collaboration, will contact parents interested in agreeing on an appropriate solution.

74 Persons particularly suited by competence and balance, and who enjoy the trust of parents, can be invited to hold private conversations with pupils to help them to develop their affective maturity and to give the right balance in their social relationships. Such interventions in personal guidance belong in particular to the more difficult cases, at least when the gravity of the situation makes necessary recourse to a specialist in the matter.

75 The formation and development of an harmonious personality require a peaceful atmosphere, fruitful understanding, reciprocal trust and collaboration between persons in charge. It is obtained with mutual
respect for the specific competence of the various members of the educational staff, their responsibilities and
the choice of the differentiated means at their disposal.

APPROPRIATE TEACHING MATERIALS
76. In order to offer correct sex education, appropriate teaching materials can be of assistance. The
elaboration of such materials requires the contribution of specialists in moral and pastoral theology, of
catechists, of educationists and catholic psychologists. Particular attention is to be paid to the materials to be
used by the pupils themselves.
Some school text-books on sexuality, by reason of their naturalist character, are harmful to the child and the
adolescent. Graphic and audio-visual materials are more harmful when they cruelly present sexual realities
for which the pupil is not prepared, and thus create traumatic impressions or raise an unhealthy curiosity
which leads to evil. Let teachers think seriously of the grave harm that an irresponsible attitude in such
delicate matters can cause in pupils.

YOUTH GROUPS
77. There exists in education a not negligible factor which goes side by side with the action of the family and
the school and which frequently has an even greater influence in the formation of the person: these are youth
groups, constituted in leisure time, which impinge intensely on the life of the adolescent and young adult.
The human sciences hold that "groups" are a positive condition for formation, because the maturation of the
personality is not possible without efficacious personal relationships.

III.
CONDITIONS AND MODE OF SEX EDUCATION
78. The complexity and delicacy of the task requires accurate preparation of teachers, specific qualities in
the way the matter is treated and particular attention to precise objectives.

PREPARATION OF TEACHERS
79. The mature personality of the teachers, their training and psychological balance strongly influence their
pupils. An exact and complete vision of the meaning and value of sexuality and a peaceful integration within
the personality itself are indispensable for teachers in constructive education. Their training takes shape
according to environment. Their ability is not so much the fruit of theoretical knowledge but rather the result
of their affective maturity. This does not dispense with the acquisition of scientific knowledge suited to their
educational work, which is particularly arduous these days. Meetings with parents can be of great help.
80. The dispositions which must characterise the teacher are the result of a general formation, founded on a
positive and professional constructive concept of life, and of constant effort in realising it. Such a formation
goes beyond the purely necessary professional training and addresses the more intimate aspects of the
personality, including the religious and the spiritual. This last will be the guarantee of a recourse to christian
principles, which, by supernatural means, must sustain the educational enterprise.
81. The teacher who carries out his or her task outside the family context needs a suitable and serious
psychopedagogic training which allows the seizing of particular situations which require a special solcitude.
A high degree of this is needed when, in consultation with the parents, a boy or girl needs a psychologist.
82. Beyond the normal topics and pathological cases, there is a whole range of individuals with problems
more or less acute and persistent, which risk being little cured, yet are truly in need of help. In these cases, in
addition to therapy at the medical level, constant support and guidance on the part of teachers is needed.

QUALITY OF TEACHING METHODS
83. A clear vision of the situation is required because the method adopted not only gradually conditions the
success of this delicate education, but also conditions cooperation between the various people in
responsibility. In reality, the criticisms normally raised refer more to the methods used by some teachers
than to the enterprise itself. These methods must have definite qualities, both in the same teachers and in the
end to which such education is proposed.

NEEDS OF THE PUPIL AND EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE
84. Affective-sex education, being more conditioned than others by the degree of physical and psychological
development of the pupil, must always be adapted to the individual. In certain cases it is necessary to advise
the pupil in preparation for particularly difficult situations, when it is foreseen that the pupil will have to
encounter them, or forewarn him or her of imminent or permanent dangers.
85. It is necessary therefore to respect the progressive character of this education. A proper gradual progress
of initiatives must be attentive to the stages of physical and psychological growth, which require a more
careful preparation and a prolonged period of maturation. One needs to be assured that the pupil has
assimilated the values, the knowledge and the motivation which has been proposed, or the changes and the
evolution which he or she could observe in him or herself and of which the teacher opportunely indicates the
causes, the connections and the purpose.

QUALITY OF THE TEACHER
86. In order to make a valid contribution to the harmonious and balanced development of the young, teachers
must regulate their teaching according to the particular rôle which falls to them. The pupil neither perceives
nor receives in the same manner from different teachers the information and motivation which they give, because different teachers affect his or her intimacy in a different way. Objectivity and prudence must characterise such teaching.

87. Progressive information requires a partial explanation, but always according to truth. Explanations must not be distorted by reticence or by lack of frankness. Prudence therefore requires of the teacher not only an appropriate adaption of the matter to the expectations of the pupil, but also a choice of language, mode and time in which the teaching is carried out. This requires that the child's sense of decency be taken into account. The teacher, moreover, remembers the influence of parents: their preoccupation with this dimension of education, the particular character of family education, their concept of life, and their degree of openness to other educational spheres.

88. One must insist first of all on the human and christian values of sexuality, so that pupils can appreciate them, and so that the desire to realise them in one's personal life and relationships may be roused. Without disregarding the difficulties which sexual development involves, but without creating an obsessive state, the teacher may have confidence in the educational enterprise: it can rely on the resonance which true values strike in the young, when they are presented with conviction and are confirmed by testimony of life.

89. Given the importance of sex education in the integral formation of the person, teachers, taking account of the various aspects of sexuality and of their incidence in the global personality, are urged in particular not to separate knowledge from corresponding values, which give a sense and orientation to biological, psychological and social information. Consequently, when they present moral norms, it is necessary, that they show how find their raison d'être and value.

EDUCATION FOR MODESTY AND FRIENDSHIP

90. Modesty, a fundamental component of the personality, may be considered - on the ethical level - as the vigilant knowledge which defends the dignity of man, woman and authentic love. It tends to react to certain attitudes and to curb behaviour which stains the dignity of the person. It is a necessary and effective means of controlling the instincts, making authentic love flower, integrating the affective-sexual life in the harmonious picture of the person. Modesty has great pedagogic weight and must therefore be respected. Children and young people will thus learn to respect the body itself as a gift from God, member of Christ and temple of the Holy Spirit; they will learn to resist the evil which surrounds them and to have a vision and clear imagination to seek to express a truly human love with all its spiritual components when they meet people in friendship.

91. To such an end, concrete and attractive models of virtue are to be presented, the aesthetic sense is to be developed, inspiring a taste for the beauty present in nature, in art and in moral life; the young are to be educated to assimilate a system of sensible and spiritual values in an unselfish impetus of faith and love.

92. Friendship is the height of affective maturation and differs from mere camaraderie by its interior dimension, by communication which allows and fosters true communion, by its reciprocal generosity and its stability. Education for friendship can become a factor of extraordinary importance in the making of the personality in its individual and social dimensions.

93. The bonds of friendship which unite the young of both sexes contribute both to understanding and to reciprocal respect when they are maintained within the limits of normal affective expression. If however they become or tend to become manifestations of a genital character, they lose the authentic meaning of mature friendship, prejudice the relationships involved and the future prospects with regard to an eventual marriage, and render the individuals concerned less attentive to a possible call to the consecrated life.

IV.
SOME PARTICULAR PROBLEMS

The teacher may find that in carrying out his or her mission, he or she may be confronted by several particular problems, which we treat here.

94. Sex education must lead the young to take cognisance of the different expressions and dynamisms of sexuality and of the human values which must be respected. True love is the capacity to open oneself to one's neighbour in generosity, and in devotion to the other for the other's good; it knows how to respect the personality and the freedom of the other,(53) it is self giving, not possessive. The sex instinct, on the other hand, if abandoned to itself, is reduced to the merely genital, and tends to take possession of the other, immediately seeking personal gratification.

95. Relationships of sexual intimacy are reserved to marriage, because only then is the inseparable connection secured - which God wants - between the unitive and the procreative meaning of such matters, which are ordained to maintain, confirm and express a definitive communion of life - one flesh (54) - mediating the realisation of a love that is human, total, faithful, creative (55) which is marital love. Therefore, sexual relations outside the context of marriage constitute a grave disorder, because they are reserved to a reality which does not yet exist;(56) they are a language which is not found in the objective reality of the life of the two persons, not yet constituted in definitive community with the necessary recognition and guarantee of civil and, for catholic spouses, religious society.
96. It seems that there is a spread amongst adolescents and young adults of certain manifestations of a sexual kind which of themselves tend to complete encounter, though without reaching its realisation: manifestations of the merely genital which are a moral disorder because they are outside the matrimonial context of authentic love.

97. Sex education will help adolescents to discover the profound values of love, and to understand the harm which such manifestations do to their affective maturation, in as much as they lead to an encounter which is not personal, but instinctive, often weakened by reservations and egoistic calculations, without therefore the character of true personal relationship and so much less definitive. An authentic education will lead the young towards maturity and self-control, the fruit of conscientious choice and personal effort.

98. It is the task of sex education to promote a continuous progress in the control of the impulses to effect an opening, in due course, to true and self-giving love. A particularly complex and delicate problem which can be present is that of masturbation and of its repercussions on the integral growth of the person. Masturbation, according to catholic doctrine constitutes a grave moral disorder,(57) principally because it is the use of the sexual faculty in a way which essentially contradicts its finality, not being at the service of love and life according to the design of God.(58)

99. A teacher and perspicacious counsellor must endeavour to identify the causes of the deviation in order to help the adolescent to overcome the immaturity underlying this habit. From an educative point of view, it is necessary to consider masturbation and other forms of autoerotism as symptoms of problems much more profound, which provoke sexual tension which the individual seeks to resolve by recourse to such behaviour. Pedagogic action, therefore, should be directed more to the causes than to the direct repression of the phenomenon.(59)

While taking account of the objective gravity of masturbation, it is necessary to be cautious in evaluating the subjective responsibility of the person.(60)

100. In order that the adolescent be helped to feel accepted in a communion of charity and freed from self-enclosure, the teacher "should undramatise masturbation and not reduce his or her esteem and benevolence for the pupil".(61) The teacher will help the pupil towards social integration, to be open and interested in others; to be able to be free from this form of autoerotism, advancing towards self-giving love, proper to mature affectivity; at the same time, the teacher will encourage the pupil to have recourse to the recommended means of christian asceticism, such as prayer and the sacraments, and to be involved in works of justice and charity.

101. Homosexuality, which impedes the person's acquisition of sexual maturity, whether from the individual point of view, or the inter-personal, is a problem which must be faced in all objectivity by the pupil and the educator when the case presents itself.

"Pastorally, these homosexuals must be received with understanding and supported in the hope of overcoming their personal difficulties and their social mal-adaption, their culpability will be judged with prudence; but no pastoral method can be used which, holding that these acts conform to the condition of these persons, accord them a moral justification.

"According to the objective moral acts, homosexual relations are acts deprived of their essential and indispensable rule."(62)

102. It will be the duty of the family and the teacher to seek first of all to identify the factors which drive towards homosexuality: to see if it is a question of physiological or psychological factors; if it be the result of a false education or of the lack of normal sexual evolution; if it comes from a contracted habit or from bad example;(63) or from other factors. More particularly, in seeking the causes of this disorder, the family and the teacher will have to take account of the elements of judgement proposed by the ecclesiastical Magisterium, and be served by the contribution which various disciplines can offer. One must, in fact, investigate elements of diverse order: lack of affection, immaturity, obsessive impulses, seduction, social isolation and other types of frustration, deprivation in dress, license in shows and publications. In greater profundity lies the innate frailty of man and woman, the consequence of original sin; it can run to the loss of the sense of God and of man and woman, and have its repercussions in the sphere of sexuality.(64)

103. The causes having been sought and understood, the family and the teacher will offer an efficacious help in the process of integral growth: welcoming with understanding, creating a climate of hope, encouraging the emancipation of the individual and his or her growth in self control, promoting an authentic moral force towards conversion to the love of God and neighbour, suggesting - if necessary - medical-psychological assistance from persons attentive to and respectful of the teaching of the Church.

104. A permissive society which does not offer valid values on which to found one's life promotes alienating escapism, to which the young are subject in a particular way. Their idealism encounters the harshness of life, causing a tension which can provoke, because of the frailty of the will, a destructive escape in drugs. This is one of the problems which is getting worse and which assumes dramatic tones for the teacher. Some psychotropic substances raise the sensibility for sexual pleasure and in general diminish the capacity for self-control and thereby for defense. The prolonged abuse of drugs leads to physical and psychological
destruction. Drugs, mistaken autonomy and sexual disorders are often found together. The psychological situation and the human context of isolation being such, many people give up, addicts living in rebellion, creating conditions which easily lead into sexual abuses.

105. Remedial intervention, which calls for a profound transformation of the individual from within and without, is laborious and long, because it must help to reconstruct the personality and relationships with the world of people and values. Preventative action is more efficacious. It secures the avoidance of deep, affective decline. It is love and care which educate towards value, dignity, respect for life, for the body, for sex, for health. The civil and christian community must know how to timely welcome the young who are abandoned, alone, insecure, helping them to be included in study and in work, to occupy their free time, offering them healthy places for meeting, happiness, activity, furnishing them with occasions for affective relationships and for solidarity.

In particular, sport, which is at the service of man and woman, possesses a great educative value, not only as bodily discipline, but also as a healthy relaxation in which young people are encouraged to renounce their egotism and to meet other people. Only a freedom which is authentic, educated, aided and promoted offers protection from the quest for illusory liberty of drugs and sex.

CONCLUSION

106. From these reflections one can conclude that in the actual socio-cultural situation there is urgent need to give positive and gradual affective-sex education to children, adolescents and young adults, paying attention to the dispositions of Vatican Council II. Silence is not a valid norm of conduct in this matter, above all when one thinks of the “hidden persuaders” which use insinuating language. Their influence today is undeniable: it is up to parents, therefore, to be alert not only to repair the harm caused by inappropriate and injurious interventions, but above all to opportunistically inform their own children, offering them a positive and convincing education.

107. The defense of the fundamental rights of the child and the adolescent for the harmonious and complete development of the personality conforms to the dignity of the children of God, and belongs in first place to parents. Personal maturation requires, in fact, a continuity in the educative process, protected by love and trust, proper to the family environment.

108. In accomplishing her mission the Church has the duty and the right to take care of the moral education of the baptised.

The contribution of the school in all education, and particularly in these matters which are so delicate, must be carried out in agreement with the family.

This presupposes in teachers and in others involved, whether implicitly or explicitly, a correct criterion for the purpose of their contribution, and training in order to be able to treat these matters with delicacy and in a climate of serene trust.

109. So that information and affective-sex education may be efficacious, it must be carried out with timely prudence, with adequate expression, and preferably in an individual form. The outcome of this education will depend largely on the human and christian vision in which the educator presents the values of life and love.

110. The christian educator, whether father or mother of the family, teacher, priest or whoever bears responsibility in this regard, can be tempted, today above all, to demand, from others this task which needs such delicacy, principle, patience and courage, and which requires committed generosity in the pupil. It is necessary, therefore, before concluding, to reaffirm that this aspect of education is firstly a work of faith for the christian, and of faithful recourse to grace: each aspect of sex education, in fact, is inspired by faith, and draws indispensable strength from it and from grace. The Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians puts self-control and temperance within the ambit which the Holy Spirit, and He alone, can establish in the believer. It is God who bestows light, it is God who grants sufficient strength.(65)

111. The Congregation for Catholic Education turns to Episcopal Conferences so that they promote the union of parents, of christian communities, and of educators for convergent action in such an important sector for the future of young people and the good of society. The Congregation makes this invitation to assume this educational commitment in reciprocal trust and with the highest regard for rights and specific competences, with a complete christian formation in view.

Rome, November 1st, Feast of All Saints
WILLIAM Card. BAUM
Prefect
Antonio M. Javierre. Secretary
Titular Archbishop of Meta


(2) Ibid.


(5) Pius XI, in his Encyclical *Divini illius Magistri*, of 31st. December, 1929, declared erroneous the sex education which was presented at that time, which was information of a naturalist character, precociously and indiscriminately imparted. (AAS 22 (1930) pp. 49-86). The Decree of the Holy Office of 21st. March, 1931 (AAS 23 (1931 ) pp. 118-119) must be read in this perspective. However, Pius XI considered the possibility of an individual, positive sex education " on the part of those who have received from God the educational mission and the grace of state ". (AAS 22 (1930) p. 71). This positive value of sex education indicated by Pius XI has been gradually developed by successive Pontiffs. Pius XII, in his discourse to the Vth. International Congress of Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology, 13th. April, 1953 (AAS 45 (1953) pp. 278-286) and in his allocution to Italian Women of " Azione Cattolica ". 26th. October, 1941 (AAS 33 (1941) pp. 450-458) defines how sex education should be conducted within the ambit of the family. (Cf. also, Pius XII; to the Carmelites: AAS 43 (1951) pp. 734-738; to French Parents: AAS 43 (1951) pp. 730-734) The Teaching of Pius XII prepared the way to the Conciliar Declaration *Gravissimum educationis*.


(7) Ibid.


(9) Cf. *Gravissimum educationis*, n. 5.

(10) Ibid., n. 3; cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 52.


(12) Ibid.

(13) Ibid.

(14) *Familiaris consortio*, n. 37.

(15) Ibid.

(16) *Gaudium et spes*, n. 11.


(21) " Precisely by traversing the depth of that original solitude, man now emerges in the dimension of the mutual gift, the expression of which - and for that very reason the expression of his existence as a person - is the human body in all the original truth of its masculinity and feminity. The body, which expresses masculinity 'for' femininity and, viceversa, femininity 'for' masculinity, manifests the reciprocity and communion of persons. It expresses it by means of the gift as the fundamental characteristic of personal existence ". Ibid.


(23) *Gaudium et spes*, n. 49.

(24) Ibid. n. 12.

(25) Ibid., in which comment is made on the social sense of *Gen.* 1, 27.

(26) Ibid., nn. 47-52.


(28) *Gaudium et spes*, n. 22.


(31) Cf. I *Cor.* 7, 32-34.

(32) Cf. I *Cor.* 13, 4-8; cf. *Familiaris consortio*, n. 16.


(35) Cf. I *Cor.* 6, 15, 19-20.


Cf. Familiaris consortio, n. II.

Ibid., n. 16.


Gaudium et spes, n. 48.

Cf. Humanae vitae, n. 10.


Cf. Gaudium et Spes, n. 26; cf. Humanae vitae, n. 23.


Humanae vitae, n. 10.

Cf. The Human Person, n. 7.

Cf. The Human Person, n. 9.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Inter mirifica, n. 12.

Familiaris consortio, n. 32.

Cf above n. 58.

1 Cor. 13, 5. s

Mr. 19, 5.

Humanae vitae, n. 9.

Cf. The Human Person, n. 7.

Cf. The Human Person, n. 9.

Ibid.

Ibid.


The Human Person, n. 8.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Cf. Rom. 1, 26-28; cf., per analogia, The Human Person, n. 9.


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**THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION**

**OF EDUCATION IN A CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

**GUIDELINES FOR REFLECTION AND RENEWAL**

**CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. On October 28, 1965, the Second Vatican Council promulgated the Declaration on Christian Education Gravissimum educationis. The document describes the distinguishing characteristic of a Catholic school in this way; "The Catholic school pursues cultural goals and the natural development of youth to the same degree as any other school. What makes the Catholic school distinctive is its attempt to generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love. It tries to guide the adolescents in such a way that personality development goes hand in hand with the development of the "new creature" that each one has become through baptism. It tries to relate all of human culture to the good news of salvation so that the light of faith will illumine everything that the students will gradually come to learn about the world, about life, and about the human person".(1)

The Council, therefore, declared that what makes the Catholic school distinctive is its religious dimension, and that this is to be found in a) the educational climate, b) the personal development of each student, c) the relationship established between culture and the Gospel, d) the illumination of all knowledge with the light of faith.

2. More than twenty years have passed since this declaration of the Council. In response to suggestions received from many parts of the world, the Congregation for Catholic Education warmly invites local ordinaries and the superiors of Religious Congregations dedicated to the education of young people to examine whether or not the words of the Council have become a reality. The Second Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops of 1985 said that this opportunity should not be missed! The reflection
should lead to concrete decisions about what can and should be done to make Catholic schools more effective in meeting the expectations of the Church, expectations shared by many families and students.

3. In order to be of assistance in implementing the Council’s declaration, the Congregation for Catholic Education has already published several papers dealing with questions of concern to Catholic schools. The Catholic School (2) develops a basic outline of the specific identity and mission of the school in today’s world. Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to the Faith(3) emphasizes the contributions of lay people, who complement the valuable service offered in the past and still offered today by so many Religious Congregations of men and women. This present document is closely linked to the preceding ones; it is based on the same sources, appropriately applied to the world of today. (4)

4. The present document restricts its attention to Catholic schools: that is, educational institutions of whatever type, devoted to the formation of young people at all preuniversity levels, dependent on ecclesiastical authority, and therefore falling within the competence of this Dicastery. This clearly leaves many other questions untouched, but it is better to concentrate our attention on one area rather than try to deal with several different issues at once. We are confident that attention will be given to the other questions at some appropriate time.(5)

5. The pages which follow contain guidelines which are rather general. Different regions, different schools, and even different classes within the same school will have their own distinct history, ambience, and personal characteristics. The Congregation asks bishops, Religious superiors and those in charge of the schools to study these general guidelines and adapt them to their own local situations.

6. Not all students in Catholic schools are members of the Catholic Church; not all are Christians. There are, in fact, countries in which the vast majority of the students are not Catholics - a reality which the Council called attention to. (6) The religious freedom and the personal conscience of individual students and their families must be respected, and this freedom is explicitly recognized by the Church.(7) On the other hand, a Catholic school cannot relinquish its own freedom to proclaim the Gospel and to offer a formation based on the values to be found in a Christian education; this is its right and its duty. To proclaim or to offer is not to impose, however; the latter suggests a moral violence which is strictly forbidden, both by the Gospel and by Church law. (8)

PART ONE
THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION IN THE LIVES OF TODAY’S YOUTH

1. Youth in a changing world

7. The Council provided a realistic analysis of the religious condition in the world today,(9) and paid explicit attention to the special situation of young people:(10) educators must do the same. Whatever methods they employ to do this, they should be attentive to the results of research with youth done at the local level, and they should be mindful of the fact that the young today are, in some respects, different from those that the Council had in mind.

8. Many Catholic schools are located in countries which are undergoing radical changes in outlook and in life-style: these countries are becoming urbanized and industrialized, and are moving into the so-called "tertiary" economy, characterized by a high standard of living, a wide choice of educational opportunities, and complex communication systems. Young people in these countries are familiar with the media from infancy; they have been exposed to a wide variety of opinions on every possible topic, and are surprisingly well-informed even when they are still very young.

9. These young people absorb a wide and varied assortment of knowledge from all kinds of sources, including the school. But they are not yet capable of ordering or prioritizing what they have learned. Often enough, they do not yet have the critical ability needed to distinguish the true and good from their opposites; they have not yet acquired the necessary religious and moral criteria that will enable them to remain objective and independent when faced with the prevailing attitudes and habits of society. Concepts such as truth, beauty and goodness have become so vague today that young people do not know where to turn to find help; even when they are able to hold on to certain values, they do not yet have the capacity to develop these values into a way of life; all too often they are more inclined simply to go their own way, accepting whatever is popular at the moment.

Changes occur in different ways and at different rates. Each school will have to look carefully at the religious behaviour of the young people “in loco” in order to discover their thought processes, their life-style, their reaction to change. Depending on the situation, the change may be profound, it may be only beginning, or the local culture may be resistant to change. Even a culture resistant to change is being influenced by the all-pervasive mass media!

2. Some common characteristics of the young

10. Although local situations create great diversity, there are characteristics that today’s young people have in common, and educators need to be aware of them.
Many young people find themselves in a condition of radical instability. On the one hand they live in a onedimensional universe in which the only criterion is practical utility and the only value is economic and technological progress. On the other hand, these same young people seem to be progressing to a stage beyond this narrow universe; nearly everywhere, evidence can be found of a desire to be released from it.  

11. Others live in an environment devoid of truly human relationships; as a result, they suffer from loneliness and a lack of affection. This is a widespread phenomenon that seems to be independent of life-style: it is found in oppressive regimes, among the homeless, and in the cold and impersonal dwellings of the rich. Young people today are notably more depressed than in the past; this is surely a sign of the poverty of human relationships in families and in society today. 

12. Large numbers of today's youth are very worried about an uncertain future. They have been influenced by a world in which human values are in chaos because these values are no longer rooted in God; the result is that these young people are very much afraid when they think about the appalling problems in the world: the threat of nuclear annihilation, vast unemployment, the high number of marriages that end in separation or divorce, widespread poverty, etc. Their worry and insecurity become an almost irresistible urge to focus in on themselves, and this can lead to violence when young people are together - a violence that is not always limited to words. 

13. Not a few young people, unable to find any meaning in life or trying to find an escape from loneliness, turn to alcohol drugs, the erotic, the exotic etc. Christian education is faced with the huge challenge of helping these young people discover something of value in their lives. 

14. The normal instability of youth is accentuated by the times they are living in. Their decisions are not solidly based: today's "yes" easily becomes tomorrow's "no". 

Finally, a vague sort of generosity is characteristic of many young people. Filled with enthusiasm, they are eager to join in popular causes. Too often, however, these movements are without any specific orientation or inner coherence. It is important to channel this potential for good and, when possible, give it the orientation that comes from the light of faith. 

15. In some parts of the world it might be profitable to pay particular attention to the reasons why young people abandon their faith. Often enough, this begins by giving up religious practices. As time goes on, it can develop into a hostility toward Church structures and a crisis of conscience regarding the truths of faith and their accompanying moral values. This can be especially true in those countries where education in general is secular or even imbued with atheism. The crisis seems to occur more frequently in places where there is high economic development and rapid social and cultural change. Sometimes the phenomenon is not recent; it is something that the parents went through, and they are now passing their own attitudes along to the new generation. When this is the case, it is no longer a personal crisis, but one that has become religious and social. It has been called a "split between the Gospel and culture". (11) 

16. A break with the faith often takes the form of total religious indifference. Experts suggest that certain patterns of behaviour found among young people are actually attempts to fill the religious void with some sort of a substitute: the pagan cult of the body, drug escape, or even those massive "youth events" which sometimes deteriorate into fanaticism and total alienation from reality. 

17. Educators cannot be content with merely observing these behaviour patterns; they have to search for the causes. It may be some lack at the start, some problem in the family background. Or it may be that parish and Church organizations are deficient. Christian formation given in childhood and early adolescence is not always proof against the influence of the environment. Perhaps there are cases in which the fault lies with the Catholic school itself. 

18. There are also a number of positive signs, which give grounds for encouragement. In a Catholic school, as in any school, one can find young people who are outstanding in every way - in religious attitude, moral behaviour, and academic achievement. When we look for the cause, we often discover an excellent family background reinforced by both Church and school. There is always a combination of factors, open to the interior workings of grace. 

Some young people are searching for a deeper understanding of their religion; as they reflect on the real meaning of life they begin to find answers to their questions in the Gospel. Others have already passed through the crisis of indifference and doubt, and are now ready to commit themselves - or recommit themselves - to a Christian way of life. These positive signs give us reason to hope that a sense of religion can develop in more of today's young people, and that it can be more deeply rooted in them. 

19. For some of today's youth, the years spent in a Catholic school seem to have scarcely any effect. They seem to have a negative attitude toward all the various ways in which a Christian life is expressed - prayer, participation in the Mass, or frequenting of the Sacraments. Some even reject these expressions outright, especially those associated with an institutional Church. If a school is excellent as an academic institution, but does not witness to authentic values, then both good pedagogy and a concern for pastoral care make it obvious that renewal is called for - not only in the content and methodology of religious instruction, but in the overall school planning which governs the whole process of formation of the students.
20. The religious questioning of young people today needs to be better understood. Many of them are asking about the value of science and technology when everything could end in a nuclear holocaust; they look at how modern civilization floods the world with material goods, beautiful and useful as these may be, and they wonder whether the purpose of life is really to possess many "things" or whether there may not be something far more valuable; they are deeply disturbed by the injustice which divides the free and the rich from the poor and the oppressed.

21 For many young people, a critical look at the world they are living in leads to crucial questions on the religious plane. They ask whether religion can provide any answers to the pressing problems afflicting humanity. Large numbers of them sincerely want to know how to deepen their faith and live a meaningful life. Then there is the further practical question of how to translate responsible commitment into effective action. Future historians will have to evaluate the "youth group" phenomenon, along with the movements founded for spiritual growth, apostolic work, or service of others. But these are signs that words are not enough for the young people of today. They want to be active - to do something worthwhile for themselves and for others.

22 Catholic schools are spread throughout the world and enroll literally millions of students. These students are children of their own race, nationality, traditions, and family. They are also the children of our age. Each student has a distinct origin and is a unique individual. A Catholic school is not simply a place where lessons are taught; it is a centre that has an operative educational philosophy, attentive to the needs of today's youth and illumined by the Gospel message. A thorough and exact knowledge of the real situation will suggest the best educational methods.

23 We must be ready to repeat the basic essentials over and over again, so long as the need is present. We need to integrate what has already been learned, and respond to the questions which come from the restless and critical minds of the young. We need to break through the wall of indifference, and at the same time be ready to help those who are doing well to discover a "better way", offering them a knowledge that also embraces Christian wisdom. The specific methods and the steps used to accomplish the educational philosophy of the school will, therefore, be conditioned and guided by an intimate knowledge of each student's unique situation.

PART TWO

THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF THE SCHOOL CLIMATE

1. What is a Christian school climate?
24. In pedagogical circles, today as in the past, great stress is put on the climate of a school: the sum total of the different components at work in the school which interact with one another in such a way as to create favourable conditions for a formation process. Education always takes place within certain specific conditions of space and time, through the activities of a group of individuals who are active and also interactive among themselves. They follow a programme of studies which is logically ordered and freely accepted. Therefore, the elements to be considered in developing an organic vision of a school climate are: persons, space, time, relationships, teaching, study, and various other activities.

25. From the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illumined by the light of faith, and having its own unique characteristics. The Council summed this up by speaking of an environment permeated with the Gospel spirit of love and freedom. In a Catholic school, everyone should be aware of the living presence of Jesus the "Master" who, today as always, is with us in our journey through life as the one genuine "Teacher", the perfect Man in whom all human values find their fullest perfection. The inspiration of Jesus must be translated from the ideal into the real. The Gospel spirit should be evident in a Christian way of thought and life which permeates all facets of the educational climate. Having crucifixes in the school will remind everyone, teachers and students alike, of this familiar and moving presence of Jesus, the "Master" who gave his most complete and sublime teaching from the cross.

26. Prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teachers, as individuals and as a community. The religious dimension of the school climate is expressed through the celebration of Christian values in Word and Sacrament, in individual behaviour, in friendly and harmonious interpersonal relationships, and in a ready availability. Through this daily witness, the students will come to appreciate the uniqueness of the environment to which their youth has been entrusted. If it is not present, then there is little left which can make the school Catholic.

2. The physical environment of a Catholic school
27. Many of the students will attend a Catholic school - often the same school - from the time they are very young children until they are nearly adults. It is only natural that they should come to think of the school as
an extension of their own homes, and therefore a “school- home” ought to have some of the amenities which can create a pleasant and happy family atmosphere. When this is missing from the home, the school can often do a great deal to make up for it.

28 The first thing that will help to create a pleasant environment is an adequate physical facility: one that includes sufficient space for classrooms, sports and recreation, and also such things as a staff room and rooms for parent-teacher meetings, group work, etc. The possibilities for this vary from place to place; we have to be honest enough to admit that some school buildings are unsuitable and unpleasant. But students can be made to feel "at home" even when the surroundings are modest, if the climate is humanly and spiritually rich.

29 A Catholic school should be an example of simplicity and evangelical poverty, but this is not inconsistent with having the materials needed to educate properly. Because of rapid technological progress, a school today must have access to equipment that, at times, is complex and expensive. This is not a luxury; it is simply what a school needs to carry out its role as an educational institution. Catholic schools, therefore, have a right to expect the help from others that will make the purchase of modern educational materials possible. (16) Both individuals and public bodies have a duty to provide this support.

Students should feel a responsibility for their "schoolhome"; they should take care of it and help to keep it as clean and neat as possible. Concern for the environment is part of a formation in ecological awareness, the need for which is becoming increasingly apparent.

An awareness of Mary's presence can be a great help toward making the school into a "home". Mary, Mother and Teacher of the Church, accompanied her Son as he grew in wisdom and grace; from its earliest days, she has accompanied the Church in its mission of salvation.

30 The physical proximity of the school to a church can contribute a great deal toward achieving the educational aims. A church should not be seen as something extraneous, but as a familiar and intimate place where those young people who are believers can find the presence of the Lord: " Behold, I am with you all days" (17) Liturgy planning should be especially careful to bring the school community and the local Church together.

3. The ecclesial and educational climate of the school

31 The declaration Gravissimum educationis (18) notes an important advance in the way a Catholic school is thought of: the transition from the school as an institution to the school as a community. This community dimension is, perhaps, one result of the new awareness of the Church's nature as developed by the Council. In the Council texts, the community dimension is primarily a theological concept rather than a sociological category; this is the sense in which it is used in the second chapter of Lumen gentium, where the Church is described as the People of God.

As it reflects on the mission entrusted to it by the Lord, the Church gradually develops its pastoral instruments so that they may become ever more effective in proclaiming the Gospel and promoting total human formation. The Catholic school is one of these pastoral instruments; its specific pastoral service consists in mediating between faith and culture: being faithful to the newness of the Gospel while at the same time respecting the autonomy and the methods proper to human knowledge.

32 Everyone directly involved in the school is a part of the school community: teachers, directors, administrative and auxiliary staff. Parents are central figures, since they are the natural and irreplaceable agents in the education of their children. And the community also includes the students, since they must be active agents in their own education. (19)

33 At least since the time of the Council, therefore, the Catholic school has had a clear identity, not only as a presence of the Church in society, but also as a genuine and proper instrument of the Church. It is a place of evangelization, of authentic apostolate and of pastoral action - not through complementarity or parallel or extracurricular activity, but of its very nature: its work of educating the Christian person. The words of the present Holy Father make this abundantly clear: "the Catholic school is not a marginal or secondary element in the pastoral mission of the bishop. Its function is not merely to be an instrument with which to combat the education given in a State school" (20)

34 The Catholic school finds its true justification in the mission of the Church; it is based on an educational philosophy in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony. Through it, the local Church evangelizes, educates, and contributes to the formation of a healthy and morally sound life-style among its members. The Holy Father affirms that "the need for the Catholic school becomes evidently clear when we consider what it contributes to the development of the mission of the People of God, to the dialogue between Church and the human community, to the safeguarding of freedom of conscience ...". Above all, according to the Holy Father, the Catholic school helps in achieving a double objective: "of its natute it guides men and women to human and Christian perfection, and at the same time helps them to become mature in their faith. For those who believe in Christ, these are two facets of a single reality" (21)

35 Most Catholic schools are under the direction of Religious Congregations, whose consecrated members enrich the educational climate by bringing to it the values of their own Religious communities. These men
and women have dedicated themselves to the service of the students without thought of personal gain, because they are convinced that it is really the Lord whom they are serving. (22)

Through the prayer, work and love that make up their life in community, they express in a visible way the life of the Church. Each Congregation brings the richness of its own educational tradition to the school, found in its original charism; its members each bring the careful professional preparation that is required by the call to be an educator. The strength and gentleness of their total dedication to God enlightens their work, and students gradually come to appreciate the value of this witness. They come to love these educators who seem to have the gift of eternal spiritual youth, and it is an affection which endures long after students leave the school.

36 The Church offers encouragement to these men and women who have dedicated their lives to the fulfillment of an educational charism. (23) It urges those in education not to give up this work, even in situations where it involves suffering and persecution. In fact, the Church hopes that many others will be called to this special task. When afflicted by doubts and uncertainty, when difficulties are multiplied, these Religious men and women should recall the nature of their consecration, which is a type of holocaust (24) - a holocaust which is offered “in the perfection of love, which is the scope of the consecrated life”. (25) Their merit is the greater because their offering is made on behalf of young people, who are the hope of the Church.

37 At the side of the priests and Religious, lay teachers contribute their competence and their faith witness to the Catholic school. Ideally, this lay witness is a concrete example of the lay that most of the students will be called to. The Congregation has devoted a specific document to lay teachers. (26) meant to remind lay people of their apostolic responsibility in the field of education and to summon them to participate in a common mission, whose point of convergence is found in the unity of the Church. For all are active members of one Church and cooperate in its one mission, even though the fields of labour and the states of life are different because of the personal call each one receives from God.

38 The Church, therefore, is willing to give lay people charge of the schools that it has established, and the laity themselves establish schools. The recognition of the school as a Catholic school is, however, always reserved to the competent ecclesiastical authority. (27) When lay people do establish schools, they should be especially concerned with the creation of a community climate permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love, and they should witness to this in their own lives.

39 The more the members of the educational community develop a real willingness to collaborate among themselves, the more fruitful their work will be. Achieving the educational aims of the school should be an equal priority for teachers, students and families alike, each one according to his or her own role, always in the Gospel spirit of freedom and love. Therefore channels of communication should be open among all those concerned with the school. Frequent meetings will help to make this possible, and a willingness to discuss common problems candidly will enrich this communication.

The daily problems of school life are sometimes aggravated by misunderstandings and various tensions. A determination to collaborate in achieving common educational goals can help to overcome these difficulties and reconcile different points of view. A willingness to collaborate helps to facilitate decisions that need to be made about the ways to achieve these goals and, while preserving proper respect for school authorities, even makes it possible to conduct a critical evaluation of the school - a process in which teachers, students and families can all take part because of their common concern to work for the good of all.

40 Considering the special age group they are working with, primary schools should try to create a community school climate that reproduces, as far as possible, the warm and intimate atmosphere of family life. Those responsible for these schools will, therefore, do everything they can to promote a common spirit of trust and spontaneity. In addition, they will take great care to promote close and constant collaboration with the parents of these pupils. An integration of school and home is especially important for the birth and development of all of the potential which these children manifest in one or the other of these two situations - including their openness to religion with all that this implies.

41 The Congregation wishes to express its appreciation to all those dioceses which have worked to establish primary schools in their parishes; these deserve the strong support of all Catholics. It also wishes to thank the Religious Congregations helping to sustain these primary schools, often at great sacrifice. Moreover, the Congregation offers enthusiastic encouragement to those dioceses and Religious Congregations who wish to establish new schools. Such things as film clubs and sports groups are not enough; not even classes in catechism instruction are sufficient. What is needed is a school. This is a goal which, in some countries, was the starting point. There are countries in which the Church began with schools and only later was able to construct Churches and to establish a new Christian community. (28)

4. The Catholic school as an open community

42 Partnership between a Catholic school and the families of the students must continue and be strengthened: not simply to be able to deal with academic problems that may arise, but rather so that the educational goals of the school can be achieved. Close cooperation with the family is especially important
when treating sensitive issues such as religious, moral, or sexual education, orientation toward a profession, or a choice of one's life. It is not a question of convenience, but a partnership based on faith. Catholic tradition teaches that God has bestowed on the family its own specific and unique educational mission.

43 The first and primary educators of children are their parents. (29) The school is aware of this fact but, unfortunately, the same is not always true of the families themselves; it is the school's responsibility to give them this awareness. Every school should initiate meetings and other programmes which will make the parents more conscious of their role, and help to establish a partnership; it is impossible to do too much along these lines. It often happens that a meeting called to talk about the children becomes an opportunity to raise the consciousness of the parents. In addition, the school should try to involve the family as much as possible in the educational aims of the school - both in helping to plan these goals and in helping to achieve them. Experience shows that parents who were once totally unaware of their role can be transformed into excellent partners.

44 "The involvement of the Church in the field of education is demonstrated especially by the Catholic school". (30) This affirmation of the Council has both historical and practical importance. Church schools first appeared centuries ago, growing up alongside monasteries, cathedrals and parish churches. The Church has always had a love for its schools, because this is where its children receive their formation. These schools have continued to flourish with the help of bishops, countless Religious Congregations, and laity; the Church has never ceased to support the schools in their difficulties and to defend them against governments seeking to close or confiscate them.

Just as the Church is present in the school, so the school is present in the Church; this is a logical consequence of their reciprocal commitment. The Church, through which the Redemption of Christ is revealed and made operative, is where the Catholic school receives its spirit. It recognizes the Holy Father as the centre and the measure of unity in the entire Christian community. Love for and fidelity to the Church is the organizing principle and the source of strength of a Catholic school. Teachers find the light and the courage for authentic Religious education in their unity among themselves and their generous and humble communion with the Holy Father. Concretely, the educational goals of the school include a concern for the life and the problems of the Church, both local and universal. These goals are attentive to the Magisterium, and include cooperation with Church authorities. Catholic students are helped to become active members of the parish and diocesan communities. They have opportunities to join Church associations and Church youth groups, and they are taught to collaborate in local Church projects. Mutual esteem and reciprocal collaboration will be established between the Catholic school and the bishop and other Church authorities through direct contacts. We are pleased to note that a concern for Catholic schools is becoming more of a priority of local Churches in many parts of the world. (31)

45 A Christian education must promote respect for the State and its representatives, the observance of just laws, and a search for the common good. Therefore, traditional civic values such as freedom, justice, the nobility of work and the need to pursue social progress are all included among the school goals, and the life of the school gives witness to them. The national anniversaries and other important civic events are commemorated and made operative, is where the Catholic school receives its spirit. It recognizes the Holy Father as the centre and the measure of unity in the entire Christian community. Love for and fidelity to the Church is the organizing principle and the source of strength of a Catholic school.

The school life should also reflect an awareness of international society. Christian education sees all of humanity as one large family, divided perhaps by historical and political events, but always one in God who is Father of all. Therefore a Catholic school should be sensitive to and help to promulgate Church appeals for peace, justice, freedom, progress for all peoples and assistance for countries in need. And it should not ignore similar appeals coming from recognized international organizations such as UNESCO and the United Nations.

46 That Catholic schools help to form good citizens is a fact apparent to everyone. Both government policy and public opinion should, therefore, recognize the work these schools do as a real service to society. It is unjust to accept the service and ignore or fight against its source. Fortunately, a good number of countries seem to have a growing understanding of and sympathy for the Catholic school. (32) A recent survey conducted by the Congregation demonstrates that a new age may be dawning.

PART THREE
THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION
OF SCHOOL LIFE AND WORK

1. The religious dimension of school life

47 Students spend a large share of each day and the greater part of their youth either at school or doing activities that are related to school. "School" is often identified with "teaching"; actually, classes and lessons are only a small part of school life. Along with the lessons that a teacher gives, there is the active participat on of the students individually or as a group: study, research, exercises, para-curricular activities,
examinations, relationships with teachers and with one another, group activities, class meetings, school assemblies. While the Catholic school is like any other school in this complex variety of events that make up the life of the school, there is one essential difference: it draws its inspiration and its strength from the Gospel in which it is rooted. The principle that no human act is morally indifferent to one's conscience or before God has clear applications to school life: examples of it are school work accepted as a duty and done with good will; courage and perseverance when difficulties come; respect for teachers; loyalty toward and love for fellow students; sincerity, tolerance, and goodness in all relationships.

48 The educational process is not simply a human activity; it is a genuine Christian journey toward perfection. Students who are sensitive to the religious dimension of life realize that the will of God is found in the work and the human relationships of each day. They learn to follow the example of the Master, who spent his youth working and who did good to all.(33) Those students who are un aware of this religious dimension are deprived of its benefits and they run the risk of living the best years of their lives at a shallow level.

49 Within the overall process of education, special mention must be made of the intellectual work done by students. Although Christian life consists in loving God and doing his will, intellectual work is intimately involved. The light of Christian faith stimulates a desire to know the universe as God's creation. It enkindles a love for the truth that will not be satisfied with superficiality in knowledge or judgment. It awakens a critical sense which examines statements rather than accepting them blindly. It impels the mind to learn with careful order and precise methods, and to work with a sense of responsibility. It provides the strength needed to accept the sacrifices and the perseverance required by intellectual labour. When fatigued, the Christian student remembers the command of Genesis(34) and the invitation of the Lord.(35)

50 The religious dimension enhances intellectual efforts in a variety of ways: interest in academic work is stimulated by the presence of new perspectives; Christian formation is strengthened; supernatural grace is given. How sad it would be if the young people in Catholic schools were to have no knowledge of this reality in the midst of all the difficult and tiring work they have to do!

2. The religious dimension of the school culture

51 Intellectual development and growth as a Christian go forward hand in hand. As students move up from one class into the next it becomes increasingly imperative that a Catholic school help them become aware that a relationship exists between faith and human culture.(36) Human culture remains human, and must be taught with scientific objectivity. But the lessons of the teacher and the reception of those students who are believers will not divorce faith from this culture;(37) this would be a major spiritual loss. The world of human culture and the world of religion are not like two parallel lines that never meet; points of contact are established within the human person. For a believer is both human and a person of faith, the protagonist of culture and the subject of religion. Anyone who searches for the contact points will be able to find them.(38)

Helping in the search is not solely the task of religion teachers; their time is quite limited, while other teachers have many hours at their disposal every day. Everyone should work together, each one developing his or her own subject area with professional competence, but sensitive to those opportunities in which they can help students to see beyond the limited horizon of human reality. In a Catholic school, and analogously in every school, God cannot be the Great Absent One or the unwelcome intruder. The Creator does not put obstacles in the path of someone trying to learn more about the universe he created, a universe which is given new significance when seen with the eyes of faith.

52 A Catholic secondary school will give special attention to the "challenges" that human culture poses for faith. Students will be helped to attain that synthesis of faith and culture which is necessary for faith to be mature. But a mature faith is also able to recognize and reject cultural counter-values which threaten human dignity and are therefore contrary to the Gospel.(39) No one should think that all of the problems of religion and of faith will be completely solved by academic studies; nevertheless, we are convinced that a school is a privileged place for finding adequate ways to deal with these problems. The declaration Gravissimum educationis,(40) echoing Gaudium et spes,(41) indicates that one of the characteristics of a Catholic school is that it interpret and give order to human culture in the light of faith.

53 As the Council points out, giving order to human culture in the light of the message of salvation cannot mean a lack of respect for the autonomy of the different academic disciplines and the methodology proper to them; nor can it mean that these disciplines are to be seen merely as subservient to faith. On the other hand, it is necessary to point out that a proper autonomy of culture has to be distinguished from a vision of the human person or of the world as totally autonomous, implying that one can negate spiritual values or prescind from them. We must always remember that, while faith is not to be identified with any one culture and is independent of all cultures, it must inspire every culture: "Faith which does not become culture is faith which is not received fully, not assimilated entirely, not lived faithfully".(42)

54 In a number of countries, renewal in school programming has given increased attention to science and technology. Those teaching these subject areas must not ignore the religious dimension. They should help
their students to understand that positive science, and the technology allied to it, is a part of the universe created by God. Understanding this can help encourage an interest in research: the whole of creation, from the distant celestial bodies and the immeasurable cosmic forces down to the infinitesimal particles and waves of matter and energy, all bear the imprint of the Creator's wisdom and power. The wonder that past ages felt when contemplating this universe, recorded by the Biblical authors, is still valid for the students of today; the only difference is that we have a knowledge that is much more vast and profound. There can be no conflict between faith and true scientific knowledge; both find their source in God.

The student who is able to discover the harmony between faith and science will, in future professional life, be better able to put science and technology to the service of men and women, and to the service of God. It is a way of giving back to God what he has first given to us.

55 A Catholic school must be committed to the development of a programme which will overcome the problems of a fragmented and insufficient curriculum. Teachers dealing with areas such as anthropology, biology, psychology, sociology and philosophy all have the opportunity to present a complete picture of the human person, including the religious dimension. Students should be helped to see the human person as a living creature having both a physical and a spiritual nature; each of us has an immortal soul, and we are in need of redemption. The older students can gradually come to a more mature understanding of all that is implied in the concept of "person": intelligence and will, freedom and feelings, the capacity to be an active and creative agent; a being endowed with both rights and duties, capable of interpersonal relationships, called to a specific mission in the world.

56 The religious dimension makes a true understanding of the human person possible. A human being has a dignity and a greatness exceeding that of all other creatures: a work of God that has been elevated to the supernatural order as a child of God, and therefore having both a divine origin and an eternal destiny which transcend this physical universe. Religion teachers will find the way already prepared for an organic presentation of Christian anthropology.

57 Every society has its own heritage of accumulated wisdom. Many people find inspiration in these philosophical and religious concepts which have endured for millennia. The systematic genius of classical Greek and European thought has, over the centuries, generated countless different doctrinal systems, but it has also given us a set of truths which we can recognize as a part of our permanent philosophical heritage. A Catholic school conforms to the generally accepted school programming of today, but implements these programmes within an overall religious perspective. This perspective includes criteria such as the following: Respect for those who seek the truth, who raise fundamental questions about human existence.

58 Teachers should guide the students' work in such a way that they will be able to discover a religious dimension in the world of human history. As a preliminary, they should be encouraged to develop a taste for historical truth, and therefore to realize the need to look critically at texts and curricula which, at times, are imposed by a government or distorted by the ideology of the author. The next step is to help students see history as something real: the drama of human grandeur and human misery. The protagonist of history is the human person, who projects onto the world, on a larger scale, the good and the evil that is within each individual. History is, then, a monumental struggle between these two fundamental realities, and subject to moral judgments. But such judgments must always be made with understanding.

59 To this end, the teacher should help students to see history as a whole. Looking at the grand picture, they will see the development of civilizations, and learn about progress in such things as economic development, human freedom, and international cooperation. Realizing this can help to offset the disgust that comes from learning about the darker side of human history. But even this is not the whole story. When they are ready to appreciate it, students can be invited to reflect on the fact that this human struggle takes place within the divine history universal salvation. At this moment, the religious dimension of history begins to shine forth in all its luminous grandeur.

60 The increased attention given to science and technology must not lead to a neglect of the humanities: philosophy, history, literature and art. Since earliest times, each society has developed and handed on its artistic and literary heritage, and our human patrimony is nothing more than the sum total of this cultural wealth. Thus, while teachers are helping students to develop an aesthetic sense, they can bring them to a
deeper awareness of all peoples as one great human family. The simplest way to uncover the religious dimension of the artistic and literary world is to start with its concrete expressions: in every human culture, art and literature have been closely linked to religious beliefs. The artistic and literary patrimony of Christianity, is vast and gives visible testimony to a faith that has been handed down through centuries. 61 Literary and artistic works depict the struggles of societies, of families, and of individuals. They spring from the depths of the human heart, revealing its lights and its shadows, its hope and its despair. The Christian perspective goes beyond the merely human, and offers more penetrating criteria for understanding the human struggle and the mysteries of the human spirit.(55) Furthermore, an adequate religious formation has been the starting point for the of a number of Christian artists and art critics. In the upper grades, a teacher can bring students to: an even more profound appreciation of artistic works; as a reflection of the divine beauty in tangible form. Both the Fathers of the Church and the masters of Christian philosophy teach this in their writings on aesthetics - St. Augustine invites us to go beyond the intention of the artists in order to find the eternal order of God in the work of art; St. Thomas sees the presence of the Divine Word in art.(56)

62 A Catholic school is often attentive to issues having to do with educational methods, and this can be of great service both to civil society and to the Church. Government requirements for teacher preparation usually require historical and systematic courses in pedagogy, psychology and teaching methods. In more recent times, educational science has been subdivided into a number of areas of specialization and has been subjected to a variety of different philosophies and political ideologies; those preparing to become teachers may feel that the whole field is confused and fragmented. Teachers of pedagogical science can help these students in their bewilderment, and guide them in the formulation of a carefully thought out synthesis, whose elaboration begins with the premise that every pedagogical current of thought contains things which are true and useful. But then one must begin to reflect, judge, and choose.

63 Future teachers should be helped to realize that any genuine educational philosophy has to be based on the nature of the human person, and therefore must take into account all of the physical and spiritual powers of each individual, along with the call of each one to be an active and creative agent in service to society. And this philosophy must be open to a religious dimension. Human beings are fundamentally free; they are not the property of the state or of any human organization. The entire process of education, therefore, is a service to the individual students, helping each one to achieve the most complete formation possible. The Christian model, based on the person of Christ, is then linked to this human concept of the person - that is, the model begins with an educational framework based on the person as human, and then enriches it with supernatural gifts, virtues, and values - and a supernatural call. It is indeed possible to speak about Christian education; the Conciliar declaration provides us with a clear synthesis of it.(57) Proper pedagogical formation, finally, will guide these students to a self-formation that is both human and Christian, because this is the best possible preparation for one who is preparing to educate others.

64 Interdisciplinary work has been introduced into Catholic schools with positive results, for there are questions and topics that are not easily treated within the limitations of a single subject area. Religious themes should be included; they arise naturally when dealing with topics such as the human person, the family, society, or history. Teachers should be adequately prepared to deal with such questions and be ready to give them the attention they deserve.

65 Religion teachers are not excluded. While their primary mission must be the systematic presentation of religion, they can also be invited - within the limitations of what is concretely possible - to assist in clarifying religious questions that come up in other classes. Conversely, they may wish to invite one of their colleagues to attend a religion class, in order to have the help of an expert when dealing with some specific issue. Whenever this happens, students will be favourably impressed by the cooperative spirit among the teachers: the one purpose all of them have in mind is to help these students grow in knowledge and in commitment.

PART FOUR

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN THE CLASSROOM
AND THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF FORMATION

1. The nature of religious instruction

66 The mission of the Church is to evangelize, for the interior transformation and the renewal of humanity (58) For young people, the school is one of the ways for this evangelization to take place.(59) It may be profitable to recall what the Magisterium has said: “Together with and in collaboration with the family, schools provide possibilities for catechesis that must not be neglected ... This refers especially to the Catholic school, of course: it would no longer deserve the title if, no matter how good its reputation for teaching in other areas there were just grounds for a reproach of negligence or deviation in religious
education properly so-called. It is not true that such education is always given implicitly or indirectly. The special character of the Catholic school and the underlying reason for its existence, the reason why Catholic parents should prefer it, is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the overall education of the students”.

67 Sometimes there is an uncertainty, a difference of opinion, or an uneasiness about the underlying principles governing religious formation in a Catholic school, and therefore about the concrete approach to be taken in religious instruction. On the one hand, a Catholic school is a “civic institution”; its aim, methods and characteristics are the same as those of every other school. On the other hand, it is a “Christian community”, whose educational goals are rooted in Christ and His Gospel. It is not always easy to bring these two aspects into harmony: the task requires constant attention, so that the tension between a serious effort to transmit culture and a forceful witness to the Gospel does not turn into a conflict harmful to both.

68 There is a close connection, and at the same time a clear distinction, between religious instruction and catechesis, or the handing on of the Gospel message. The close connection makes it possible for a school to remain a school and still integrate culture with the message of Christianity. The distinction comes from the fact that, unlike religious instruction, catechesis presupposes that the hearer is receiving the Christian message as a salvific reality. Moreover, catechesis takes place within a community living out its faith at a level of space and time not available to a school: a whole lifetime.

69 The aim of catechesis, or handing on the Gospel message, is maturity: spiritual, liturgical, sacramental and apostolic; this happens most especially in a local Church community. The aim of the school however, is knowledge. While it uses the same elements of the Gospel message, it tries to convey a sense of the nature of Christianity, and of how Christians are trying to live their lives. It is evident, of course, that religious instruction cannot help but strengthen the faith of a believing student, just as catechesis cannot help but increase one’s knowledge of the Christian message.

The distinction between religious instruction and catechesis does not change the fact that a school can and must play its specific role in the work of catechesis. Since its educational goals are rooted in Christian principles, the school as a whole is inserted into the evangelical function of the Church. It assists in and promotes faith education.

70 Recent Church teaching has added an essential note: "The basic principle which must guide us in our commitment to this sensitive area of pastoral activity is that religious instruction and catechesis are at the same time distinct and complementary. A school has as its purpose the students' integral formation. Religious instruction, therefore, should be integrated into the objectives and criteria which characterize a modern school". School directors should keep this directive of the Magisterium in mind, and they should respect the distinctive characteristics of religious instruction. It should have a place in the weekly order alongside the other classes, for example; it should have its own syllabus, approved by those in authority; it should seek appropriate interdisciplinary links with other course material so that there is a coordination between human learning and religious awareness. Like other course work, it should promote culture, and it should make use of the best educational methods available to schools today. In some countries, the results of examinations in religious knowledge are included within the overall measure of student progress.

Finally, religious instruction in the school needs to be coordinated with the catechesis offered in parishes, in the family, and in youth associations.

2. Some basic presuppositions about religious instruction

71 It should be no surprise that young people bring with them into the classroom what they see and hear in the world around them, along with the impressions gained from the "world" of mass media. Perhaps some have become indifferent or insensitive. The school curriculum as such does not take these attitudes into account, but teachers must be very aware of them. With kindness and understanding, they will accept the students as they are, helping them to see that doubt and indifference are common phenomena, and that the reasons for this are readily understandable. But they will invite students in a friendly manner to seek and discover together the message of the Gospel, the source of joy and peace.

The teachers' attitudes and behaviour should be those of one preparing the soil.(63) They then add their own spiritual lives, and the prayers they offer for the students entrusted to them.(64)

72 An excellent way to establish rapport with students is simply to talk to them - and to let them talk. Once a warm and trusting atmosphere has been established, various questions will come up naturally. These obviously depend on age and living situation, but many of the questions seem to be common among all of today's youth; and they tend to raise them at a younger age. (65) These questions are serious ones for young people, and they make a calm study of the Christian faith very difficult. Teachers should respond with patience and humility, and should avoid the type of peremptory statements that can be so easily contradicted: Experts in history and science could be invited to class. One's own experiences and study should be used to help the students. Inspiration can be found in the numerous and carefully worked out responses which Vatican II gives to these kinds of questions. In theory at least, this patient work of clarification should take
place at the beginning of each year, since it is almost certain that new questions and new difficulties will have come up during the vacation period. And experience suggests that every other opportune occasion should be taken advantage of.

73 It is not easy to develop a course syllabus for religious instruction classes which will present the Christian faith systematically and in a way suited to the young people of today. The Second Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1985 suggested that a new catechism be developed for the universal Church, and the Holy Father immediately created a commission to begin the preparatory work on this project. When the catechism becomes available, adaptations will be necessary in order to develop course outlines that conform to the requirements of education authorities and respond to the concrete situations that depend on local circumstances of time and place.

While we await the new synthesis of Christian doctrine - the completion of the work mandated by the Synod we present by way of example an outline which is the fruit of experience. It is complete in content, faithful to the Gospel message, organic in form, and is developed according to a methodology based on the words and deeds of the Lord.

3. An outline for an organic presentation of the Christian event and the Christian message

74 As expressed by Vatican II, the task of the teacher is to summarize Christology and present it in everyday language. Depending on the level of the class, this should be preceded by a presentation of some basic ideas about Sacred Scripture, especially those having to do with the Gospels, Divine Revelation, and the Tradition that is alive in the Church.(66) With this as a base, the class begins to learn about the Lord Jesus. His person, his message, his deeds, and the historical fact of his resurrection lead to the mystery of his divinity: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God".(67) For more mature students, this study can be expanded to include Jesus as Saviour, Priest, Teacher, and Lord of the universe. At his side is Mary his Mother, who cooperates in his mission.(68)

The discovery process is an important pedagogical method. The person of Jesus will come alive for the students. They will see again the example of his life, listen to his words, hear his invitation as addressed to them: "Come to me, all of you ... ".(69) Faith is thus based on knowing Jesus and following him; its growth depends on each one's good will and cooperation with grace.

75 The teacher has a reliable way to bring young people closer to the mystery of the revealed God, to the extent that this can ever be humanly possible.(70) It is the way indicated by the Saviour: "Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father".(71) Through his person and his message we learn about God: we examine what he has said about the Father, and what he has done in the name of the Father. Through the Lord Jesus, therefore, we come to the mystery of God the Father, who created the universe and who sent his Son into the world so that all men and women might be saved.(72) Through Christ we come to the mystery of the Holy Spirit, sent into the world to bring the mission of the Son to fulfilment.(73) And thus we approach the supreme mystery of the Holy Trinity, in itself and as operative in the world. It is this mystery that the Church venerates and proclaims whenever it recites the Creed, repeating the words of the first Christian communities.

The process has great educational value. Its successful completion will help to strengthen the virtues of faith and of Christian religion, both of which have God as their object: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; known, loved and served in this life as we await an eternal life in union with them.

76 Students learn many things about the human person by studying science; but science has nothing to say about mystery. Teachers should help students begin to discover the mystery within the human person, just as Paul tried to help the people of Athens discover the "Unknown God". The text of John already cited(74) demonstrates that, in and through Christ, a close relationship has been established between God and each human being. The relationship has its beginning in the love of the Father; it is expressed in the love of Jesus, which led to the ultimate sacrifice of himself: "No one has greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends".(75) A crowd of people constantly surrounded Jesus; they were of all types, as if representing all of humanity. As the students see this, they will begin to ask themselves why Jesus loves everyone, why he offers an invitation to all, why he gives his life for us all. And they will be forced to conclude that each person must be a very privileged creature of God, to be the object of so much love. This is the point at which students will begin to discover another mystery - that human history unfolds within a divine history of salvation: from creation, through the first sin, the covenant with the ancient people of God, the long period of waiting until finally Jesus our Saviour came, so that now we are the new People of God, pilgrims on earth journeying toward our eternal home.(76)

The educational value of Christian anthropology is obvious. Here is where students discover the true value of the human person: loved by God, with a mission on earth and a destiny that is immortal. As a result, they learn the virtues of self-respect and self-love, and of love for others - a love that is universal. In addition, each student will develop a willingness to embrace life, and also his or her own unique , as a fulfillment of God's will.

77 The history of salvation continues in the Church, an historical reality that is visible to the students. They should be encouraged to discover its origins in the Gospels, in Acts, and in the Apostolic Letters; as they
study these works they will see the Church at its birth, and then as it begins to grow and take its place in the world. From the way it comes into being, from its miraculous growth, and from its fidelity to the Gospel message the transition is made to the Church as a mystery. The teacher will help students to discover the Church as the People of God, composed of women and men just like ourselves, bringing salvation to all of humanity. The Church is guided by Jesus the Eternal Shepherd; guided by his Spirit, which sustains it and is forever renewing it; guided visibly by the pastors he has ordained: the Holy Father and the bishops, assisted by priests and the deacons who are their collaborators in priesthood and in ministry. The Church, called by God to be holy in all its members, continues to be at work in the world. This is the mystery of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church that we celebrate in the Creed. (77) Ecclesiology has an extremely important educational value: the ideal of a universal human family is realized in the Church. As young people come to a better knowledge of the Church they belong to, they will learn to love it with a filial affection; this has obvious consequences for life, for apostolate, and for a Christian vision of the world.

78 As they get older, many young people stop receiving the Sacraments; this may be a sign that their meaning has not been grasped. Perhaps they are seen as devotional, practices for children, or a popular devotion joined to a secular feast. Teachers are familiar with this phenomenon and its dangers. They will, therefore, help students to discover the real value of the Sacraments: they accompany the believer on his or her journey through life. This journey takes place within the Church, and therefore becomes more comprehensible as students grow in an understanding of what it means to be a member of the Church. The essential point for students to understand is that Jesus Christ is always truly present in the Sacraments which he has instituted. (78) and his presence makes them efficacious means of grace. The moment of closest encounter with the Lord Jesus occurs in the Eucharist, which is both Sacrifice and Sacrament. In the Eucharist, two supreme acts of love are united: Our Lord renews his sacrifice of salvation for us, and he truly gives himself to us.

79 An understanding of the sacramental journey has profound educational implications. Students become aware that being a member of the Church is something dynamic, responding to every person's need to continue growing all through life. When we meet the Lord in the Sacraments, we are never left unchanged. Through the Spirit, he causes us to grow in the Church, offering us "grace upon grace"; (79) the only thing he asks is our cooperation. The educational consequences of this touch on our relationship with God, our witness as a Christian, and our choice of a personal. (80)

80 Young people today are assaulted by distractions; the circumstances are not ideal for reflecting on the last things. An effective way to approach this mystery of faith is, however, available to the teacher: the Lord proposes it in his own unique way. In the story of Lazarus, he calls himself "the resurrection and the life" (81) In the parable of the rich man he helps us to understand that a personal judgement awaits each one of us. (82) In the impressive drama of the last judgment he points to an eternal destiny which each of us merits through our own works. (83) The good or evil done to each human being is as if done to him. (84) Then, using the Creed as a pattern, the teacher can help students to learn about the Kingdom of Heaven: that it consists of those who have believed in him and spent their lives in his service. The Church calls them "saints" even if not all are formally venerated under that title. First among them is Mary, the Mother of Jesus, living a glorified life at the side of her Son. Those who have died are not separated from us. They, with us, form the one Church, the People of God, united in the "communion of saints". Those dear to us who have left us are alive and are in communion with us. (85)

These truths of faith contribute to human and Christian maturity in several important areas. They provide a sense of the dignity of the person, as destined to immortality. Christian hope offers comfort in life's difficulties. We are personally responsible in everything we do, because we must render an account to God.

4. An outline for a systematic presentation of the Christian life

82 As we have seen, each truth of faith has educational and ethical implications, and students should be helped to learn about these from the time when they first begin the study of religion. But a systematic presentation of Christian ethics is also needed; to assist in this task, we present here a sample outline. As an introduction to a study of the relationship between faith and life through religious ethics it can be helpful to reflect on the first Christian communities, where the Gospel message was accompanied by prayer and the celebration of the Sacraments. (86) This has permanent value. Students will begin to understand the meaning of the virtue of faith: helped by grace, to give complete, free, personal and affective loyalty to the God who reveals himself through his Son.

This commitment is not automatic; it is itself a gift of God. We must ask for it and wait for it patiently. And students must be given time to grow and to mature.

83 The life of faith is expressed in acts of religion. The teacher will assist students to open their hearts in confidence to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through personal and liturgical prayer. The latter is not just another way of praying; it is the official prayer of the Church, which makes the mystery of Christ present in our lives - especially through the Eucharist, Sacrifice and Sacrament, and through the Sacrament of
Reconciliation. Religious experiences are then seen, not as something externally imposed, but as a free and loving response to the God who first loved us.(87) The virtues of faith and religion, thus rooted and cultivated, are enabled to develop during childhood, youth, and in all the years that follow.

84 The human person is present in all the truths of faith: created in "the image and likeness" of God; elevated by God to the dignity of a child of God; unfaithful to God in original sin, but redeemed by Christ; a temple of the Holy Spirit; a member of the Church; destined to eternal life.

Students may well object that we are a long way from this ideal. The teacher must listen to these pessimistic responses, but point out that they are also found in the Gospel.(88) Students may need to be convinced that it is better to know the positive picture of personal Christian ethics rather than to get lost in an analysis of human misery. In practice, this means respect for oneself and for others. We must cultivate intelligence and the other spiritual gifts, especially through scholastic work. We must learn to care for our body and its health, and this includes physical activity and sports. And we must be careful of our sexual integrity through the virtue of chastity, because sexual energies are also a gift of God, contributing to the perfection of the person and having a providential function for the life of society and of the Church.(89) Thus, gradually, the teacher will guide students to the idea, and then to the realization, of a process of total formation.

85 Christian love is neither sentimentalism nor humanitarianism; it is a new reality, born of faith. Teachers must remember that the love of God governs the divine plan of universal salvation. The Lord Jesus came to live among us in order to show us the Father's love. His ultimate sacrifice testifies to his love for his friends. And the Lord's new commandment is at the centre of our faith: "This is my commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you".(90) The "as" is the model and the measure of Christian love.

86 Students will raise the standard objections: violence in the world, racial hatred, daily crime, both young and old concerned only with themselves and what they can get for themselves. Teachers cannot avoid discussing these issues, but they should insist that the commandment of Christ is new and revolutionary, and that it stands in opposition to all that is evil and to every form of egoism. The new Christian ethic needs to be understood and put into practice.

87 It begins at the level of family and school: affection, respect, obedience, gratitude, gentleness, goodness, helpfulness, service and good example. All manifestations of egoism, rebellion, antipathy, jealousy, hatred or revenge must be rooted out. At the broader level of Church: a love for all that excludes no one because of religion, nationality or race; prayer for all, so that all may know the Lord; labouring together in apostolic works and in efforts to relieve human suffering; a preferential option for the less fortunate, the sick, the poor, the handicapped, the lonely. As love grows in the Church, more young people may choose a life of service in it, responding to a call to the priesthood or to Religious life.

As they begin to prepare for marriage: rejecting anything that would hint at a desecration of love; discovering the newness and the depth of Christian love between man and woman, including the mutuality and reserve with which it is expressed and the sincere tenderness by which it is preserved. Young people should experience love in this way from their first friendships, gradually leading to the possibility of a commitment, until finally love is consecrated for the whole of life in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

88 Christian social ethics must always be founded on faith. From this starting point it can shed light on related disciplines such as law, economics and political science, all of which study the human situation,(91) and this is an obvious area for fruitful interdisciplinary study. But it is important to remind ourselves that God has put the world at the service of the human family.(92) As our Lord pointed out,(93) violence and injustice in society come from men and women, and they are contrary to the will of God. But in saving us, God also saves our works: a renewed world flows from a renewed heart. The works of the new Christian ethic of humanity are love, justice, freedom and grace.(94)

89 These, then, are the basic elements of a Christian social ethic: the human person, the central focus of the social order; justice, the recognition of the rights of each individual; honesty, the basic condition for all human relationships; freedom, the basic right of each individual and of society. World peace must then be founded on good order and the justice to which all men and women have a right as children of God; national and international well-being depend on the fact that the goods of the earth are gifts of God, and are not the privilege of some individuals or groups while others are deprived of them. Misery and hunger weigh on the conscience of humanity and cry out to God for justice.

90 This is an area which can open up broad possibilities. Students will be enriched by the principles and values they learn, and their service of society will be more effective. The Church supports and enlightens them with a social doctrine which is waiting to be put into practice by courageous and generous men and women of faith.(95)

91 The guidelines developed up to this point seem excessively optimistic. While the presentation of the Christian message as "good news" is pedagogically sound,(96) the realism of revelation, history and daily experience all require that students have a clear awareness of the evil that is at work in the world and in the human person. The Lord spoke about the "power of darkness".(97) Men and women wander far away from
God, and rebel against the Gospel message; they continue to poison the world with war, violence, injustice and crime.

92 A teacher can invite the students to examine their own consciences. Which one of us can honestly claim to be without sin? (98) Thus they will acquire a sense of sin: the great sin of humanity as a whole and the personal sin which all of us discover within ourselves. Sin drives us away from God, rejects the message of Christ, and transgresses the law of love; sin betrays conscience, abuses the gift of freedom, offends the other children of God, and harms the Church of which we are all members.

93 But we are not in a hopeless situation. The teacher should help students to see, in the light of faith, that this reality has another side to it. On the world scale, the Gospel message continues to "die" as the "seed" in the soil of the earth only to blossom and bear fruit in due season. (99) At the personal level, the Lord waits for us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is not just a devotional practice, but rather a personal encounter with him, through the mediation of his minister. After this celebration we can resume our journey with renewed strength and joy.

94 These truths can lead to a new and more mature understanding of Christianity. The Lord calls us to an endless struggle: to resist the forces of evil and, with his help, to have the courage to overpower it. This is a Christianity which is alive and healthy, at work in history and within the life of each individual. (100)

The call to be a Christian involves a call to help liberate the human family from its radical slavery to sin and, therefore, from the effects of sin in the cultural, economic, social and political orders. Ultimately, these effects all result from sin; they are obstacles which prevent men and women from living according to the dignity which is theirs. (101)

95 Perfection is a theme which must be part of this systematic presentation of the Christian message. To pass over it would be disloyal: to the Lord, who calls us to limitless perfection; (102) to the Church, which invites us all to perfection; (103) and to the young people themselves, who have the right to know what the Lord and the Church expect of them. The teacher will begin by reminding believing students that, through their baptism, they have become members of the Church. The Christian perfection to which we are all called is a gift of Jesus through the mediation of the Spirit; but the gift requires our cooperation. Our apostolic witness must make this perfection visible in the world, today and in the future.

Once they get beyond feeling that too much is being asked of them, students will realize that perfection is actually within their grasp. The only thing they have to do is live their lives as students as well as they can: (104) do their best in study and work; put into practice the virtues they already know in theory - especially love, which must be lived in the classroom, at home, and among friends; accept difficulties with courage; help those in need; give good example. In addition, they must find the inspiration for their daily lives in the words and the example of Jesus. They must converse with him in prayer and receive him in the Eucharist. No student can say that these are impossible demands.

The ideal would be for each student to have an opportunity for spiritual guidance, to help in interior formation. It is the best way of giving orientation and completion to the religious instruction given in the classroom and, at the same time, of integrating this instruction into the personal experiences of each individual.

5. The religion teacher

96 The fruits of an organic presentation of the faith and of Christian ethics depend in great part on the religion teachers: who they are and what they do.

The religion teacher is the key, the vital component, if the educational goals of the school are to be achieved. But the effectiveness of religious instruction is closely tied to the personal witness given by the teacher; this witness is what brings the content of the lessons to life. Teachers of religion, therefore, must be men and women endowed with many gifts, both natural and supernatural, who are also capable of giving witness to these gifts; they must have a thorough cultural, professional, and pedagogical training, and they must be capable of genuine dialogue.

Most of all, students should be able to recognize authentic human qualities in their teachers. They are teachers of the faith; however, like Christ, they must also be teachers of what it means to be human. This includes culture, but it also includes such things as affection, tact, understanding, serenity of spirit, a balanced judgment, patience in listening to others and prudence in the way they respond, and, finally, availability for personal meetings and conversations with the students. A teacher who has a clear vision of the Christian milieu and lives in accord with it will be able to help young people develop a similar vision, and will give them the inspiration they need to put it into practice.

97 In this area, especially, an unprepared teacher can do a great deal of harm. Everything possible must be done to ensure that Catholic schools have adequately trained religion teachers; it is a vital necessity and a legitimate expectation. In Catholic schools today, these teachers tend more and more to be lay people, and they should have the opportunity of receiving the specific experiential knowledge of the mystery of Christ and of the Church that priests and Religious automatically acquire in the course of their formation. We need to look to the future and promote the establishment of formation centres for these teachers; ecclesiastical
universities and faculties should do what they can to develop appropriate programs so that the teachers of tomorrow will be able to carry out their task with the competence and efficacy that is expected of them.(105)

PART FIVE
A GENERAL SUMMARY:
THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION
OF THE FORMATION PROCESS AS A WHOLE

1. What is a Christian formation process?

98 The declaration of the Council insists on the dynamic nature of integral human formation,(106) but it adds immediately that, from a Christian point of view, human development by itself is not sufficient. Education “does not merely strive to foster in the human person the maturity already described. Rather, its principal aims are these: that as the baptized person is gradually introduced into a knowledge of the mystery of salvation, he or she may daily grow more conscious of the gift of faith which has been received ...”.(107) What characterizes a Catholic school, therefore, is that it guide students in such a way "that the development of each one's own personality will be matched by the growth of that new creation which he or she became by baptism".(108) We need to think of Christian education as a movement or a growth process, directed toward an ideal goal which goes beyond the limitations of anything human.(109) At the same time the process must be harmonious, so that Christian formation takes place within and in the course of human formation. The two are not separate and parallel paths; they are complementary forms of education which become one in the goals of the teacher and the willing reception of the students. The Gospel notes this harmonious growth in the child Jesus.(110)

99 A Christian formation process might therefore be described as an organic set of elements with a single purpose: the gradual development of every capability of every student, enabling each one to attain an integral formation within a context that includes the Christian religious dimension and recognizes the help of grace. But what really matters is not the terminology but the reality, and this reality will be assured only if all the teachers unite their educational efforts in the pursuit of a common goal. Sporadic, partial, or uncoordinated efforts, or a situation in which there is a conflict of opinion among the teachers, will interfere with rather than assist in the students' personal development.

2. Educational goals

100 The responsibility of a Catholic school is enormous and complex. It must respect and obey the laws that define methods, programmes, structure, etc., and at the same time it must fulfil its own educational goals by blending human culture with the message of salvation into a coordinated programme; it must help each of the students to actually become the “new creature” that each one is potentially, and at the same time prepare them for the responsibilities of an adult member of society. This means that a Catholic school needs to have a set of educational goals which are “distinctive” in the sense that the school has a specific objective in mind, and all of the goals are related to this objective. Concretely, the educational goals provide a frame of reference which:

- defines the school's identity: in particular, the Gospel values which are its inspiration must be explicitly mentioned;
- gives a precise description of the pedagogical, educational and cultural aims of the school;
- presents the course content, along with the values that are to be transmitted through these courses;
- describes the organization and the management of the school;
- determines which policy decisions are to be reserved to professional staff (governors and teachers), which policies are to be developed with the help of parents and students, and which activities are to be left to the free initiative of teachers, parents, or students;
- indicates the ways in which student progress is to be tested and evaluated.

101 In addition, careful attention must be given to the development of general criteria which will enable each aspect of school activity to assist in the attainment of the educational objective, so that the cultural, pedagogical, social, civil and political aspects of school life are all integrated:

a) Fidelity to the Gospel as proclaimed by the Church. The activity of a Catholic school is, above all else, an activity that shares in the evangelizing mission of the Church; it is a part of the particular local Church of the country in which it is situated, and shares in the life and work of the local Christian community.
b) Careful rigour in the study of culture and the development of a critical sense, maintaining a respect for the autonomy of human knowledge and for the rules and methods proper to each of the disciplines, and at the same time orienting the whole process toward the integral formation of the person.
c) Adapting the educational process in a way that respects the particular circumstances of individual students and their families.
d) Sharing responsibility with the Church. While school authorities are the ones primarily responsible for the educational and cultural activities of the school, the local Church should also be involved in appropriate ways; the educational goals should be the result of dialogue with this ecclesial community.
It is clear, then, that the set of educational goals is something quite distinct from internal school regulations or teaching methods; and it is not just a description of vague intentions.

102 The educational goals should be revised each year on the basis of experience and need. They will be achieved through a formation process which takes place in stages; it has a starting point, various intermediate points, and a conclusion. At each stage, teachers, students and families should determine the degree of success in achieving these goals; where there is insufficient progress they should look for the reasons and find suitable remedies. It is essential that this evaluation be seen as a common responsibility, and that it be carried out faithfully.

The end of each school year is one appropriate time for such an evaluation. From a Christian perspective, it is not enough to say that this is the time for examinations. The academic programme is only one part of the process, and the end of the school year is also the time for a serious and intelligent examination of which educational goals have been achieved and which have not. A much more decisive time comes at the completion of a student's years in the school, because this is the moment when students should have reached the maximum level of an education that integrates the human and the Christian.(111)

103 The religious dimension of the school climate strengthens the quality of the formation process, so long as certain conditions are verified - conditions that depend both on teachers and students. It is worth noting, once again, that the students are not spectators; they help to determine the quality of this climate. Some of the conditions for creating a positive and supportive climate are the following: that everyone agree with the educational goals and cooperate in achieving them; that interpersonal relationships be based on love and Christian freedom; that each individual, in daily life, be a witness to Gospel values; that every student be challenged to strive for the highest possible level of formation, both human and Christian. In addition, the climate must be one in which families are welcomed, the local Church is an active participant, and civil society - local, national, and international - is included. If all share a common faith, this can be an added advantage.

104 Strong determination is needed to do everything possible to eliminate conditions which threaten the health of the school climate. Some examples of potential problems are these: the educational goals are either not defined or are defined badly; those responsible for the school are not sufficiently trained; concern for academic achievement is excessive; relations between teachers and students are cold and impersonal; teachers are antagonistic toward one another; discipline is imposed from on high without any participation or cooperation from the students; relationships with families are formal or even strained, and families are not involved in helping to determine the educational goals; some within the school community are giving a negative witness; individuals are unwilling to work together for the common good; the school is isolated from the local Church; there is no interest in or concern for the problems of society; religious instruction is "routine". Whenever some combination of these symptoms is present, the religious dimension of the school is seriously threatened. Religious instruction can become empty words falling on deaf ears, because the authentically Christian witness that reinforces it is absent from the school climate. All symptoms of ill health have to be faced honestly and directly, remembering that the Gospel calls us to a continuous process of conversion.

105 A school exerts a great deal of effort in trying to obtain the students' active cooperation. Since they are active agents in their own formation process, this cooperation is essential. To be human is to be endowed with intelligence and freedom; it is impossible for education to be genuine without the active involvement of the one being educated. Students must act and react; with their intelligence, freedom, will, and the whole complex range of human emotions. The formation process comes to a halt when students are uninvolved and unmoved. Experienced teachers are familiar with the causes of such “blocks” in young people; the roots are both psychological and theological, and original sin is not excluded.

106 There are many ways to encourage students to become active participants in their own formation. Those with sufficient knowledge and maturity can be asked to help in the development of educational goals. While they are clearly not yet able to determine the final objective, they can help in determining the concrete means which will help to attain this objective. When students are trusted and given responsibility, when they are invited to contribute their own ideas and efforts for the common good, their gratitude rules out indifference and inertia. The more that students can be helped to realize that a school and all its activities have only one purpose
- to help them in their growth toward maturity - the more those students will be willing to become actively involved.

Even students who are very young can sense whether the atmosphere in the school is pleasant or not. They are more willing to cooperate when they feel respected, trusted and loved. And their willingness to cooperate will be reinforced by a school climate which is warm and friendly, when teachers are ready to help, and when they find it easy to get along with the other students.

107 One important result of religious instruction is the development of religious values and religious motivation; these can be a great help in obtaining the willing participation of the students. But we must
remember that religious values and motivation are cultivated in all subject areas and, indeed, in all of the various activities going on in the school. One way that teachers can encourage an understanding of and commitment to religious values is by frequent references to God. Teachers learn through experience how to help the students understand and appreciate the religious truths they are being taught, and this appreciation can easily develop into love. A truth which is loved by the teacher, and communicated in such a way that it is seen to be something valuable in itself, then becomes valuable to the student. One advantage of the Christological approach to religious instruction is that it can develop this love more easily in young people. The approach we have suggested concentrates on the person of Jesus. It is possible to love a person; it is rather difficult to love a formula. This love for Christ is then transferred to his message which, because it is loved, has value.

But every true educator knows that a further step is necessary: values must lead to action; they are the motivation for action. Finally, truth becomes fully alive through the supernatural dynamism of grace, which enlightens and leads to faith, to love, to action that is in accord with the will of God, through the Lord Jesus, in the Holy Spirit. The Christian process of formation is, therefore, the result of a constant interaction involving the expert labour of the teachers, the free cooperation of the students, and the help of grace.

108 We have already referred to the fact that, in many parts of the world, the student body in a Catholic school includes increasing numbers of young people from different faiths and different ideological backgrounds. In these situations it is essential to clarify the relationship between religious development and cultural growth. It is a question which must not be ignored, and dealing with it is the responsibility of each Christian member of the educational community.

In these situations, however, evangelization is not easy - it may not even be possible. We should look to pre-evangelization: to the development of a religious sense of life. In order to do this, the process of formation must constantly raise questions about the "how" and the "why" and the "what" and then point out and deepen the positive results of this investigation.

The transmission of a culture ought to be especially attentive to the practical effects of that culture, and strengthen those aspects of it which will make a person more human. In particular, it ought to pay attention to the religious dimension of the culture and the emerging ethical requirements to be found in it. There can be unity in the midst of pluralism, and we need to exercise a wise discernment in order to distinguish between what is essential and what is accidental. Prudent use of the "why" and the "what" and the "how" will lead to integral human development in the formation process, and this is what we mean by a genuine pre-evangelization. It is fertile ground which may, at some future time, be able to bear fruit.

109 In order to describe the formation process, we have had to proceed by an analysis of its various elements; this, of course, is not the way things happen in the real world. The Catholic school is a centre of life, and life is synthetic, In this vital centre, the formation process is a constant interplay of action and reaction. The interplay has both a horizontal and a vertical dimension, and it is this qualification that makes the Catholic school distinctive from those other schools whose educational objectives are not inspired by Christianity.

110 The teachers love their students, and they show this love in the way they interact with them. They take advantage of every opportunity to encourage and strengthen them in those areas which will help to achieve the goals of the educational process. Their words, their witness, their encouragement and help, their advice and friendly correction are all important in achieving these goals, which must always be understood to include academic achievement, moral behaviour, and a religious dimension.

When students feel loved, they will love in return. Their questioning, their trust, their critical observations and suggestions for improvement in the classroom and the school milieu will enrich the teachers and also help to facilitate a shared commitment to the formation process.

111 In a Catholic school, even this is not enough. There is also a continuous vertical interaction, through prayer; this is the fullest and most complete expression of the religious dimension.

Each of the students has his or her own life, family and social background, and these are not always happy situations. They feel the unrest of the child or adolescent, which grows more intense as they face the problems and worries of a young person approaching maturity. Teachers will pray for each of them, that the grace present in the Catholic school’s milieu may permeate their whole person, enlightening them and helping them to respond adequately to all that is demanded of them in order to live Christian lives.

And the students will learn that they must pray for their teachers. As they get older, they will come to appreciate the pain and the difficulties that teaching involves. They will pray that the educational gifts of their teachers may be more effective, that they may be comforted by success in their work, that grace may sustain their dedication and bring them peace in their work.

112 Thus a relationship is built up which is both human and divine; there is a flow of love, and also of grace. And this will make the Catholic school truly authentic. As the years go by, students will have the joy of seeing themselves nearing maturity; not only physically, but also intellectually and spiritually. When they look back, they will realize that, with their cooperation, the educational objectives of the school have
become a reality. And as they look forward, they will feel free and secure, because they will be able to face the new, and now proximate, life commitments.

CONCLUSION

113 The Congregation for Catholic Education asks local ordinaries and superiors of Religious Congregations dedicated to the education of youth to bring these reflections to the attention of all teachers and directors of Catholic schools. At the same time, the Congregation wishes to affirm once again that it is fully conscious of the important service they offer - to youth and to the Church.

114 Therefore the Congregation extends warm thanks to all those engaged in this work: for all they have done, and for all that they continue to do in spite of political, economic, and practical difficulties. For many, to continue in this mission involves great sacrifice. The Church is deeply grateful to everyone dedicated to the educational mission in a Catholic school; it is confident that, with the help of God, many others will be called to join in this mission and will respond generously.

115 The Congregation would like to suggest that further study, research, and experimentation be done in all areas that affect the religious dimension of education in Catholic schools. Much has been done, but many people are asking for even more. This is surely possible in every school whose freedom is sufficiently protected by civil law. It may be difficult in those countries which allow the Catholic school as an academic institution, but where the religious dimension leads to constant conflict. Local experience must be the determining factor in such situations; however, to the extent that it is possible, a religious dimension should always be present - either in the school or outside its walls. There has never been a shortage of families and students, of different faiths and religious, who choose a Catholic school because they appreciate the value of an education where instruction is enhanced by a religious dimension. Educators will know the best way to respond to their expectations, knowing that, in a world of cultural pluralism, dialogue always gives grounds for hope.

Rome, April 7, 1988, Feast of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, Principal Patron of teachers.

WILLIAM CARDINAL BAUM
Prefect

+ ANTONIO M. JAVIERRE ORTAS
Titular Archbishop of Meta
Secretary

(1) Gravissimum educationis, 8.
(3) October 15, 1982.
(4) From Vatican Council II: Declaration on Christian Education Gravissimum educationis; Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen gentium; Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et spes; Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei verbum; Constitution on the Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium; Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam actuositatem; Decree on Missionary Activity Ad gentes divinitus; Declaration on Non-Christian Religions Nostra aetate; Declaration on Ecumenism Unitatis redintegratio; Declaration on Religious Liberty Dignitatis humanae. From Paul VI, the Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi of December 8, 1975. From John Paul II, the Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi tradendae of October 16, 1979; in addition, a number of his talks given to educators and to young people will be cited below. From the Congregation for Clergy, the Directorium catechisticum generale of April 11, 1971. All of these documents will be cited by their Latin titles in the notes which follow. In a few places, pastoral letters of bishops will be quoted.
(5) Note that the Congregation has also published Educational Guidance in Human Love: Outlines for Sex Education, November 1, 1983. This theme, therefore, will receive only brief and passing mention in the present document.
(6) Gravissimum educationis, 9: "It is clear that the Church has a deep respect for those Catholic schools, especially in countries where the Church is young, which have large numbers of students who are not Catholics".
(7) Cf. Dignitatis humanae, 2; 9; 10; 12 et passim.
(8) C.I.C., canon 748 § 2: "Hominem ad amplectendam fidem catholicam contra ipsorum conscientiam per coactionem adducere nemini umquam fas est ".
(9) Cf Gaudium et spes, 4-10.
(10) Ibid., 7: "The change of mentality and of structures often call into question traditional values, especially among the young ".
(12) Cf the Annuario Statistico della Chiesa published by the Central Statistical Office of the Church, an office within the Secretariate of State for Vatican City. By way of example, on December 31, 1985, there were 154,126 Catholic schools with 38,243,304 students.
(13) Cf 1 Cor 12:31.
(14) Various aspects of the religious attitudes of young people developed in this section have been the object of recent statements of the Holy Father. A handy compilation of these numerous talks can be found in a book edited by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, The Holy Father Speaks to Youth: 1980-1985. The book is published in several languages.
(15) Cf Gravissimum educationis, 8. For the Gospel spirit of love and freedom, cf Gaudium et spes, 38: "[The Lord Jesus] reveals to us that God is love (1 Jn 4:8), and at the same time teaches us that the fundamental rule for human perfection, and therefore also for the transformation of the world, is the new commandment of love". See also 2 Cor 3:17: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom".
(16) This question was treated in The Catholic School, 81-82.
(18) 6.
(19) Cf the address of John Paul II to the parents, teachers and students from the Catholic schools of the Italian Province of Lazio, March 9, 1985. Insegnamenti, VIII/1, p. 620.
(20) Address of John Paul II to the bishops of Lombardy, Italy, on the occasion of their "Ad limina" visit, January 15, 1982, Insegnamenti, V/1, 1982, p. 105.
(21) Insegnamenti, VIII/1, pp. 618f.
(22)Mt 25:40: "For indeed I tell you, as often as you have done these things to one of these least of my brothers, you have done it to me".
(23) Cf Perfectae caritatis, 8: "There are in the Church a great number of institutes, clerical or lay, dedicated to various aspects of the apostolate, which have different gifts according to the grace that has been given to each: ‘some exercise a ministry of service; some teach’ (cf Rom 12:5-8)”. Also see Ad gentes divinitus, 40.
(24) Summa Theol. II-II, q. 186, a. 1: "By antonomasis those are called 'religious' who dedicate themselves to the service of God as if they were offering themselves as a holocaust to the Lord”.
(25) Ibid., a. 2.
(26) Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to the Faith.
(27) The norms of the Church in this respect are to be found in canons 800-803 of the Code of Canon Law.
(29) Cf Gravissimum educationis, 3
(30) Gravissimum educationis, 8
(31) A number of recent documents from national Episcopal Conferences and from individual local ordinaries have had the Catholic school as their theme. These documents should be known and put into practice.
(32) See, for example, the Resolution of the European Parliament on freedom of education in the European Community, approved by a large majority on March 14, 1984.
(33) Cf Mk 6: 3; Acts 10: 35. Useful applications of the ethics of work to the work done in school can be found in the September 14, 1981 Encyclical Laborem exercens of John Paul II, especially in Part Five.
(34) Gen 3: 19: "By the sweat on your face shall you get bread to eat".
(35) Lk 9: 23: "...let him take up his cross each day".
(36) Gravissimum educationis, 8: among the elements characteristic of the Catholic school, there is that of "developing the relationship between human culture and the message of salvation, so that the knowledge of the world, of life and of the human person which the students are gradually acquiring is illuminated by faith".
(37) For a description of culture and of the relationship between culture and faith, see Gaudium et spes, 54 ff.
(38) Cf Denz: Schön. 3016-3017 for the traditional doctrine on the rapport between reason and faith, as defined by Vatican Council I.
(39) Cf the address of Pope John Paul II to the teachers and students of Catholic schools in Melbourne, Australia, on the occasion of his pastoral journey to East Asia and Oceania: Insegnamenti November 28, 1986; IX/2, 1986, pp. 1710 ff.
(40) Cf 8.
(41) Cf 53-62.
(43) Wis 13: 5: "Through the grandeur and beauty of the creatures we may, by analogy, contemplate their Author". Ps 18(19): 2ff.: "The heavens tell of the glory of God...".
(44) Cf Mt 25: 14-30.
(45) Cf Gaudium et spes, 12; 14; 17; 22.
(46) Cf Gaudium et spes, 10.
(47) Cf Denz.-Schön. 3004 for the ability to know God through human reason, and 3005 for the ability to know other truths.
(48) 1 Thes 5: 21: "Examine all things, hold on to what is good". Phil 4: 8: "Everything that is true, noble, or just ... let all this be the object of your thoughts".
(49) Cf Gaudium et spes, 61, on the need to hold on to certain fundamental concepts.
(50) Ibid., 44: "At the same time there should be a vital exchange between the Church and the diverse cultures of peoples".
(51) Cf Dei verbum 2.
(52) Cf Blaise Pascal, Pensées, fr. 397.
(53) Gaudium et spes, 37: "The whole of human history is permeated with the gigantic struggle against the powers of darkness".
(54) Invaluable material for presenting the divine history of salvation can be found in Lumen gentium and Dei verbum.
(55) Cf Gaudium et spes, 62.
(56) Cf St. Augustine, De libero arbitrio, II, 16, 42. PL 32, 1264. St. Thomas, Contra gentiles, IV, 42.
(57) Cf Gravissimum educationis, 1-2.
(58) Evangelii nuntiandi, 18: "For the Church to evangelize is to bring the Good News to all aspects of humanity and, through its influence, to transform it from within, making humanity itself into some thing new".
(59) Ibid., 44: "The effort to evangelize will bring great profit, through catechetical instruction given at Church, in schools wherever this is possible, and always within the Christian family".
(60) Catechesi tradendae, 69.
(62) Address of John Paul II to the priests of the diocese of Rome, March 5, 1981, Insegnamenti, IV/1, pp. 629 f.
(63) Cf Mt 3: 1-3 on the mission of the Precursor.
(64) Cf Jn 17: 9, the prayer of the Lord for those entrusted to him.
(65) Apart from strictly local concerns, these questions are generally the ones treated in university "apologetics" manuals, and are about the "preambles to the faith". But the questions acquire a specific nuance for today's students, because of the material they are studying and the world they are living in. Typical questions have to do with atheism, non-Christian religions, divisions among Christians, events in the life of the Church; the violence and injustice of supposedly Christian nations, etc.
(66) Revelation, Scripture, Tradition and Christology are themes developed in Dei verbum, Lumen gentium, and Gaudium et spes. Study of the Gospels should be extended to include a study of these documents.
(67) Mt 16: 16.
(68) Concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary in the life of the Pilgrim Church, cf the encyclical Redemptoris Mater of Pope John Paul II, number 39.
(69) Mt 11:28.
(70) Cf Denz.-Schön. 2854: one cannot speak about God in the same way that one speaks about the objects of human knowledge.
(71) Jn 14: 9.
(72) Cf Lk 12: 24-28; Jn 3: 16 f.
(74) Cf Jn 3: 16 f.
(75) Jn 15: 13.
(76) From the point of view of Christian anthropology, it is essential that the history of salvation presented in Lumen gentium and Gaudium et spes be a part of what is studied in class.
(77) Important and valuable material for teaching about the Church can be found in Lumen gentium.
(78) Sacrosanctum Concilium, 7: "Christ is present in the Sacraments with his own authority, so that when one baptizes it is Christ himself who baptizes ...".
(79) Jn 1: 16.
(80) The content and the methods for teaching about the Sacraments can be enriched through studying parts of Lumen gentium and Sacrosanctum Concilium.
(81) Jn 11: 25-27.
(82) Cf Lk 16: 19-31.
(83) Cf Mt 25: 31-46.
(84) Cf Ibid. 25: 40.
(85) Cf Lumen gentium, Chapter VII on the eschatological nature of the pilgrim Church and its union with the heavenly Church.

1 Jn 4:10: "It is not we who have loved God, but God who first loved us ...".

Cf Mt 15: 19 f.

Cf the document of the Congregation for Catholic Education already referred to - Educational Guidance in Human Love: Outlines for Sex Education.

Jn 15:12.

Cf Gaudium et spes, 63-66 and related applications.

Cf Gen 1: 27 f.

Again cf Mt 15: 19 f.

Cf Gaudium et spes, 93.

Students should become aware of at least some of the Church's major social documents.

Lk 22: 53: "But this is your hour; this is the reign of darkness". Evidence of this is easily found in various abuses, acts of injustice, attacks on freedom, the overwhelming weight of misery that leads to sickness, decline and death, the scandalous inequality between rich and poor, the lack of any equity or sense of solidarity in international relations. (Cf Some Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation", published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Introduction and Part I).

Jn 8: 7: "Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone ...".

Cf Lk 8: 4.15.

Cf Eph 6: 10-17, a characteristically vigorous Pauline description.

Cf the Introduction to Some Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation" published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, August 6, 1984.

Mt 5: 48: "You must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect".

Lumen gentium, 42: "All the faithful are invited and called to holiness and to perfection within their own state of life".

Ibid., 39: "This holiness of the Church... is expressed in various forms according to each individual, who in their lives and their activities join perfection to love".

Some aspects of this are treated in the documents already referred to: The Catholic School, 78-80; Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to the Faith, especially 56-59. What is said there does not apply only to the lay teachers.

Gravissimum educationis, 1; "Children and young people should be assisted in the harmonious development of their physical, moral and intellectual gifts ... They should be helped to acquire gradually a more mature sense of responsibility ... ".

Ibid., 2.

Ibid., 8.

Cf Mt 5: 48.

Lk 2:40: "The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him". Lk 2:52: "And Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and with men".

Gravissimum educationis, 1-2.

CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION
(for Seminaries and Educational Institutions)
THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL
ON THE THRESHOLD
OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM
Introduction
1. On the threshold of the third millennium education faces new challenges which are the result of a new socio-political and cultural context. First and foremost, we have a crisis of values which, in highly developed societies in particular, assumes the form, often exalted by the media, of subjectivism, moral relativism and
nihilism. The extreme pluralism pervading contemporary society leads to behaviour patterns which are at times so opposed to one another as to undermine any idea of community identity. Rapid structural changes, profound technical innovations and the globalization of the economy affect human life more and more throughout the world. Rather than prospects of development for all, we witness the widening of the gap between rich and poor, as well as massive migration from underdeveloped to highly-developed countries. The phenomena of multiculturalism and an increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-religious society is at the same time an enrichment and a source of further problems. To this we must add, in countries of long-standing evangelization, a growing marginalization of the Christian faith as a reference point and a source of light for an effective and convincing interpretation of existence.

2. In the specifically educational field, the scope of educational functions has broadened, becoming more complex, more specialized. The sciences of education, which concentrated in the past on the study of the child and teacher-training, have been widened to include the various stages of life, and the different spheres and situations beyond the school. New requirements have given force to the demand for new contents, new capabilities and new educational models besides those followed traditionally. Thus education and schooling become particularly difficult today.

3. Such an outlook calls for courageous renewal on the part of the Catholic school. The precious heritage of the experience gained over the centuries reveals its vitality precisely in the capacity for prudent innovation. And so, now as in the past, the Catholic school must be able to speak for itself effectively and convincingly. It is not merely a question of adaptation, but of missionary thrust, the fundamental duty to evangelize, to go towards men and women wherever they are, so that they may receive the gift of salvation.

4. Accordingly, the Congregation for Catholic Education, during this time of immediate preparation for the great jubilee of the year 2000, and as it celebrates the thirtieth anniversary of the creation of the Schools Office(1) and the twentieth anniversary of The Catholic School, published on 19th March 1977, proposes to "focus attention on the nature and distinctive characteristics of a school which would present itself as Catholic". (2) It therefore addresses this circular letter to all those who are engaged in Catholic schooling, in order to convey to them a word of encouragement and hope. In particular, by means of the present letter, the Congregation shares their joy for the positive fruits yielded by the Catholic school and their anxiety about the difficulties which it encounters. Furthermore, the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, innumerable interventions of the Holy Father, ordinary and extraordinary Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops, Episcopal Conferences and the pastoral solicitude of diocesan Ordinaries, as well as international Catholic organisations involved in education and schooling, all support our conviction that it is opportune to devote careful attention to certain fundamental characteristics of the Catholic school, which are of great importance if its educational activity is to be effectual in the Church and in society. Such are: the Catholic school as a place of integral education of the human person through a clear educational project of which Christ is the foundation; (3) its ecclesial and cultural identity; its mission of education as a work of love; its service to society; the traits which should characterize the educating community.

Joys and difficulties

5. We retrace with satisfaction the positive course of the Catholic school over the past decades. First and foremost, we must recognize the contribution it makes to the evangelizing mission of the Church throughout the world, including those areas in which no other form of pastoral work is possible. Moreover, in spite of numerous obstacles, the Catholic school has continued to share responsibility for the social and cultural development of the different communities and peoples to which it belongs, participating in their joys and hopes, their sufferings and difficulties, their efforts to achieve genuine human and communitarian progress. In this respect, mention must be made of the invaluable services of the Catholic school to the spiritual and material development of less fortunate peoples. It is our duty to express appreciation for the Catholic school's contribution to innovation in the fields of pedagogy and didactics, and the strenuous commitment of so many men and women, especially of all those religious and laity who see their teaching as a mission and true apostolate. (4) Finally, we cannot forget the part played by Catholic schools in organic pastoral work and in pastoral care for the family in particular, emphasizing in this respect their discreet insertion in the educational dynamics between parents and their children and, very especially the unpretentious yet caring and sensitive help offered in those cases, more and more numerous above all in wealthy nations, of families which are "fragile" or have broken up.

6. The school is undoubtedly a sensitive meeting-point for the problems which besiege this restless end of the millennium. The Catholic school is thus confronted with children and young people who experience the difficulties of the present time. Pupils who shun effort, are incapable of self-sacrifice and perseverance and who lack authentic models to guide them, often even in their own families. In an increasing number of instances they are not only indifferent and non-practising, but also totally lacking in religious or moral formation. To this we must add — on the part of numerous pupils and families — a profound apathy where ethical and religious formation is concerned, to the extent that what is in fact required of the Catholic school is a certificate of studies or, at the most, quality instruction and training for employment. The atmosphere
we have described produces a certain degree of pedagogical tiredness, which intensifies the ever increasing difficulty of conciliating the role of the teacher with that of the educator in today's context.

7. Among existing difficulties, there are also situations in the political, social and cultural sphere which make it harder or even impossible to attend a Catholic school. The drama of large-scale poverty and hunger in many parts of the world, internal conflicts and civil wars, urban deterioration, the spread of crime in large cities, impede the implementation of projects for formation and education. In other parts of the world, governments themselves put obstacles in the way, when they do not actually prevent the Catholic school from operating, in spite of the progress which has been made as far as attitude, democratic practice and sensitivity to human rights are concerned. Finance is a source of further difficulties, which are felt more acutely in those states in which no government aid is provided for non state schools. This places an almost unbearable financial burden on families choosing not to send their children to state schools and constitutes a serious threat to the survival of the schools themselves. Moreover, such financial strain not only affects the recruiting and stability of teachers, but can also result in the exclusion from Catholic schools of those who cannot afford to pay, leading to a selection according to means which deprives the Catholic school of one of its distinguishing features, which is to be a school for all.

Looking ahead

8. This overview of the joys and difficulties of the Catholic school, although not pretending to exhaust its entire breadth and depth, does prompt us to reflect on the contribution it can make to the formation of the younger generation on the threshold of the third millennium, recognising, as John Paul II has written, that "the future of the world and of the Church belongs to the younger generation, to those who, born in this century, will reach maturity in the next, the first century of the new millennium". (5) Thus the Catholic school should be able to offer young people the means to acquire the knowledge they need in order to find a place in a society which is strongly characterized by technical and scientific skill. But at the same time, it should be able, above all, to impart a solid Christian formation. And for the Catholic school to be a means of education in the modern world, we are convinced that certain fundamental characteristics need to be strengthened.

The human person and his or her education

9. The Catholic school sets out to be a school for the human person and of human persons. "The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ's teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school". (6) This affirmation, stressing man's vital relationship with Christ, reminds us that it is in His person that the fullness of the truth concerning man is to be found. For this reason the Catholic school, in committing itself to the development of the whole man, does so in obedience to the solicitude of the Church, in the awareness that all human values find their fulfilment and unity in Christ. (7) This awareness expresses the centrality of the human person in the educational project of the Catholic school, strengthens its educational endeavour and renders it fit to form strong personalities.

10. The social and cultural context of our time is in danger of obscuring "the educational value of the Catholic school, in which its fundamental reason for existing and the basis of its genuine apostolate is to be found". (8) Indeed, although it is true to say that in recent years there has been an increased interest and a greater sensitivity on the part of public opinion, international organizations and governments with regard to schooling and education, there has also been a noticeable tendency to reduce education to its purely technical and practical aspects. Pedagogy and the sciences of education themselves have appeared to devote greater attention to the study of phenomenology and didactics than to the essence of education as such, centred on deeply meaningful values and vision. The fragmentation of education, the generic character of the values frequently invoked and which obtain ample and easy consensus at the price of a dangerous obscuring of their content, tend to make the school step back into a supposed neutrality, which enervates its educating potential and reflects negatively on the formation of the pupils. There is a tendency to forget that education always presupposes and involves a definite concept of man and life. To claim neutrality for schools signifies in practice, more times than not, banning all reference to religion from the cultural and educational field, whereas a correct pedagogical approach ought to be open to the more decisive sphere of ultimate objectives, attending not only to "how", but also to "why", overcoming any misunderstanding as regards the claim to neutrality in education, restoring to the educational process the unity which saves it from dispersion amid the meandering of knowledge and acquired facts, and focuses on the human person in his or her integral, transcendent, historical identity. With its educational project inspired by the Gospel, the Catholic school is called to take up this challenge and respond to it in the conviction that "it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear". (9)

The Catholic school at the heart of the Church

11. The complexity of the modern world makes it all the more necessary to increase awareness of the ecclesial identity of the Catholic school. It is from its Catholic identity that the school derives its original characteristics and its "structure" as a genuine instrument of the Church, a place of real and specific pastoral
ministry. The Catholic school participates in the evangelizing mission of the Church and is the privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out. In this way "Catholic schools are at once places of evangelization, of complete formation, of inculturation, of apprenticeship in a lively dialogue between young people of different religions and social backgrounds". The ecclesial nature of the Catholic school, therefore, is written in the very heart of its identity as a teaching institution. It is a true and proper ecclesial entity by reason of its educational activity, "in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony". Thus it must be strongly emphasized that this ecclesial dimension is not a mere adjunct, but is a proper and specific attribute, a distinctive characteristic which penetrates and informs every moment of its educational activity, a fundamental part of its very identity and the focus of its mission. The fostering of this dimension should be the aim of all those who make up the educating community.

By reason of its identity, therefore, the Catholic school is a place of ecclesial experience, which is moulded in the Christian community. However, it should not be forgotten that the school fulfils its mission to be a genuine experience of Church only if it takes its stand within the organic pastoral work of the Christian community. In a very special way the Catholic school affords the opportunity to meet young people in an environment which favours their Christian formation. Unfortunately, there are instances in which the Catholic school is not perceived as an integral part of organic pastoral work, at times it is considered alien, or very nearly so, to the community. It is urgent, therefore, to sensitize parochial and diocesan communities to the necessity of their devoting special care to education and schools.

In the life of the Church, the Catholic school is recognised above all as an expression of those Religious Institutes which, according to their proper charism or specific apostolate, have dedicated themselves generously to education. The present time is not without its difficulties, not only on account of the alarming decrease in numbers, but also of a serious misunderstanding which induces some Religious to abandon the teaching apostolate. In other words, on the one hand the commitment to schooling is separated from pastoral activity, while on the other it is not easy to reconcile concrete activities with the specific demands of religious life. The fertile intuitions of saintly founders and foundresses demonstrate, more radically than any other argumentation, the groundless and precarious nature of such attitudes. We should also remember that the presence of consecrated religious within the educating community is indispensable, since "consecrated persons are able to be especially effective in educational activities". They are an example of the unreserved and gratuitous "gift" of self to the service of others in the spirit of their religious consecration. The presence of men and women religious, side by side with priests and lay teachers, affords pupils "a vivid image of the Church and makes recognition of its riches easier".

Cultural identity of the Catholic school

From the nature of the Catholic school also stems one of the most significant elements of its educational project: the synthesis between culture and faith. Indeed, knowledge set in the context of faith becomes wisdom and life vision. The endeavour to interweave reason and faith, which has become the heart of individual subjects, makes for unity, articulation and coordination, bringing forth within what is learnt in school a Christian vision of the world, of life, of culture and of history. In the Catholic school's educational project there is no separation between time for learning and time for formation, between acquiring notions and growing in wisdom. The various school subjects do not present only knowledge to be attained, but also values to be acquired and truths to be discovered. All of which demands an atmosphere characterized by the search for truth, in which competent, convinced and coherent educators, teachers of learning and of life, may be a reflection, albeit imperfect but still vivid, of the one Teacher. In this perspective, in the Christian educational project all subjects collaborate, each with its own specific content, to the formation of mature personalities.

"Care for learning means loving" (Sap 6,17)

In its ecclesial dimension another characteristic of the Catholic school has its root: it is a school for all, with special attention to those who are weakest. In the past, the establishment of the majority of Catholic educational institutions has responded to the needs of the socially and economically disadvantaged. It is no novelty to affirm that Catholic schools have their origin in a deep concern for the education of children and young people left to their own devices and deprived of any form of schooling. In many parts of the world even today material poverty prevents many youths and children from having access to formal education and adequate human and Christian formation.

In other areas new forms of poverty challenge the Catholic school. As in the past, it can come up against situations of incomprehension, mistrust and lack of material resources. The girls from poor families that were taught by the Ursuline nuns in the 15th Century, the boys that Saint Joseph of Calasanz saw running and shouting through the streets of Rome, those that De la Salle came across in the villages of France, or those that were offered shelter by Don Bosco, can be found again among those who have lost all sense of meaning in life and lack any type of inspiring ideal, those to whom no values are proposed and who do not know the beauty of faith, who come from families which are broken and incapable of love, often living in situations of material and spiritual poverty, slaves to the new idols of a society, which, not infrequently,
promises them only a future of unemployment and marginalization. To these new poor the Catholic school turns in a spirit of love.

Spurred on by the aim of offering to all, and especially to the poor and marginalized, the opportunity of an education, of training for a job, of human and Christian formation, it can and must find in the context of the old and new forms of poverty that original synthesis of ardour and fervent dedication which is a manifestation of Christ's love for the poor, the humble, the masses seeking for truth.

The Catholic school at the service of society

16. The school cannot be considered separately from other educational institutions and administered as an entity apart, but must be related to the world of politics, economy, culture and society as a whole. For her part the Catholic school must be firmly resolved to take the new cultural situation in her stride and, by her refusal to accept unquestioningly educational projects which are merely partial, be an example and stimulus for other educational institutions, in the forefront of ecclesial community's concern for education. In this way the Catholic school's public role is clearly perceived. It has not come into being as a private initiative, but as an expression of the reality of the Church, having by its very nature a public character. It fulfils a service of public usefulness and, although clearly and decidedly configured in the perspective of the Catholic faith, is not reserved to Catholics only, but is open to all those who appreciate and share its qualified educational project. This dimension of openness becomes particularly evident in countries in which Christians are not in the majority or developing countries, where Catholic schools have always promoted civil progress and human development without discrimination of any kind.(16) Catholic schools, moreover, like state schools, fulfil a public role, for their presence guarantees cultural and educational pluralism and, above all, the freedom and right of families to see that their children receive the sort of education they wish for them.(17) 17. The Catholic school, therefore, undertakes a cordial and constructive dialogue with states and civil authorities. Such dialogue and collaboration must be based on mutual respect, on the reciprocal recognition of each other's role and on a common service to mankind. To achieve this end, the Catholic school willingly occupies its place within the school system of the different countries and in the legislation of the individual states, when the latter respect the fundamental rights of the human person, starting with respect for life and religious freedom. A correct relationship between state and school, not only a Catholic school, is based not so much on institutional relations as on the right of each person to receive a suitable education of their free choice. This right is acknowledged according to the principle of subsidiarity,(18) For "The public authority, therefore, whose duty it is to protect and defend the liberty of the citizens, is bound according to the principle of distributive justice to ensure that public subsidies are so allocated that parents are truly free to select schools for their children in accordance with their conscience".(19) In the framework not only of the formal proclamation, but also in the effective exercise of this fundamental human right, in some countries there exists the crucial problem of the juridical and financial recognition of non-state schools. We share John Paul II's earnest hope, expressed yet again recently, that in all democratic countries "concrete steps finally be taken to implement true equality for non-state schools and that it be at the same time respectful of their educational project".(20)

Climate of the educating community

18. Before concluding, we should like to dwell briefly on the climate and role of the educating community, which is constituted by the interaction and collaboration of its various components: students, parents, teachers, directors and non-teaching staff.(21) Attention is rightly given to the importance of the relations existing between all those who make up the educating community. During childhood and adolescence a student needs to experience personal relations with outstanding educators, and what is taught has greater influence on the student's formation when placed in a context of personal involvement, genuine reciprocity, coherence of attitudes, life-styles and day to day behaviour. While respecting individual roles, the community dimension should be fostered, since it is one of the most enriching developments for the contemporary school.(22) It is also helpful to bear in mind, in harmony with the Second Vatican Council,(23) that this community dimension in the Catholic school is not a merely sociological category; it has a theological foundation as well. The educating community, taken as a whole, is thus called to further the objective of a school as a place of complete formation through interpersonal relations.

19. In the Catholic school, "prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teachers, as individuals and as a community".(24) Teaching has an extraordinary moral depth and is one of man's most excellent and creative activities, for the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirits of human beings. The personal relations between the teacher and the students, therefore, assume an enormous importance and are not limited simply to giving and taking. Moreover, we must remember that teachers and educators fulfil a specific Christian and share an equally specific participation in the mission of the Church, to the extent that "it depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic school achieves its purpose".(25)

20. Parents have a particularly important part to play in the educating community, since it is to them that primary and natural responsibility for their children's education belongs. Unfortunately in our day there is a
widespread tendency to delegate this unique role. Therefore it is necessary to foster initiatives which encourage commitment, but which provide at the same time the right sort of concrete support which the family needs and which involve it in the Catholic school's educational project.(26) The constant aim of the school therefore, should be contact and dialogue with the pupils' families, which should also be encouraged through the promotion of parents' associations, in order to clarify with their indispensable collaboration that personalised approach which is needed for an educational project to be efficacious.

Conclusion

21. The Holy Father has pointed out in a meaningful expression how "man is the primary and fundamental way for the Church, the way traced out by Christ himself".(27) This way cannot, then, be foreign to those who evangelize. Travelling along it, they will experience the challenge of education in all its urgency. Thus it follows that the work of the school is irreplaceable and the investment of human and material resources in the school becomes a prophetic choice. On the threshold of the third millennium we perceive the full strength of the mandate which the Church handed down to the Catholic school in that "Pentecost" which was the Second Vatican Council: "Since the Catholic school can be of such service in developing the mission of the People of God and in promoting dialogue between the Church and the community at large to the advantage of both, it is still of vital importance even in our times".(28)

Prot. N. 29096.
Pio Card. Laghi
Prefect
José Saraiva Martins
Tit. Archbishop of Tuburnica
Secretary

(1) The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education was the new name given to the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities by the Apostolic Constitution Regimini ecclesiae universae, which was published on 15 August 1967 and in force as from 1 March 1968 (AAS, LIX [1967] pp. 885-928). The Congregation now comprised a third section, the Schools Office, intended "to develop further" the fundamental principles of education, especially in schools (cfr. II Vatican Council, Declaration on Christian Education Gravissimum educationis, Preface).

(2) S. Congregation for Catholic Education, The Catholic School, n. 2.


(8) S. Congregation for Catholic Education, The Catholic School, n. 3.

(9) II Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes, n. 22.

(10) John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa, n. 102.

(11) Congregation for Catholic Education, Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic school, n. 34.


(13) John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrata, n. 96.

(14) John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici, n. 62.


(17) Cfr. Holy See, Charter of Rights of the Family, art. 5.


(19) II Vatican Council, Declaration on Christian Education Gravissimum educationis, n. 6.


(22) Cfr. Ibid.


(28) II Vatican Council, Declaration on Christian Education Gravissimum educationis, n. 8.
INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the third millennium
1. The celebration of the two thousandth anniversary of the incarnation of the Word was for many believers a time of conversion and of opening to God’s plan for the human person created in his image. The grace of the Jubilee incited in the People of God an urgency to proclaim the mystery of Jesus Christ “yesterday, today and forever” with the testimony of their lives and, in Him, the truth about the human person. Young people, moreover, expressed a surprising interest with regard to the explicit announcement of Jesus. Consecrated persons, for their part, grasped the strong call to live in a state of conversion for accomplishing their specific mission in the Church: to be witnesses of Christ, *epiphany of the love of God in the world*, recognizable signs of reconciled humanity.[ii]

A prophetic task
2. The complex cultural situations of the beginning of the 21st century are a further appeal to a responsibility to live the present as *kaiρōs*, a favourable time, so that the Gospel may effectively reach the men and women of today. Consecrated persons feel the importance of the prophetic task entrusted to them by the Church in these momentous but fascinating times.[iii] “[recalling and serving the divine plan for humanity, as it is announced in Scripture and as also emerges from the attentive reading of the signs of God’s providential action in history.”[iv] This task requires the courage of testimony and the patience of dialogue; it is a duty before the cultural tendencies that threaten the dignity of human life, especially in the crucial moments of its beginning and its ending, the harmony of creation, and the existence of peoples and peace.

The reason for these reflections
3. Within the context of the profound changes that assail the world of education and schools, the Congregation for Catholic Education wishes to share some reflections, offer some guidelines and incite some further investigations of the educational mission and the presence of consecrated persons in schools in general, not only Catholic schools. This document is mainly addressed to members of institutes of consecrated life and of societies of apostolic life, as well as to those who, involved in the educational mission of the Church, have assumed the evangelical counsels in other forms.

As a continuation of previous ecclesial guidelines
4. These considerations are within the lines of the Second Vatican Council, the Magisterium of the universal Church and the documents of the continental Synods regarding evangelisation, the consecrated life and education, especially scholastic education. In recent years, this Congregation has offered guidelines on Catholic schools[v] and on lay people who bear witness to faith in schools.[vi] As a continuation of the document on lay people, it now intends reflecting on the specific contribution of consecrated persons to the educational mission in schools in the light of the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata* and of the more recent developments of pastoral care for culture.[vii] This is a result of its conviction that: “a faith that does not become culture is a faith that has not been fully received, not entirely thought through, not loyally lived.”[viii]

The cultural mediation of the faith today
5. The necessity for a cultural mediation of the faith is an invitation for consecrated persons to consider the meaning of their presence in schools. The altered circumstances in which they operate, in environments that are often laicised and in reduced numbers in educational communities, make it necessary to clearly express their specific contribution in cooperation with the other persons present in schools. A time emerges in which to process answers to the fundamental questions of the young generations and to present a clear cultural proposal that clarifies the type of person and society to which it is desired to educate, and the reference to the anthropological vision inspired by the values of the gospel, in a respectful and constructive dialogue with the other concepts of life.

A renewed commitment in the educational sphere
6. The challenges of modern life give new motivations to the mission of consecrated persons, called to live the evangelic councils and bring the humanism of the beatitudes to the field of education and schools. This is not at foreign to the mandate of the Church to announce salvation to all.[viii] “At the same time, however, we are painfully aware of certain difficulties which induce your Communities to abandon the school sector. The dearth of religious s, estrangement from the teaching apostolate, the attraction of alternative forms of apostolate seemingly more gratifying.”[ix] Far from discouraging, these difficulties can be a source of purification and characterize a time of *grace and salvation* (cf. 2 Cor 6:2). They invite discernment and an attitude of constant renewal. The Holy Spirit, moreover, guides us to rediscover the charism, the roots and the modalities for our presence in schools, concentrating on the essential: the importance of the testimony of Christ, the poor, humble and chaste one; the priority of the person and of relationships based on love; the search for truth; the synthesis between faith, life and culture and the valid proposal of a view of man that respects God’s plan.

Evangelise by educating
It thus becomes clear that consecrated persons in schools, in communion with the Bishops, carry out an ecclesial mission that is vitally important inasmuch as while they educate they are also evangelising. This mission requires a commitment of holiness, generosity and skilled educational professionalism so that the
truth about the person as revealed by Jesus may enlighten the growth of the young generations and of the entire community. This Dicastery feels therefore that it is opportune to call attention to the profile of consecrated persons and to reflect on some well-known aspects of their educational mission in schools today.

I

PROFILE OF CONSECRATED PERSONS

At the school of Christ the teacher

Ecclesial gift for revealing the Word

7. “The consecrated life, deeply rooted in the example and teaching of Christ the Lord, is a gift of God the Father to his Church through the Holy Spirit. By the profession of the evangelical counsels the characteristic features of Jesus - the chaste, poor and obedient one - are made constantly ‘visible’ in the midst of the world and the eyes of the faithful are directed towards the mystery of the Kingdom of God already at work in history, even as it awaits its full realization in heaven.”[xi] The aim of the consecrated life is “conformity to the Lord Jesus in his total self-giving.”[xii] so that every consecrated person is called to assume “his mind and his way of life,”[xiii] his way of thinking and of acting, of being and of loving.

Identity of consecrated life

8. The direct reference to Christ and the intimate nature of a gift for the Church and the world,[xiii] are elements that define the identity and scope of the consecrated life. In them the consecrated life finds itself, its point of departure, God and his love, and its point of arrival, the human community and its requirements. It is through these elements that every religious family traces its own physiognomy, from its spirituality to its apostolate, from its style of community life to its ascetic plan, to the sharing and participation in the richness of its own charisms.

At Christ’s school to have his mind

9. The consecrated life can be compared in some ways to a school, that every consecrated person is called to attend for his whole life. In fact, having the mind of the Son means to attend his school daily, to learn from him to have a heart that is meek and humble, courageous and passionate. It means allowing oneself to be educated by Christ, the eternal Word of the Father and, to be drawn to him, the heart and centre of the world, choosing his same form of life.

Allowing oneself to be educated and formed by Christ, to be similar to him

10. The life of a consecrated person is therefore an educational-formative rise and fall that educates to the truth of life and forms it to the freedom of the gift of oneself, according to the model of the Easter of the Lord. Every moment of consecrated life forms part of this rise and fall, in its double educational and formative aspect. A consecrated person does in fact gradually learn to have the mind of the Son in him and to reveal it in a life that is increasingly similar to his, both at individual and community level, in initial and permanent formation. Thus the vows are an expression of the lifestyle chosen by Jesus on this earth that was essential, chaste and completely dedicated to the Father. Prayer becomes a continuation on earth of the praise of the Son to the Father for the salvation of all mankind. Community life is the demonstration that, in the name of the Lord, stronger bonds than those that come from flesh and blood can be tied. These are bonds that are able to overcome what can divide. The apostolate is the impassioned announcement of he by whom we have been conquered.

Gift for everyone

11. The school of the mind of the Son gradually opens the consecrated life to the urgency for testimony, so that the gift may reach everyone. In fact, Christ “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped” (Phil 2:6), he kept nothing for himself, but shared his wealth of being Son with all men. That is why, even when the testimony contests some elements of the local culture, consecrated persons try to enter into a dialogue in order to share the wealth which they bring. This means that the testimony must be distinct and unequivocal, clear and comprehensible for everyone, in order to demonstrate that religious consecration has much to say to every culture inasmuch as it helps to reveal the truth about human beings.

Radical response

Anthropological value of the consecrated life

12. Among the challenges that the consecrated life faces today is that of trying to demonstrate the anthropological value of consecration. It is a question of demonstrating that a poor, chaste and obedient life enhances intimate human dignity; that everyone is called, in a different way, according to his or her, to be poor, obedient and chaste. The evangelical counsels do, in fact, transfigure authentically human values and desires, but they also relativise the human “by pointing to God as the absolute good.”[xiv] The consecrated life, moreover, must be able to show that the evangelical message possesses considerable importance for living in today’s world and is also comprehensible for those who live in a competitive society such as ours.
Lastly, the consecrated life must try to testify that holiness is the highest humanizing proposal of man and of history; it is a project that everyone on earth can make his or her own.\[xvi\]

Charismatic circularity
13. Consecrated persons communicate the richness of their specific to the extent that they live their consecration commitments to the full. On the other hand, such a communication also arouses in the receiver a capacity for an enriching response through the participation of his personal gift and his specific. This “confrontation-sharing” with the Church and with the world is of great importance for the vitality of the various religious charisms and for their interpretation in line with the modern context and their respective spiritual roots. It is the principle of charismatice circularity, as a result of which the charism returns in a sort of way to where it was born, but without simply repeating itself. In this way, the consecrated life itself is renewed, in the listening and interpretation of the signs of the times and in the creative and active fidelity of its origins.

Constructive dialogue in the past and in the present
14. The validity of this principle is confirmed by history; the consecrated life has always woven a constructive dialogue with local culture, sometimes questioning and provoking it, at others defending and preserving it, but in any case allowing it to stimulate and interrogate, in a confrontation that was in some cases dialectic, but always fruitful. It is important that such a confrontation continues even in these times of renewal for the consecrated life and of cultural disorientation that risks frustrating the human heart’s insuppressible need for truth.

In the Church communion
15. The study of the ecclesial situation as a mystery of communion has led the Church, under the action of the Spirit, to increasingly understand itself as the pilgrim people of God and, at the same time as the body of Christ the members of which are in a mutual relationship with each other and with the head. At a pastoral level, “to make the Church the home and the school of communion”\[xvi\] is the great challenge that we must know how to face, at the beginning of the new millennium, in order to be faithful to God’s plan and to the world’s deep expectations. It is first and foremost necessary to promote a spirituality of communion capable of becoming the educational principle in the various environments in which the human person is formed. This spirituality is learned by making our hearts ponder on the mystery of the Trinity, whose light is reflected in the face of every person, and welcomed and appreciated as a gift.

Consecrated persons in the Church-communion
16. Demands for communion have offered consecrated persons the chance to rediscover the mutual relationship with the other s in the people of God. In the Church they are called, in a special way, to reveal that participation in the Trinitarian communion can change human relations creating a new kind of solidarity. By professing to live for God and of God, consecrated persons do, in fact, undertake to preach the power of the peacemaking action of grace that overcomes the disruptive dynamisms present in the human heart.

with the dynamism of the specific charism
17. Whatever the specific charism that characterizes them, consecrated persons are called, through their s, to be experts of communion, to promote human and spiritual bonds that promote the mutual exchange of gifts between all the members of the people of God. The acknowledgement of the many forms of s in the Church gives a new meaning to the presence of consecrated persons in the field of scholastic education. For them a school is a place of mission, where the prophetic role conferred by baptism and lived according to the requirements of the radicalism typical of the evangelical counsels is fulfilled. The gift of special consecration that they have received will lead them to recognizing in schools and in the educational commitment the fruitful furrow in which the Kingdom of God can grow and bear fruit.

A consecrated person educates....
18. This commitment responds perfectly to the nature and to the scope of the consecrated life itself and is carried out according to that double educational and formative model that accompanies the growth of the individual consecrated person. Through schools, men and women religious educate, help young people to grasp their own identity and to reveal those authentic needs and desires that inhabit everyone’s heart, but which often remain unknown and underestimated: thirst for authenticity and honesty, for love and fidelity, for truth and consistency, for happiness and fullness of life. Desires which in the final analysis converge in the supreme human desire: to see the face of God.

... forms
19. The second modality is that regarding formation. A school forms when it offers a precise proposal for fulfilling those desires, preventing them from being deformed, or only partially or weakly achieved. With the testimony of their lives consecrated persons, who are at the school of the Lord, propose that form of existence which is inspired by Christ, so that even a young person may live the freedom of being a child of
God and may experiment the true joy and authentic fulfilment that spring from the project of the Father. Consecrated persons have a providential mission in schools, in the modern context, where the educational proposals seem to be increasingly poorer and man’s aspirations seem to be increasingly unanswered!

20. There is no need for consecrated persons to reserve exclusive tasks for themselves in educational communities. The specificity of the consecrated life lies in its being a sign, a memory and prophecy of the values of the Gospel. Its characteristic is “to bring to bear on the world of education their radical witness to the values of the Kingdom,”[xviii] in cooperation with the laity called to express, in the sign of secularity, the realism of the Incarnation of God in our midst, “the intimate dependency of earthly situations on God in Christ.”[xviii]

by developing the specificity of all the s present in the educational community

21. The different s operate for the growth of the body of Christ and of his mission in the world. The commitment to evangelical testimony according to the typical form of every gives rise to a dynamism of mutual help to fully live membership of the mystery of Christ and of the Church in its many dimensions; a stimulus for each one to discover the evangelical richness of his or her own in a gratitude-filled comparison with others.

By avoiding both confrontation and homologation, the reciprocity of s seems to be a particularly fertile prospect for enriching the ecclesial value of educational communities. In them the various carry out a service for achieving a culture of communion. They are correlative, different and mutual paths that converge to bring to fulfillment the charism of charisms: love.

Before the world
Accounting for hope

22. The awareness that they are living in a time that is full of challenges and new possibilities urges consecrated persons, involved in the educational mission in schools, to make good use of the gift received by accounting for the hope that animates them. Fruit of the faith in the God of history, hope is based on the word and on the life of Jesus, who lived in the world, without being of the world. He asks the same attitude from those who follow him: to live and work in history, without however allowing oneself to be imprisoned by it. Hope demands insertion in the world, but also separation; it requires prophecy and sometimes involves following or withdrawing in order to educate the children of God to freedom in a context of influences that lead to new forms of slavery.

Discernment and contemplative gaze

23. This way of being in history requires a deep capacity for discernment. Born from daily listening to the Word of God, this facilitates the interpreting events and prepares for becoming, as if to say, a critical conscience. The deeper and more authentic this commitment, the more likely it will be to grasp the action of the Spirit in the life of people and in the events of history. Such a capacity finds its foundation in contemplation and in prayer, which teach us to see persons and things from God’s viewpoint. This is the contrary of a superficial glance and of an activism that is incapable of reflecting on the important and the essential. When there is no contemplation and prayer – and consecrated persons are not exempt from this risk – passion for the announcement of the Gospel is also lacking as is the capacity to fight for the life and salvation of mankind.

In schools for educating to silence and to meeting God

24. By living their s with generosity and eagerness, consecrated persons bring to schools their experience of a relationship with God, based on prayer, the Eucharist, the sacrament of Reconciliation and the spirituality of communion that characterizes the life of religious communities. The evangelical position that results facilitates discernment and the formation of a critical sense, a fundamental and necessary aspect of the educational process. Whatever their specific task, the presence of consecrated persons in schools infects the contemplative glance by educating to a silence that leads to listening to God, to paying attention to others, to the situation that surrounds us, to creation. Furthermore, by aiming at the essential, consecrated persons provoke the need for authentic encounters, they renew the capacity to be amazed and to take care of the other, rediscovered like a brother.

for living the Gospel to the full

25. Because of their role, consecrated persons are “a living memorial of Jesus' way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brethren.”[xix] The first and fundamental contribution to the educational mission in schools by consecrated persons is the evangelical completeness of their lives. This way of shaping their lives, based on their generous response to God’s call, becomes an invitation to all the members of the educational community to make their lives a response to God, according to their various states of life.

and testifying a chaste, poor and obedient life
26. In this perspective, consecrated persons testify that the *chastity* of their hearts, bodies, lives is the full and strong expression of a total love for God that renders a person free, full of deep joy and ready for their mission. Thus consecrated persons contribute to guiding young men and women towards the full development of their capacity to love and a complete maturation of their personalities. This is a very important testimony in a culture that increasingly tends to trivialize human love and close itself to life. In a society where everything tends to be free, consecrated persons, through their freely chosen *poverty*, take on a simple and essential lifestyle, promoting a correct relationship with things and trusting in Divine Providence. Freedom from things makes them unservedly ready for an educational service to the young that becomes a sign of the availability of God’s love in a world where materialism and having seem to prevail over being. Finally, by living *obedience*, they remind everyone of the lordship of the only God and, against the temptation of dominion, they indicate a choice of faith that counters forms of individualism and self-sufficiency.

and expressing their donation

27. Just as Jesus did for his disciples, so consecrated persons live their donation for the benefit of the receivers of their mission: students, in the first place, but also their parents and other educators. This encourages them to live prayer and their daily response to their following Christ to become an increasingly more suitable instrument for the work that God achieves through them.

The call to give themselves fully to schools, in deep and true freedom, means that consecrated men and women become a living testimony to the Lord who offers himself for everyone. This excess of gratuitousness and love makes their donation assessable over and above any type of usefulness.

looking at Mary

28. Consecrated persons find in Mary the model to inspire them in their relations with God and in living human history. Mary is the icon of prophetic hope because of her capacity to welcome and meditate at length on the Word in her heart, of interpreting history according to God’s plan, of contemplating God present and working in time. In her eyes we see the wisdom that unites in harmony the ecstasy of her meeting with God and the greatest critical realism with regard to the world. The *Magnificat* is the prophecy *par excellence* of the Virgin. It always sounds new in the spirit of a consecrated person, as a constant praise to the Lord who bends down to the least and to the poor to give them life and mercy.

II

THE EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF CONSECRATED PERSONS TODAY

29. A profile of consecrated persons clearly shows how their educational commitment in schools is suited to the nature of the consecrated life. In fact "thanks to their experience of the particular gifts of the Spirit, their careful listening to the Word, their constant practice of discernment and their rich heritage of pedagogical traditions amassed since the establishment of their Institutes...consecrated persons give life to educational undertakings” in the educational field. This requires hand the promotion within the consecrated life, on the one, of a “renewed cultural commitment which seeks to raise the level of personal preparation” and on the other of a constant conversion to follow Jesus, *the way, the truth and the life* (cf. Jn 14:6). It is an uncomfortable and tiring road that does however make it possible to take up the challenges of the present time and undertake the educational mission entrusted to the Church. While aware that it cannot be exhaustive, the Congregation for Catholic Education, intends pausing to consider just some elements of this mission. In particular it wishes to reflect on three specific contributions of the presence of consecrated persons to scholastic education: first of all the link of education to evangelisation; then formation to “horizontal” relationism, that is to the opening to God and lastly formation to “vertical” relationism, that is to say to welcoming the other and to living together.

Educators called to evangelise

Go …preach the Gospel to the whole creation (Mk16:15)

The educational experience of consecrated persons

30. “To fulfil the mandate she has received from her divine founder of proclaiming the mystery of salvation to all men and of restoring all things in Christ, Holy Mother the Church must be concerned with the whole of men’s life, even the secular part of it insofar as it has a bearing on his heavenly calling.” Both in Catholic and in other types of schools, the educational commitment for consecrated persons is a choice of life, a path to holiness, a demand for justice and solidarity especially towards the poorest young people, threatened by various forms of deviancy and risk. By devoting themselves to the educational mission in schools, consecrated persons contribute to making the bread of culture reach those in most need of it. They see in culture a fundamental condition for people to completely fulfil themselves, achieve a level of life that conforms to their dignity and open themselves to encounter with Christ and the Gospel. Such a commitment is founded on a patrimony of pedagogical wisdom that makes it possible to confirm the value of education as
a force that is able to help the maturing of a person, to draw him to the faith and to respond to the challenges of such a complex society as that which we have today.

Faced with modern challenges
The globalisation process
31. The process of globalisation characterizes the horizon of the new century. This is a complex phenomenon in its dynamics. It has positive effects, such as the possibility for peoples and cultures to meet, but also negative aspects, which risk producing further disparities, injustices and marginalisation. The rapidity and complexity of the changes produced by globalisation are also reflected in schools, which risk being exploited by the demands of the productive-economic structures, or by ideological prejudices and political calculations that obscure their educational function. This situation incites schools to strongly reassert their specific role of stimulus to reflection and critical aspiration. Because of their consecrated persons undertake to promote the dignity of the human person, cooperating with schools so that they may become places of overall education, evangelisation and learning of a vital dialogue between persons of different cultures, religions and social backgrounds.

new technologies
32. The growing development and diffusion of new technologies provide means and instruments that were unconceivable up to just a few years ago. However, they also give rise to questions concerning the future of human development. The vastness and depth of technological innovations influence the processes of access to knowledge, socialization, relations with nature and they foreshadow radical, not always positive, changes in huge sectors of the life of mankind. Consecrated persons cannot shirk wondering about the impact that these technologies will have on people, on means of communication, on the future of society, schools’ task
33. Within the context of these changes, schools have a meaningful role to play in the formation of the personalities of the new generations. The responsible use of the new technologies, especially of internet, demands an appropriate ethical formation. Together with those working in schools, consecrated persons feel the need to understand the processes, languages, opportunities and challenges of the new technologies, but above all to become communication educators, so that these technologies may be used with discernment and wisdom.

…for the future of man
34. Among the challenges of modern society that schools have to face are threats to life and to families, genetic manipulations, growing pollution, plundering of natural resources, the unresolved drama of the underdevelopment and poverty that crush entire populations of the south of the world. These are vital questions for everyone, which need to be faced with extensive and responsible vision, promoting a concept of life that respects the dignity of man and of creation. This means forming persons who are able to dominate and transform processes and instruments in a sense that is humanizing and filled with solidarity. This concern is shared by the whole international community, that is active in assuring that national educational programmes contribute to developing training initiatives in this regard.

An explicit anthropological view
Necessity for an anthropological foundation
35. The clarification of the anthropological foundation of the formative proposal of schools is an increasingly more unavoidable urgency in our complex societies.

The human person is defined by his rationality, that is by his intelligent and free nature, and by his relational nature, that is by his relationship with other persons. Living with others involves both the level of the being of the human person – man/woman – and the ethical level of his acting. The foundation of human ethos is in being the image and likeness of God, the Trinity of persons in communion. The existence of a person appears therefore as a call to the duty to exist for one another.

36. The commitment of a spirituality of communion for the 21st century is the expression of a concept of the human person, created in the image of God. This view enlightens the mystery of man and woman. The human person experiences his humanity to the extent that he is able to participate in the humanity of the other, the bearer of a unique and unrepeatable plan. This is a plan that can only be carried out within the context of the relation and dialogue with the you in a dimension of reciprocity and opening to God. This kind of reciprocity is at the basis of the gift of self and of closeness as an opening in solidarity with every other person. This closeness has its true root in the mystery of Christ, the Word Incarnate, who wished to become close to man.

within the dimension of a plenary humanism
37. Faced with ideological pluralism and the proliferation of “knowledge”, consecrated men and women therefore offer the contribution of a vision of a plenary humanism open to God, who loves everyone and invites them to become increasingly more “conformed to the image of his Son” (cf. Rm 8:29). This
divine plan is the heart of Christian humanism: “Christ...fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear.”[xxix] To confirm the greatness of the human creature does not mean to ignore his fragility: the image of God reflected in persons is in fact deformed by sin. The illusion of freeing oneself from all dependency, even from God, always ends up in new forms of slavery, violence and suppression. This is confirmed by the experience of each human being, by the history of blood shed in the name of ideologies and regimes that wished to construct a new humanity without God.[xxx] On the contrary, in order to be authentic, freedom must measure itself according to the truth of the person, the fullness of which is revealed in Christ, and lead to a liberation from all that denies his dignity preventing him from achieving his own good and that of others.

Witnesses of the truth about the human person
38. Consecrated persons undertake to be witnesses in schools to the truth about persons and to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. With their lives they confirm that faith enlightens the whole field of education by raising and strengthening human values. Catholic schools especially have a priority: that of “bringing forth within what is learnt in school a Christian vision of the world, of life, of culture and of history.”[xxxi] with cultural mediation
39. Hence the importance of reasserting, in a pedagogical context that tends to put it in the background, the humanistic and spiritual dimension of knowledge and of the various school subjects. Through study and research a person contributes to perfecting himself and his humanity. Study becomes the path for a personal encounter with the truth, a “place” of encounter with God himself. Taken this way, knowledge can help to motivate existence, to begin the search for God, it can be a great experience of freedom for truth, placing itself in the service of the maturation and promotion of humanity.[xxxii] Such a commitment demands of consecrated persons an accurate analysis of the quality of their educational proposal, and also constant attention to their cultural and professional formation.

and commitment in the field of non-formal education
40. Another, equally important, field of evangelisation and humanization is non-formal education, that is of those who have been unable to have access to normal schooling. Consecrated persons feel that they should be present and promote innovative projects in such contexts. In these situations poorer young people should be given the chance of a suitable formation that considers their moral, spiritual and religious development and is able to promote socialization and overcome discrimination. This is no novelty, inasmuch as working classes have always been within the sphere of various religious families. It is a case of confirming today with suitable means and plans an attention that has never been lacking.

Educators called to accompany towards the Other
We wish to see Jesus (Jn12:21)
The dynamism of reciprocity
In the educational community
41. The educational mission is carried out in a spirit of cooperation between various subjects – students, parents, teachers, non-teaching personnel and the school management – who form the educational community. It can create an environment for living in which the values are mediated by authentic interpersonal relations between the various members of which it is composed. Its highest aim is the complete and comprehensive education of the person. In this respect, consecrated persons can offer a decisive contribution, in the light of their experience of communion that characterizes their community lives. In fact, by committing themselves to live and communicate the spirituality of communion in the school community, through a dialogue that is constructive and able to harmonize differences, they build an environment that is rooted in the evangelical values of truth and love. Consecrated persons are thus leaven that is able to create relations of increasingly deep communion, that are in themselves educational. They promote solidarity, mutual enhancement and joint responsibility in the educational plan, and, above all, they give an explicit Christian testimony, through communication of the experience of God and of the evangelical message, even sharing the awareness of being instruments of God and bearers of a charism in the service of all men.

within the sphere of the Church communion
42. The task of communicating the spirituality of communion within the school community derives from being part of the Church communion. This means that consecrated persons involved in the educational mission must be integrated, starting from their charism, in the pastoral activity of the local Church. They, in fact, carry out an ecclesial ministry in the service of a concrete community and in communion with the Diocesan Ordinary. The common educational mission entrusted to them by the Church does, however, require cooperation and greater synergy between the various religious families. Apart from offering a more skilled educational service, this synergy offers the chance for sharing charisms from which the entire Church will gain. For this reason the communion that consecrated persons are called to experiment goes well beyond their own religious family or institute. Indeed, by opening themselves to communion with other forms of
consecration, consecrated persons can “rediscover their common Gospel roots and together grasp the beauty of their own identity in the variety of charisms with greater clarity.”[xxxiii]

The relational dimension
promoting authentic relations

43. The educational community expresses the variety and beauty of the various and the fruitfulness at educational and pedagogical level that this contributes to the life of scholastic institutions. The commitment to promote the relational dimension of the person and the care taken in establishing authentic educational relationships with young people are undoubtedly aspects that the presence of consecrated persons can facilitate in schools, considered as microcosms in which oases are created where the bases are laid for living responsibly in the macrocosm of society. It is not, however, strange to observe, even in schools, the progressive deterioration of interpersonal relations, due to the functionalisation of roles, haste, fatigue and other factors that create conflicting situations. To organize schools like gymnasiums where one exercises to establish positive relationships between the various members and to search for peaceful solutions to the conflicts is a fundamental objective not just for the life of the educational community, but also for the construction of a society of peace and harmony.

educating to reciprocity

44. Usually in schools there are boys and girls, as well as men and women with tasks of teaching or administration. Consideration of the single-dual dimension of the human person implies the need to educate to mutual acknowledgement, in respect and acceptance of differences. The experience of man/woman reciprocity may appear paradigmatic in the positive management of other differences, including ethnic and religious ones. It does, in fact, develop and encourage positive attitudes, such as an awareness that every person can give and receive, a willingness to welcome the other, a capacity for a serene dialogue and a chance to purify and clarify one’s own experience while seeking to communicate it and compare it with the other.

through enhancing relations

45. In a relationship of reciprocity, interaction can be asymmetric from the point of view of roles, as it is necessarily in the educational relationship, but not from that of the dignity and uniqueness of every human person. Learning is facilitated when, without undue straining with regard to roles, educational interaction is at a level that fully recognizes the equality of the dignity of every human person. In this way it is possible to form personalities capable of having their own view of life and to agree with their choice. The involvement of families and teaching staff creates a climate of trust and respect that promotes the development of the capacity for dialogue and peaceful coexistence in the search for whatever favours the common good.

The educational community
creating an educational environment

46. Due to their experience of community life, consecrated persons are in a most favourable position for cooperating to make the educational plan of the school promote the creation of a true community. In particular they propose an alternative model of coexistence to that of a standardized or individualistic society. In actual fact consecrated persons undertake, together with their lay colleagues, to assure that schools are structured as places of encounter, listening, communication, where students experience values in an essential way. They help, in a directed way, to guide pedagogical choices to promote overcoming individualistic self-promotion, solidarity instead of competition, assisting the weak instead of marginalisation, responsible participation instead of indifference.

aware of the family’s task

47. The family comes first in being responsible for the education of its children. Consecrated persons appreciate the presence of parents in the educational community and try to establish a true relation of reciprocity with them. Participating bodies, personal meetings and other initiatives are aimed at rendering increasingly more active the insertion of parents in the life of institutions and for making them aware of the educational task. Acknowledgement of this task is more necessary today than it was in the past, due to the many difficulties that families now experience. When God’s original plan for families is overshadowed in peoples’ minds, society receives incalculable damage and the right of children to live in an environment of fully human love is infringed. On the contrary, when a family reflects God’s plan, it becomes a workshop where love and true solidarity are experienced.[xxxiv]

Consecrated persons announce this truth, which does not regard just believers, but is the patrimony of all mankind, inscribed in the heart of man. The chance of contact with the families of the children and young people is a favourable occasion for examining with them meaningful questions regarding life, human love and the nature of families and for agreeing to the proposed vision instead of other often dominating visions, and of the importance of brotherhood as a prophetic sign
48. By testifying to Christ and living their typical life of communion, consecrated men and women offer the whole educational community the prophetic sign of brotherhood. Community life, when woven with deep relationships “is itself prophetic in a society which, sometimes without realising it, has a profound yearning for a brotherhood which knows no borders.” [xxxv] This conviction becomes visible in the commitment to make the life of the community a place of growth of persons and of mutual aid in the search and fulfilment of the common mission. In this regard it is important that the sign of brotherhood can be perceived with transparency in every moment of the life of the scholastic community, in network with other educational agencies.

49. The educational community achieves its scopes in synergy with other educational institutions present in the country. By coordinating with other educational agencies and in the more extensive communications network a school stimulates the process of personal, professional and social growth of its students, by offering a number of proposals in integrated form. Above all, it forms a most important aid for escaping various conditionings, especially of the media, so helping young people to pass from simple and passive consumers to critical interlocutors, capable of positively influencing public opinion and even the quality of information.

Going towards the Other
A lifestyle that questions
50. When involved in the serious search for truth through the contribution of the different subjects, the life of the educational community is constantly urged to mature in reflection, to go beyond the acquisitions achieved and to question at the existential level. With their presence, consecrated persons offer in this context the specific contribution of their identity and . Even if not always consciously, young people wish to find in them the testimony of a life lived as the answer to a call, as a journey towards God, as the search for the signs through which He makes himself present. They expect to see persons who invite them to seriously question themselves, and to discover the deepest meaning of human existence and of history.

Guide in a search for meaning
develop the gift for searching
51. An encounter with God is always a personal event, an answer that is by its nature, a person’s free act in response to the gift of faith. Schools, even Catholic schools, do not demand adherence to the faith, however, they can prepare for it. Through the educational plan it is possible to create the conditions for a person to develop a gift for searching and to be guided in discovering the mystery of his being and of the reality that surrounds him, until he reaches the threshold of the faith. To those who then decide to cross this threshold the necessary means are offered for continuing to deepen their experience of faith through prayer, the sacraments, the encounter with Christ in the Word, in the Eucharist, in events and persons. [xxxvi]

educating to freedom
52. An essential dimension of the path of searching is education to freedom, typical of every school loyal to its task. Education to freedom is a humanizing action, because it aims at the full development of personality. In fact, education itself must be seen as the acquisition, growth and possession of freedom. It is a matter of educating each student to free him/herself from the conditionings that prevent him/her from fully living as a person, to form him/herself into a strong and responsible personality, capable of making free and consistent choices. [xxxvii]

preparing the ground for the choice of faith
Educating truly free people is in itself already guiding them to the faith. The search for meaning favours the development of the religious dimension of a person as ground in which the Christian choice can mature and the gift of faith can develop. It is ever more frequently observed that in schools, especially in western societies, the religious dimension of a person has become a lost link, not only in the typically educational sphere of schools, but also in the more extensive formative process that began in the family. Yet, without it the formative process, as a whole, is strongly affected, making any search for God difficult. The immediate, the superficial, the accessory, prefabricated solutions, deviations towards magic and surrogates of mystery thus tend to grasp the interest of young people and leave no room for opening to the transcendent.

Even teachers, who call themselves non-believers, today feel the urgency to recover the religious dimension of education, necessary for forming personalities able to manage the powerful conditionings under way in society and to ethically guide the new discoveries of science and technology, with a style of interpellant education
53. By living the evangelical counsels, consecrated persons form an effective invitation to question themselves about God and the mystery of life. Such a question that requires a style of education that is able
to stimulate fundamental questions on the origin and meaning of life passes through the search for the whys more than for the hows. For this reason, it is necessary to check how the contents of the various subjects are proposed in order that students may develop such questions and search for suitable replies. Moreover, children and young people should be encouraged to flee from the obvious and from the trivial, especially within the sphere of choices of life, of the family, of human love. This style is translated into a methodology of study and research that trains for reflection and discernment. It takes the form of a strategy that cultivates in the person, from his earliest years, an inner life as the place to listen to the voice of God, cultivate the meaning of the sacred, decide to follow values, mature the recognition of one’s limits and of sin, feel the growth of the responsibility for every human being.

Teaching religion
Specialized religious education itineraries

54. The teaching of religion assumes a specific role in this context. Consecrated persons, together with other educators, but with a greater responsibility, are often called to ensure specialized paths of religious education, depending on the different school situations: in some schools the majority of the pupils are Christians, in others different religious followings predominate, or there are agnostic or atheist choices.

cultural proposal offered to everyone
Their’s is the duty to emphasise the value of the teaching of religion within the timetable of the institution and within the cultural programme. Even while acknowledging that the teaching of religion in a Catholic school has a different function from that which it has in other schools, its scope is still that of opening to the understanding of the historical experience of Christianity, of guiding to knowledge of Jesus Christ and the study of his Gospel. In this sense, it can be described as a cultural proposal that can be offered to everyone over and above their personal choices of faith. In many contexts, Christianity already it forms the spiritual horizon of the native culture.

teaching of religion in Catholic schools
In Catholic schools, teaching of religion must help students to arrive at a personal position in religious matters that is consistent and respectful of the positions of others, so contributing to their growth and to a more complete understanding of reality. It is important that the whole educational community, especially in Catholic schools, recognizes the value and role of the teaching of religion and contributes to its enhancement by the students. By using words that are suited to mediating the religious message, the religion teacher is called to stimulate the pupils to study the great questions concerning the meaning of life, the significance of reality and a responsible commitment to transform it in the light of the evangelical values and modern culture.

other formative opportunities
The community of a Catholic school offers not only teaching of religion but also other opportunities, other moments and ways for educating to a harmony between faith and culture, faith and life.

Life as a gift and as a task
55. Together with other Christian educators, consecrated persons know how to grasp and enhance the al dimension that is intrinsic to the educational process. Life is, in fact, a gift that is accomplished in the free response to a special call, to be discovered in the concrete circumstances of each day. Care for the al dimension guides the person to interpret his existence in the light of God’s plan. The absence or scarce attention to the al dimension not only deprives young people of the assistance to which they have a right in the important discernment on the fundamental choices of their lives, but it also impoverishes society and the Church, both of which are in need of the presence of people able to devote themselves on a stable basis to the service of God, their brothers and the common good.

Culture of s
Reawakening a taste for the big questions
56. The promotion of a new al culture is a fundamental component of the new evangelisation. Through it, one must “find courage and zest for the big questions, those related to one’s future.” These are questions that should be reawakened even through personalized educational processes by means of which one is gradually led to discover life as a gift of God and as a task. These processes can form a real itinerary of al maturation, that leads to a specific. Consecrated persons especially are called to promote the culture of s in schools. They are a sign for all Christian people not only of a specific, but also of al dynamism as a form of life, thus eloquently representing the decision of those who wish to live with attention to God’s call.
57. In the modern situation, the educational mission in schools is increasingly shared with the laity. "Whereas at times in the recent past, collaboration came about as a means of supplementing the decline of consecrated persons necessary to carry out activities, now it is growing out of the need to share responsibility not only in the carrying out of the Institute’s works but especially in the hope of sharing specific aspects and moments of the spirituality and mission of the Institute."[xli] Consecrated persons must therefore transmit the educational charisma that animates them and promote the formation of those who feel that they are called to the same mission. To discharge this responsibility they must be careful not to get involved exclusively in academic-administrative tasks and to not be taken over by activism. What they must do is favour attention to the richness of their charism and try to develop it in response to the new social-cultural situations.

becoming privileged interlocutors in the search for God

58. In educational communities consecrated persons can promote the achievement of a mentality that is inspired by the evangelical values in a style that is typical of their charisma. This in itself is already an educational service in a al key. Young people, in fact, and often also the other members of the educational community, more or less consciously expect to find in consecrated persons privileged interlocutors in the search for God. For this type of service, the most specific of the identity of consecrated persons, there are no age limits that would justify considering oneself retired. Even when they have to retire from professional activity, they can always continue to be available for young people and adults, as experts of life according to the Spirit, men and women educators in the sphere of faith. The presence of consecrated men and women in schools is thus a proposal of evangelical spirituality, a reference point for the members of the educational community in their itinerary of faith and of Christian maturation.

The al dimension of the teaching profession

59. The quality of the teachers is fundamental in creating an educational environment that is purposeful and fertile. It is for this reason that the institutions of consecrated life and religious communities, especially when in charge of Catholic schools, propose formation itineraries for teachers. It is opportune in these to emphasize the al dimension of the teaching profession in order to make the teachers aware that they are participating in the educational and sanctifying mission of the Church.[xlii] Consecrated persons can reveal, to those who so desire, the richness of the spirituality that characterizes them and of the charism of their Institute, encouraging them to live them in the educational ministry according to the lay identity and in forms that are suitable and accessible to young people.

Educators called to teach coexistence

....all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (Jn 13:35)

On a human scale

Priority attention to the person

60. A school’s community dimension is inseparable from priority attention to the person, the focus of the scholastic educational programme. “Culture must correspond to the human person, and overcome the temptation to a knowledge which yields to pragmatism or which loses itself in the endless meanderings of erudition. Such knowledge is incapable of giving meaning to life…knowledge enlightened by faith, far from abandoning areas of daily life, invests them with all the strength of hope and prophecy. The humanism which we desire advocates a vision of society centred on the human person and his inalienable rights, on the values of justice and peace, on a correct relationship between individuals, society and the State, on the logic of solidarity and subsidiarity. It is a humanism capable of giving a soul to economic progress itself, so that it may be directed to the promotion of each individual and of the whole person.”[xliii] characterizing concrete choices in that sense

61. Consecrated persons must be careful to safeguard the priority of the person in their educational programme. For this they must cooperate in the concrete choices that are made regarding the general school programme and its formative proposal. Each pupil must be considered as an individual, bearing in mind his family environment, his personal history, his skills and his interests. In a climate of mutual trust, consecrated men and women discover and cultivate each person’s talents and help young people to become responsible for their own formation and to cooperate in that of their companions. This requires the total dedication and unselfishness of those who live the educational service as a mission. This dedication and unselfishness contribute to characterizing the school environment as a vital environment in which intellectual growth is harmonised with spiritual, religious, emotional and social growth.

Personalised accompanying

giving precedence to dialogue and attentive listening

62. With the typical sensitivity of their formation, consecrated persons offer personalised accompanying through attentive listening and dialogue. They are, in fact, convinced that “education is a thing of the
heart”[xliii] and that, consequently, an authentic formative process can only be initiated through a personal
relationship.

reaawakening the desire for internal liberation

63. Every human being feels that he is internally oppressed by tendencies to evil, even when he flaunts
limitless freedom. Consecrated men and women strive to reawaken in young people the desire for an internal
liberation. This is a condition for undertaking the Christian journey that is directed towards the new life of
the evangelical beatitudes. The evangelical view will allow young people to take an critical attitude towards
consumerism and hedonism that have wormed their way, like the tare in the wheat, into the culture and way
of life of vast areas of humanity.

that is conversion of the heart

Fully aware that all human values find their full accomplishment and their unity in Christ, consecrated
persons explicitly represent the maternal care of the Church for the complete growth of the young people of
our time, communicating the conviction that there can be no true liberation if there is no conversion of the
heart.[xliv]
The dignity of woman and her
The presence and action of women

64. The sensitivity of consecrated persons, so attentive to the need to develop the single-dual dimension of
the human person in obedience to God’s original plan (cf. Gen 2:18), can contribute to integrating
differences in the educational endeavour to make maximum use of them and overcoming homologations and
stereotypes. History testifies to the commitment of consecrated men and women in favour of women. Even
today consecrated persons feel they have a duty to appreciate women in the field of education. In various
parts of the world Catholic schools and numerous religious families are active in assuring that women are
guaranteed access to education without any discrimination and that they can give their specific contribution
to the good of the entire community. Everyone is aware of the contribution of women in favour of life and of
the humanisation of culture,[xlv] their readiness to care for people and to rebuild the social tissue that has
often been broken and torn by tension and hate. Many initiatives of solidarity, even among peoples at war,
born from that female genius that promotes sensitivity for all human beings in all circumstances.[xlvi] In
this context consecrated women are called in a very special way to be, through their dedication lived in
fullness and joy, a sign of God’s tender love towards the human race.[xlvii] The presence and appreciation
of women is therefore essential for preparing a culture that really does place at its centre people, the search
for the peaceful settlement of conflicts, unity in diversity, assistance and solidarity.

Intercultural outlook
Contribution of consecrated persons to intercultural dialogue

65. In today’s complex society, schools are called to provide young generations with the elements necessary
for developing an intercultural vision. Consecrated persons involved in education, who often belong to
institutes that are spread throughout the world, are an expression of “multi-cultural and International
communities, called to ‘witness to the sense of communion among peoples, races and cultures’ . . . where
mutual knowledge, respect, esteem and enrichment are being experienced.”[xlvi] For this reason they can
easily consider cultural differences as a richness and propose accessible paths of encounter and
dialogue. This attitude is a precious contribution for true intercultural education, something that is made
increasingly urgent by the considerable phenomenon of migration. The itinerary to be followed in
educational communities involves passing from tolerance of the multicultural situation to welcome and a
search for reasons for mutual understanding to intercultural dialogue, which leads to acknowledging the
values and limits of every culture.

Intercultural education
Education application necessary

66. From a Christian viewpoint, intercultural education is essentially based on the relational model that is
open to reciprocity. In the same way as happens with people, cultures also develop through the typical
dynamisms of dialogue and communion. “Dialogue between cultures emerges as an intrinsic demand of
human nature itself, as well as of culture. It is dialogue which protects the distinctiveness of cultures as
historical and creative expressions of the underlying unity of the human family, and which sustains
understanding and communion between them. The notion of communion, which has its source in Christian
revelation and finds its sublime prototype in the Triune God (cf. Jn 17:11, 21), never implies a dull
uniformity or enforced homogenisation or assimilation; rather it expresses the convergence of a multiform
variety, and is therefore a sign of richness and a promise of growth.”[xlvii]

Coexistence of differences
67. The intercultural prospective involves a change of paradigm at the pedagogical level. From the integration of differences one passes to a search for their coexistence. This is a model that is neither simple nor easily implemented. In the past, diversity between cultures was often a source of misunderstandings and conflicts; even today, in various parts of the world, we see the arrogant establishment of some cultures over others. No less dangerous is the tendency to homologation of cultures to models of the western world inspired by forms of radical individualism and a practically atheist concept of life. Commitment to seek the ethical foundations of the various cultures

68. Schools must question themselves about the fundamental ethical trends that characterize the cultural experiences of a particular community. “Cultures, like the people who give rise to them, are marked by the ‘mystery of evil’ at work in human history (cf. 1 Th 2:7), and they too are in need of purification and salvation. The authenticity of each human culture, the soundness of its underlying ethos, and hence the validity of its moral bearings, can be measured to an extent by its commitment to the human cause and by its capacity to promote human dignity at every level and in every circumstance.”

In his speech to the members of the 50th General Assembly of the United Nations Organization, the Pope underlined the fundamental communion between peoples, observing that the various cultures are in actual fact just different ways of dealing with the question of the meaning of personal existence. In fact, every culture is an attempt to reflect on the mystery of the world and of man, a way of expressing the transcendent dimension of human life. Seen this way, difference, rather than being a threat, can become, through respectful dialogue, a source of deep understanding of the mystery of human existence.

Sharing with the poor in solidarity
Preferential option for the poor

69. The presence of consecrated persons in an educational community concurs in perfecting the sensitivity of everyone to the poverty that still torments young people, families and entire peoples. This sensitivity can become a source of profound changes in an evangelical sense, inducing a transformation of the logics of excellence and superiority into those of service, of caring for others and forming a heart that is open to solidarity.

The preferential option for the poor leads to avoiding all forms of exclusion. Within the school there is often an educational plan that serves the more or less well-to-do social groups, while attention for the most needy definitively takes second place. In many cases social, economic or political circumstances leave no better alternative. This, however, must not mean the exclusion of a clear idea of the evangelical criteria or of trying to apply it at a personal and community level and within the scholastic institutions themselves.

Planning starting from the least
Poor young people at the centre of the education programme

70. When the preferential option for the poorest is at the centre of the educational programme, the best resources and most qualified persons are initially placed at the service of the least, without in this way excluding those who have less difficulties and shortages. This is the meaning of evangelical inclusion, so distant from the logic of the world. The Church does, in fact, mean to offer its educational service in the first place to “those who are poor in the goods of this world or who are deprived of the assistance and affection of a family or who are strangers to the gift of Faith.” Unjust situations often make it difficult to implement this choice. Sometimes, however, it is Catholic educational institutions themselves that have strayed from such a preferential option, which characterized the beginnings of the majority of institutes of consecrated life devoted to teaching.

This choice, typical of the consecrated life, should therefore be cultivated from the time of initial formation, so that it is not considered as reserved only for the most generous and courageous.

Identify situations of poverty

71. Following in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd, consecrated persons should identify among their pupils the various poverty situations that prevent the overall maturation of the person and marginalize him or her from social life, by investigating their causes. Among these, destitution occupies an undisputable place. It often brings with it the lack of a family and of health, social maladjustment, loss of human dignity, impossibility of access to culture and consequently a deep spiritual poverty. Becoming the voice of the poor of the world is a challenge assumed by the Church, and all Christians should do the same. Due to their choices and their publicly professed commitment of a poor personal and community lifestyle, consecrated persons are more strongly sensitive to their duty to promote justice and solidarity in the environment in which they are active.

Giving voice to the poor
Considering the least
72. Access to education especially for the poor is a commitment assumed at different levels by Catholic educational institutions. This requires arranging educational activity to suit the least, no matter what the social status of the pupils present in the scholastic institution. This involves, among other things, proposing the contents of the social doctrine of the Church through educational projects and requires checking the profile that the school foresees for its students. If a school listens to the poorest people and arranges itself to suit them, it will be able to interpret the subjects at the service of life, and avail of their contents in relation to the global growth of people.

73. The path to peace passes through justice. “Only in this way can we ensure a peaceful future for our world and remove the root causes of conflicts and wars: peace is the fruit of justice . . . a justice which is not content to apportion to each his own, but one which aims at creating conditions of equal opportunity among citizens, and therefore favouring those who, for reasons of social status or education or health, risk being left behind or being relegated to the lowest places in society, without possibility of deliverance.”

Culture of peace
Peace through justice
77. The path to peace passes through justice. “Only in this way can we ensure a peaceful future for our world and remove the root causes of conflicts and wars: peace is the fruit of justice . . . a justice which is not content to apportion to each his own, but one which aims at creating conditions of equal opportunity among citizens, and therefore favouring those who, for reasons of social status or education or health, risk being left behind or being relegated to the lowest places in society, without possibility of deliverance.”

Educating for peace starting from the heart
Peacemakers in their own environment

78. Awareness that education is the main road to peace is a fact shared by the international community. The various projects launched by international organizations for sensitising public opinion and governments are a clear sign of this. Consecrated persons, witnesses of Christ, the Prince of Peace, grasp the urgency of placing education for peace among the primary objectives of their formative action offering their specific contribution to encourage in the hearts of the pupils the desire to become peacemakers. Wars in fact are born in the hearts of men and the defences of peace must be built in the hearts of men. By enhancing the educational process, consecrated persons undertake to excite attitudes of peace in the souls of the men of the third millennium. This “is not only the absence of conflict but requires a positive, dynamic, participatory process where dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation.”

Consecrated persons cooperate in this undertaking with all men and women of goodwill sharing with them the effort and urgency to always seek new ways that are suited for an effective education that “has widened possibilities for strengthening a culture of peace.”

through the education to values

79. An effective education for peace involves preparing various levels of programmes and strategies. Among other things, it is a matter of proposing to the pupils an education to suitable values and attitudes for peacefully settling disputes in the respect of human dignity; of organising activities, even extracurricular ones such as sports and theatre that favour assimilating the values of loyalty and respect of rules; of assuring equality of access to education for women; of encouraging, when necessary, a review of curricula, including textbooks.

Education is also called to transmit to students an awareness of their cultural roots and respect for other cultures. When this is achieved with solid ethical reference points, education leads to a realisation of the inherent limits in one’s own culture and in that of others. At the same time, however, it emphasises a common inheritance of values to the entire human race. In this way “education has a particular role to play in building a more united and peaceful world. It can help to affirm that integral humanism, open to life's ethical and religious dimension, which appreciates the importance of understanding and showing esteem for other cultures and the spiritual values present in them.”

Educating for coexistence
Educating for active and responsible citizens

80. As a result of the negative effects of uncontrolled economic and cultural globalisation, responsible participation in the life of the community at local, national and world levels acquires increasing importance at the beginning of the third millennium. This participation presupposes the realisation of the causes of the phenomena that threaten the coexistence of people and of human life itself. As with every realisation, this too finds in education, and in particular in schools, fertile ground for its development. Thus a new and difficult task takes shape: educate to have active and responsible citizens. The words of the Pope are enlightening in this regard: “promoting the right to peace ensures respect for all other rights, since it encourages the building of a society in which structures of power give way to structures of cooperation, with a view to the common good.”

In this respect, consecrated persons can offer the sign of a responsible brotherhood, living in communities in which “each member has a sense of co-responsibility for the faithfulness of the others; each one contributes to a serene climate of sharing life, of understanding, and of mutual help.”

CONCLUSION

81. The reflections proposed clearly indicate that the presence of consecrated persons in the world of education is a prophetic choice.

The Synod on the consecrated life exhorts to assume with renewed dedication the educational mission in all levels of schools, universities and institutions of higher learning. The invitation to continue the itinerary begun by those who have already offered a significant contribution to the educational mission of the Church lies within the bounds of the fidelity to their original charism: “because of their special consecration, their particular experience of the gifts of the Spirit, their constant listening to the Word of God, their practice of discernment, their rich heritage of pedagogical traditions built up since the establishment of their Institute, and their profound grasp of spiritual truth (cf. Ef 1:17), consecrated persons are able to be especially effective in educational activities and to offer a specific contribution to the work of other educators.”

82. In the dimension of ecclesial communion, there is a growing awareness in every consecrated person of the great cultural and pedagogical wealth that derives from sharing a common educational mission, even in the specificity of the various ministries and charisms. It is a matter of discovering and renewing an
awareness of one’s own identity, finding again the inspiring nucleuses of a skilled educational professionalism to be rediscovered as a way of being that represents an authentic.

Starting afresh from Christ

The root of this renewed awareness is Christ. Consecrated persons working in schools must start from him to find again the motivating source of their mission. Starting afresh from Christ means contemplating his face, pausing at length with him in prayer to then be able to show him to others. It is what the Church is called to accomplish at the beginning of the new millennium, conscious that only faith can enter the mystery of that face.[lxix] Starting again from Christ is, therefore, also for consecrated men and women, starting afresh from faith nourished by the sacraments and supported by a hope that does not fail: “I am with you always” (Mt 28:20).

in a renewed commitment

Encouraged by this hope, consecrated persons are called to revive their educational passion living it in school communities as a testimony of encounter between different spheres and between generations.

The task of teaching to live, discovering the deepest meaning of life and of transcendence, to mutually interact with others, to love creation, to think freely and critically, to find fulfillment in work, to plan the future, in one word to be, demands a new love of consecrated persons for educational and cultural commitment in schools.

and living in a state of permanent formation

83. By allowing themselves to be transformed by the Spirit and living in a state of permanent formation, consecrated men and women become able to extend their horizons and understand the profound causes of events.[lxix] Permanent formation also becomes the key to understanding the educational mission in schools and for carrying it out in a way that is close to a reality that is so changeable and at the same time in need of responsible, timely and prophetic intervention. The cultural study that consecrated persons are called to cultivate for improving their professionalism in the subjects for which they are responsible, or in the administrative or management service, is a duty of justice, which cannot be shirked.

Participation in the life of the universal and particular Church involves demonstrating the bonds of communion and appreciating the directions of the Magisterium, especially with regard to such matters as life, the family, the issue of women, social justice, peace, ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue. In the climate of modern pluralism, the Magisterium of the Church is the voice of authority that interprets phenomena in the light of the Gospel.

Thanksgiving for the important and noble task

84. The Congregation for Catholic Education wishes to conclude these reflections with sincere gratitude to all the consecrated persons who work in the field of school education. While aware of the complexity and often of the difficulties of their task, it wishes to underline the value of the noble educational service aimed at giving reasons for life and hope to the new generations, through critically processed knowledge and culture, on the basis of a concept of the person and of life inspired by the evangelical values.

Every school and every place of non formal education can become a centre of a greater network which, from the smallest village to the most complex metropolis, wraps the world in hope. It is in education, in fact, that the promise of a more human future and a more harmonious society lies.

No difficulty should remove consecrated men and women from schools and from education in general, when the conviction of being called to bring the Good News of the Kingdom of God to the poor and small is so deep and vital. Modern difficulties and confusion, together with the new prospects that are appearing at the dawn of the third millennium, are a strong reminder to pass one’s life in educating the new generations to become bearers of a culture of communion that may reach every people and every person. The main motive and, at the same time, the goal of the commitment of every consecrated person, is to light and trim the lamp of faith of the new generations, the “morning watchmen (cf. Is 21:11-12) at the dawn of the new millennium.”[lxxi]

The Holy Father, during the Audience granted to the undersigned Prefect, approved this document and authorized its publication.


+ Zenon Card. GROCHOLEWSKI
Prefect
+ Joseph PITTAU, S.J.
Secretary

NOTES


Cf. Ibid., n. 30.


Cf. Ibid., n. 39.


Cf. Ibid., n. 105, 481.

Cf. Ibid., n. 105, 481.

Cf. Ibid., n. 105, 481.

Cf. Ibid., n. 105, 481.


*Ibid.*, n. 8, 238.


Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on Catholic Education *Gravissimum educationis*, n. 9.


For example, the United Nations has promoted the *International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence*, (2000-2010).


*Ibid.*, A, art. 1a; art. 4.


CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION
(of Seminaries and Educational Institutions)
EDUCATING TOGETHER IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
Introduction

1. The unexpected and often contradictory evolution of our age gives rise to educational challenges that pose questions for the school world. They force us to seek appropriate answers not only as regards contents and didactic methods, but also as regards the community experience that is a mark of educational activity. The relevance of these challenges transpires from the context of the social, cultural and religious complexity in which young people are actually growing up, and significantly influences their way of living. They are widespread phenomena such as lack of interest for the fundamental truths of human life, individualism, moral relativism and utilitarianism, that permeate above all rich and developed societies. Add to that rapid structural changes, globalization and the application of new technologies in the field of information that increasingly affect daily life and the process of formation. Moreover, with the process of development, the gap between rich and poor countries grows and the phenomenon of migration increases, so emphasizing the diversity of cultural identities in the same territory with the relative consequences concerning integration. In a society that is at once global and diversified, local and planetary, that hosts various and contrasting ways of interpreting the world and life, young people find themselves faced with different proposals of values, or lack thereof, that are increasingly stimulating but also increasingly less shared. There are also the difficulties that arise from problems of family stability, situations of hardship and poverty, that create a widespread feeling of disorientation at the existential and emotional level in a delicate period of their growth and maturation, exposing them to the danger of being “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14).

2. In this context it becomes especially urgent to offer young people a course of scholastic formation which is not reduced to a simple individualistic and instrumental fruition of service with a view to obtaining a qualification. As well as gaining knowledge, students must also have a strong experience of sharing with their educators. For this experience to be happily accomplished, educators must be welcoming and well-prepared interlocutors, able to awaken and direct the best energies of students towards the search for truth and the meaning of existence, a positive construction of themselves and of life in view of an overall formation. In the end, «real education is not possible without the light of truth »[1].

3. This perspective regards all scholastic institutions, but even more directly the Catholic school, which is constantly concerned with the formational requirements of society, because “the problem of instruction has always been closely linked to the Church’s mission”[2]. The Catholic school participates in this mission like a true ecclesial subject, with its educational service that is enlivened by the truth of the Gospel. In fact, faithful to its, it appears “as a place of integral education of the human person through a clear educational project of which Christ is the foundation”[3], directed at creating a synthesis between faith, culture and life. The project of the Catholic school is convincing only if carried out by people who are deeply motivated, because they witness to a living encounter with Christ, in whom alone «the mystery of man truly becomes clear»[4]. These persons, therefore, acknowledge a personal and communal adherence with the Lord, assumed as the basis and constant reference of the inter-personal relationship and mutual cooperation between educator and student.
5. The implementation of a real educational community, built on the foundation of shared projected values, represents a serious task that must be carried out by the Catholic school. In this setting, the presence both of students and of teachers from different cultural and religious backgrounds requires an increased commitment of discernment and accompaniment. The preparation of a shared project acts as a stimulus that should force the Catholic school to be a place of ecclesial experience. Its binding force and potential for relationships derive from a set of values and a communion of life that is rooted in our common belonging to Christ. Derived from the recognition of evangelical values are educational norms, motivational drives and also the final goals of the school. Certainly the degree of participation can differ in relation to one’s personal history, but this requires that educators be willing to offer a permanent commitment to formation and self-formation regarding a choice of cultural and life values to be made present in the educational community.

6. Having already dealt in two previous separate documents with the themes of the identity and mission of Catholic lay persons and of consecrated persons in schools respectively, this document of the Congregation for Catholic Education considers the pastoral aspects regarding cooperation between lay and consecrated persons within the same educational mission. In it, the choice of the lay faithful to live their educational commitment as «a personal in the Church, and not simply as […] the exercise of a profession» meets with the choice of consecrated persons, inasmuch as they are called «to live the evangelical councils and bring the humanism of the beatitudes to the field of education and schools».

7. This document constantly refers to previous texts of the Congregation for Catholic Education regarding education and schools and clearly considers the different situations encountered by Catholic Institutions in various parts of the world. It wishes to call attention to three fundamental aspects of cooperation between lay faithful and consecrated persons in the Catholic school: communion in the educational mission, the necessary course of formation for communion for a shared educational mission and, lastly, openness towards others as the fruit of that communion.

I. COMMUNION IN THE MISSION OF EDUCATION

8. Every human being is called to communion because of his nature which is created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26-27). Therefore, within the sphere of biblical anthropology, man is not an isolated individual, but a person: a being who is essentially relational. The communion to which man is called always involves a double dimension, that is to say vertical (communion with God) and horizontal (communion with people). It is fundamental that communion be acknowledged as a gift of God, as the fruit of the divine initiative fulfilled in the Easter mystery.

The Church: mystery of communion and mission

9. God’s original plan was compromised by the sin that wounded all relations: between man and God, between man and man. However, God did not abandon man in solitude, and, in the fullness of time, sent his Son, Jesus Christ, as Saviour, so that man might find, in the Spirit, full communion with the Father. In its turn, communion with the Trinity rendered possible by the encounter with Christ, unites persons with one other.

10. When Christians say communion, they refer to the eternal mystery, revealed in Christ, of the communion of love that is the very life of God-Trinity. At the same time we also say that Christians share in this communion in the Body of Christ which is the Church (cf. Phil 1: 7; Rev 1: 9). Communion is, therefore, the “essence” of the Church, the foundation and source of its mission of being in the world «the home and the school of communion», to lead all men and women to enter ever more profoundly into the mystery of Trinitarian communion and, at the same time, to extend and strengthen internal relations within the human community. In this sense, «the Church is like a human family, but at the same time it is also the great family of God, through which he creates a place of communion and unity through all continents, cultures and nations ».

11. As a result, therefore, in the Church, which is the icon of the love incarnate of God, «communion and mission are profoundly connected with each other, they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, to the point that communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion».

Educating in communion and for communion

12. Because its aim is to make man more man, education can be carried out authentically only in a relational and community context. It is not by chance that the first and original educational environment is that of the natural community of the family. Schools, in their turn, take their place beside the family as an educational space that is communitarian, organic and intentional and they sustain their educational commitment, according to a logic of assistance.

13. The Catholic school, characterized mainly as an educating community, is a school for the person and of persons. In fact, it aims at forming the person in the integral unity of his being, using the tools of teaching and learning where «criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of
inspiration and models of life»[16] are formed. Above all, they are involved in the dynamics of interpersonal relations that form and vivify the school community.

14. On the other hand, because of its identity and its ecclesial roots, this community must aspire to becoming a Christian community, that is, a community of faith, able to create increasingly more profound relations of communion which are themselves educational. It is precisely the presence and life of an educational community, in which all the members participate in a fraternal communion, nourished by a living relationship with Christ and with the Church, that makes the Catholic school the environment for an authentically ecclesial experience.

Consecrated persons and the lay faithful together in schools

15. «In recent years, one of the fruits of the teaching on the Church as communion has been the growing awareness that her members can and must unite their efforts, with a view to cooperation and exchange of gifts, in order to participate more effectively in the Church’s mission. This helps to give a clearer and more complete picture of the Church herself, while rendering more effective the response to the great challenges of our time, thanks to the combined contributions of the various gifts»[17]. In this ecclesial context the mission of the Catholic school, lived as a community formed of consecrated persons and lay faithful, assumes a very special meaning and demonstrates a wealth that should be acknowledged and developed. This mission demands, from all the members of the educational community, the awareness that educators, as persons and as a community, have an unavoidable responsibility to create an original Christian style. They are required to be witnesses of Jesus Christ and to demonstrate Christian life as bearing light and meaning for everyone. Just as a consecrated person is called to testify his or her specific to a life of communion in love[18] so as to be in the scholastic community a sign, a memorial and a prophecy of the values of the Gospel[19], so too a lay educator is required to exercise «a specific mission within the Church by living, in faith, a secular in the communitarian structure of the school»[20].

16. What makes this testimony really effective is the promotion, especially within the educational community of the Catholic school, of that spirituality of communion that has been indicated as the great prospect awaiting the Church of the Third Millennium. Spirituality of communion means «an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in the faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as “those who are a part of me”»[21], and «the Christian community’s ability to make room for all the gifts of the Spirit»[22] in a relationship of reciprocity between the various ecclesial s. Even in that special expression of the Church that is the Catholic school, spirituality of communion must become the living breath of the educational community, the criterion for the full ecclesiastical development of its members and the fundamental point of reference for the implementation of a truly shared mission.

17. This spirituality of communion, therefore, must be transformed into an attitude of clear evangelical fraternity among those persons who profess charisms in Institutes of consecrated life, in movements or new communities, and in other faithful who operate in the Catholic school. This spirituality of communion holds true for the Catholic school, founded by Religious families, by dioceses, by parishes or by the lay faithful, which today takes into itself the presence of ecclesial movements. In this way, the educational community makes room for the gifts of the Spirit and acknowledges these diversities as wealth. A genuine ecclesial maturity, nourished by the encounter with Christ in the sacraments, will make it possible to develop «whether of the more traditional kind or the newer ecclesial movements […] a vitality that is God’s gift»[23], for the entire scholastic community and for the educational journey itself.

18. The Catholic professional associations form another situation of “communion”, a structured aid for the educational mission. They are a space for dialogue between families, the local institutions and the school. These associations, with their break-down at local, national and international levels, are a wealth that brings an especially fruitful contribution to the world of education as regards both motivations and professional points of view. Many associations have among their members teachers and persons in responsible positions both from the Catholic school and from other educational situations. Thanks to the pluralism of their origins, they can carry out an important function of dialogue and cooperation between institutions that differ but which have in common the same educational goals. These associative realities are required to consider how situations change, so adapting their structure and their way of operating in order to continue to be an effective and incisive presence in the sector of education. They must also intensify their reciprocal cooperation, especially in order to guarantee the achievement of their common goals, fully respecting the value and specificity of each association.

19. It is, moreover, of fundamental importance that the service carried out by the associations is stimulated by full participation in the pastoral activity of the Church. The Episcopal Conferences and their continental versions are entrusted with the role of promoting the development of the specificities of each association, favouring and encouraging more coordinated work in the educational sector.

II. A JOURNEY OF FORMATION FOR EDUCATING TOGETHER
20. Educating the young generations in communion and for communion in the Catholic school is a serious commitment that must not be taken lightly. It must be duly prepared and sustained through an initial and permanent project of formation that is able to grasp the educational challenges of the present time and to provide the most effective tools for dealing with them within the sphere of a shared mission. This implies that educators must be willing to learn and develop knowledge and be open to the renewal and updating of methodologies, but open also to spiritual and religious formation and sharing. In the context of the present day, this is essential for responding to the expectations that come from a constantly and rapidly changing world in which it is increasingly difficult to educate.

Professional formation

21. One of the fundamental requirements for an educator in a Catholic school is his or her possession of a solid professional formation. Poor quality teaching, due to insufficient professional preparation or inadequate pedagogical methods, unavoidably undermines the effectiveness of the overall formation of the student and of the cultural witness that the educator must offer.

22. The professional formation of the educator implies a vast range of cultural, psychological and pedagogical skills, characterized by autonomy, planning and evaluation capacity, creativity, openness to innovation, aptitude for updating, research and experimentation. It also demands the ability to synthesize professional skills with educational motivations, giving particular attention to the relational situation required today by the increasingly collegial exercise of the teaching profession. Moreover, in the eyes and expectations of students and their families, the educator is seen and desired as a welcoming and prepared interlocutor, able to motivate the young to a complete formation, to encourage and direct their greatest energy and skills towards a positive construction of themselves and their lives, and to be a serious and credible witness of the responsibility and hope which the school owes to society.

23. The continuous rapid transformation that affects man and today’s society in all fields leads to the precocious aging of acquired knowledge that demands new attitudes and methods. The educator is required to constantly update the contents of the subjects he teaches and the pedagogical methods he uses. The educator’s demands a ready and constant ability for renewal and adaptation. It is not, therefore, sufficient to achieve solely an initial good level of preparation; rather what is required is to maintain it and elevate it in a journey of permanent formation. Because of the variety of aspects that it involves, permanent formation demands a constant personal and communal search for its forms of achievement, as well as a formation course that is also shared and developed through exchange and comparison between consecrated and lay educators of the Catholic school.

24. It is not sufficient simply to care about professional updating in the strict sense. The synthesis between faith, culture and life that educators of the Catholic school are called to achieve is, in fact, reached «by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel […]and] in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian»[24]. This means that Catholic educators must attain a special sensitivity with regard to the person to be educated in order to grasp not only the request for growth in knowledge and skills, but also the need for growth in humanity. Thus educators must dedicate themselves «to others with heartfelt concern, enabling them to experience the richness of their humanity »[25].

25. For this reason, Catholic educators need «a “formation of the heart”: they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others», so that their educational commitment becomes «a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love (cf. Gal 5:6)»[26]. In fact, even «care for instruction means loving» (Wis 6:17). It is only in this way that they can make their teaching a school of faith, that is to say, a transmission of the Gospel, as required by the educational project of the Catholic school.

Theological and spiritual formation

26. The transmission of the Christian message through teaching implies a mastery of the knowledge of the truths of the faith and of the principles of spiritual life that require constant improvement. This is why both consecrated and lay educators of the Catholic school need to follow an opportune formational theological itinerary[27]. Such an itinerary makes it easier to combine the understanding of faith with professional commitment and Christian action. Apart from their theological formation, educators need also to cultivate their spiritual formation in order to develop their relationship with Jesus Christ and become a Master like Him. In this sense, the formational journey of both lay and consecrated educators must be combined with the moulding of the person towards greater conformity with Christ (cf. Rm 8:29) and of the educational community around Christ the Master. Moreover, the Catholic school is well aware that the community that it forms must be constantly nourished and compared with the sources from which the reason for its existence derives: the saving word of God in Sacred Scripture, in Tradition, above all liturgical and sacramental Tradition, enlightened by the Magisterium of the Church[28].

The contribution of consecrated persons to shared formation
27. Consecrated persons who profess the evangelical counsels show that they live for God and of God and become concrete witnesses to the Trinitarian love, so that people can experience the charm of divine beauty. Thus, the first and foremost contribution to the shared mission is the evangelical deep-rootedness of the lives of consecrated persons. Because of their lit journey, they possess a theological-spiritual preparation that, centred on the mystery of Christ living in the Church, needs to unceasingly progress in step with the Church that progresses in history towards the «complete truth» (Jn 16:13). Again within this exquisitely ecclesial dynamic, consecrated persons also are invited to share the fruits of their formation with the laity, especially with those who feel that they are called «[to share] specific aspects and moments of the spirituality and mission of the Institute»[29]. In this way, Institutes of consecrated life and Societies of apostolic life involved in education will manage to assure an essential openness to the Church and keep alive the spirit of the Founders and Foundresses, while also renewing a particularly precious aspect of the tradition of the Catholic school. From the very beginning, in fact, Founders and Foundresses paid special attention to the formation of the educators and they often devoted their best energies to this. Such formation, then as now, is not only aimed at strengthening professional skills, but above all, at highlighting the al dimension of the teaching profession, promoting the development of a mentality that is inspired by evangelical values, according to the specific characteristics of the Institute’s mission. Therefore, formation programmes which include regular courses of study and prayerful reflection on the founder, the charism and the constitutions of the institute are particularly beneficial »[30].

28. In many religious Institutes, sharing the educational mission with the laity has already existed for some time, having been born with the religious community present in the school. The development of “spiritual families”, of groups of “associated lay people” or other forms that permit the lay faithful to draw spiritual and apostolic fruitfulness from the original charism, appears as a positive element and one of great hope for the future of the Catholic educational mission. The contribution of lay persons to shared formation 30. While invited to deepen their as educators in the Catholic school in communion with consecrated persons, the lay faithful also are called in the common formational journey to give the original and irreplaceable contribution of their full ecclesial subjectivity. This involves, first and foremost, that they discover and live in their «life of a lay person […] a specific “wonderful” within the Church»[31]; the to «seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will»[32]. As educators they are called on to live «in faith a secular in the communitarian structure of the school: with the best possible professional qualifications, with an apostolic intention inspired by faith, for the integral formation of the human person»[33].

31. It should be emphasized that the special contribution that lay educators can bring to the formational journey derives precisely from their secular nature that makes them especially able to grasp “the signs of the times”[34]. In fact, by living their faith in the everyday conditions of their families and society, they can help the entire educational community to distinguish more precisely the evangelical values and the opposite values that these signs contain.

32. With the gradual development of their ecclesial, lay people become increasingly more aware of their participation in the educational mission of the Church. At the same time, they are also driven to carry out an active role in the spiritual animation of the community that they build together with the consecrated persons. «Communion and mutuality in the Church are never one way streets»[35]. If, in fact, in the past it was mostly priests and religious who spiritually nourished and directed the lay faithful, now it is often «the lay faithful themselves [who] can and should help priests and religious in the course of their spiritual and pastoral journey»[36].

33. In the perspective of formation, by sharing their life of prayer and opportune forms of community life, the lay faithful and consecrated persons will nourish their reflection, their sense of fraternity and generous dedication. In this common catechetical-theological and spiritual formational journey, we can see the face of a Church that presents that of Christ, praying, listening, learning and teaching in fraternal communion. Formation in the spirit of communion for educating 34. By its very nature, the Catholic school requires the presence and involvement of educators that are not only culturally and spiritually formed, but also intentionally directed at developing their community educational commitment in an authentic spirit of ecclesial communion. 35. It is also through their formational journey that educators are called on to build relationships at professional, personal and spiritual levels, according to the logic of communion. For each one this involves being open, welcoming, disposed to a deep exchange of ideas, convivial and living a fraternal life within the educational community itself. The parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) helps us to understand how each
one is called to make his or her gifts bear fruit and to welcome the riches of others within the shared educational mission.

36. The shared mission, besides, is enriched by the differences that the lay faithful and consecrated persons bring when they come together in different expressions of charism. These charisms are none other than different gifts with which the same Spirit enriches the Church and the world[37]. In the Catholic school, therefore, «by avoiding both confrontation and homologation, the reciprocity of s seems to be a particularly fertile prospect for enriching the ecclesial value of educational communities. In them the various s […] are correlative, different and mutual paths that converge to bring to fulfilment the charism of charisms: love»[38].

37. Organized according to the diversities of persons and s, but vivified by the same spirit of communion, the educational community of the Catholic school aims at creating increasingly deeper relationships of communion that are in themselves educational. Precisely in this, it «expresses the variety and beauty of the various s and the fruitfulness at educational and pedagogical levels that this contributes to the life of the school »[39].

Witness and culture of communion

38. This fruitfulness is expressed, above all, in the witness offered by the educational community. Certainly in schools, education is essentially accomplished through teaching, which is the vehicle through which ideas and beliefs are communicated. In this sense, «words are the main roads in educating the mind»[40]. This does not mean, however, that education is not accomplished in other situations of scholastic life. Thus teachers, just like every person who lives and works in a scholastic environment, educate, or they can also dis-educate, with their verbal and non-verbal behaviour. «The central figure in the work of educating, and especially in education in the faith, which is the summit of the person’s formation and is his or her most appropriate horizon, is specifically the form of witness»[41]. «More than ever this demands that witness, nourished by prayer, be the all-encompassing milieu of every Catholic school. Teachers, as witnesses, account for the hope that nourishes their own lives (cf. J Pt 3:15) by living the truth they propose to their pupils, always in reference to the one they have encountered and whose dependable goodness they have sampled with joy. And so with Saint Augustine they say: “We who speak and you who listen acknowledge ourselves as fellow disciples of a single teacher” (Sermons, 23:2)-[42]. In educational communities, therefore, the style of life has great influence, especially if the consecrated persons and the lay faithful work together, fully sharing the commitment to develop, in the school, «an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel»[43]. This requires that each one contributes the specific gift of his or her to construct a family supported by charity and by the spirit of the beatitudes.

39. By giving witness of communion, the Catholic educational community is able to educate for communion, which, as a gift that comes from above, animates the project of formation for living together in harmony and being welcoming. Not only does it cultivate in the students the cultural values that derive from the Christian vision of reality, but it also involves each one of them in the life of the community, where values are mediated by authentic interpersonal relationships among the various members that form it, and by the individual and community acceptance of them. In this way, the life of communion of the educational community assumes the value of an educational principle, of a paradigm that directs its formational action as a service for the achievement of a culture of communion. Education in the Catholic school, therefore, through the tools of teaching and learning, «is not given for the purpose of gaining power but as an aid towards a fuller understanding of, and communion with man, events and things»[44]. This principle affects every scholastic activity, the teaching and even all the after-school activities such as sport, theatre and commitment in social work, which promote the creative contribution of the students and their socialization. Educational community and al pastoral activity

40. The shared mission experienced by an educational community of lay and consecrated persons, with an active al conscience, makes the Catholic school a pedagogical place that favours al pastoral activity. The very composition of such an educational community of a Catholic school highlights the diversity and complementarity of s in the Church[45], of which it, too, is an expression. In this sense, the communitarian dynamics of the formational experience become the horizon where the student can feel what it means to be a member of the biggest community which is the Church. And to experience the Church means to personally meet the living Christ in it: «a young man can truly understand Christ’s will and his own only to the extent that he has a personal experience of Christ»[46]. In this sense, the Catholic school is committed to guiding its students to knowing themselves, their attitudes and their interior resources, educating them in spending their lives responsibly as a daily response to God’s call. Thus, the Catholic school accompanies its students in conscious choices of life: to follow their to the priesthood or to consecrated life or to accomplish their Christian in family, professional and social life.

41. In fact, the daily dialogue and confrontation with lay and consecrated educators, who offer a joyful witness of their calling, will more easily direct a young person in formation to consider his or her life as a , as a journey to be lived together, grasping the signs through which God leads to the fullness of existence.
Similarly, it will make him or her understand how necessary it is to know how to listen, to interiorize values, to learn to assume commitments and make life choices.

42. Therefore, the formation experience of the Catholic school constitutes an impressive barrier against the influence of a widespread mentality that leads young people especially «to consider themselves and their lives as a series of sensations to be experienced rather than as a work to be accomplished».[47]. At the same time, it contributes to insuring strong character formation [...] capable both of resisting the debilitating influence of relativism and of living up to the demands made on them by their Baptism »[48].

III. COMMUNION FOR OPENING ONESELF TOWARDS OTHERS

43. The communion lived by the educators of the Catholic school contributes to making the entire educational sphere a place of communion open to external reality and not just closed in on itself. Educating in communion and for communion means directing students to grow authentically as persons who «gradually learn to open themselves up to life as it is, and to create in themselves a definite attitude to life».[49] that will help them to open their views and their hearts to the world that surrounds them, able to see things critically, with a sense of responsibility and a desire for a constructive commitment. Two orders of motivation, anthropological and theological, form the basis of this opening towards the world. Anthropological and theological foundations

44. The human being, as a person, is a unity of soul and body that is dynamically realized through its opening to a relation with others. A person is formed for being-with and for-others, which is realized in love. Now, it is precisely love that drives a person to gradually broaden the range of his or her relations beyond the sphere of private life and family affections, to assume the range of universality and to embrace – at least by desire – all mankind. This same drive also contains a strong formational requirement: the requirement to learn to read the interdependence of a world that is increasingly besieged by the same problems of a global nature, as a strong ethical sign for the people of our time; like a call to emerge from that vision of man that tends to see each one as an isolated individual. It is the requirement to form man as a person: a subject that in love builds his historical, cultural, spiritual and religious identity, placing it in dialogue with other persons, in a constant exchange of gifts offered and received. Within the context of globalization, people must be formed in such a way as to respect the identity, culture, history, religion and especially the suffering and needs of others, conscious that «we are all really responsible for all».[50].

45. This requirement assumes even more importance and urgency within the sphere of the Catholic faith, experienced in the love of ecclesial communion. In fact, the Church, the place of communion and image of Trinitarian love, «is alive with the love enkindled by the Spirit of Christ».[51]. The Spirit acts as an «interior power» that harmonizes the hearts of believers with Christ’s heart and «transforms the heart of the ecclesial community, so that it becomes a witness before the world to the love of the Father».[52]. Thus, «beginning with intra-ecclesial communion, charity of its nature opens out into a service that is universal; it inspires in us a commitment to practical and concrete love for every human being».[53]. In this sense, the Church is not an end in itself, it exists to show God to the world; it exists for others.

46. In the same way, inasmuch as it is an ecclesial subject, the Catholic school acts as the Christian ferment of the world. In it, students learn to overcome individualism and to discover, in the light of faith, that they are called to live responsibly a specific to friendship with Christ and in solidarity with other persons. Basically, the school is called to be a living witness of the love of God among us. It can, moreover, become a means through which it is possible to discern, in the light of the Gospel, what is positive in the world, what needs to be transformed and what injustices must be overcome. A vigilant acceptance of the contributions of the world to the life of the school also nourishes and promotes open communion, especially in some educational environments, such as education to peace, to living together, to justice and to brotherhood. Builders of open communion

47. Sharing the same educational mission with a diversity of persons, states and life is undoubtedly a strong point of the Catholic school in its participation in the missionary life of the Church, in the opening of ecclesial communion towards the world. In this respect, a first precious contribution comes from communion between lay and consecrated faithful in the school.

Lay persons who, because of their family and social relationships, live immersed in the world, can promote the opening of the educational community to a constructive relationship with cultural, civil and political institutions, with various social groups – from the most informal ones to those most organized – present in the territory. The Catholic school also assures its presence in the locality through its active cooperation with other educational institutions, especially with Catholic centres for higher studies, with which they share a special ecclesial bond, and with local bodies and various social agencies. In this sphere, faithful to its inspiration, it contributes to building a network of relationships that helps students to develop their sense of belonging, and society itself to develop a sense of solidarity.

Consecrated persons also participate, as «true signs of Christ in the world».[54], in this opening to the outside world by sharing the gifts they bear. They must demonstrate especially that religious consecration has much to say to every culture in that it helps to reveal the truth of the human being. The witness of their evangelical
life must reveal that «holiness is the highest humanizing proposal of man and of history; it is a project that everyone on earth can make his or her own».[55]
48. Another pillar of open communion is formed by the relationship between the Catholic school and the families that choose it for the education of their children. This relationship appears as full participation of the parents in the life of the educational community, not only because of their primary responsibility in the education of their children, but also by virtue of their sharing in the identity and project that characterize the Catholic school and which they must know and share with a readiness that comes from within. It is precisely because of this that the educational community identifies the decisive space for cooperation between school and family in the educational project, to be made known and implemented with a spirit of communion, through the contribution of everyone, discerning responsibilities, roles and competences. Parents in particular are required to enrich the communion around this project, making the family climate that must characterize the educating community more alive and explicit. For this reason, in willingly welcoming parents’ cooperation, Catholic schools consider essential to their mission the service of permanent formation offered to families, to support them in their educating task and to develop an increasingly closer bond between the values proposed by the school and those proposed by the family.
49. The Christian-inspired associations and groups that unite the parents of Catholic schools represent a further bridge between the educational community and the world that surrounds it. These associations and groups can strengthen the bond of reciprocity between school and society, maintaining the educational community open to the wider social community and, at the same time, creating an awareness in society and its institutions of the presence and action carried out by Catholic schools in the territory.
50. At an ecclesial level also, the communion experienced within the Catholic school can and must be open to an enriching exchange in a more extensive communion with the parish, the diocese, ecclesial movements and the universal Church. This means that lay persons (educators and parents) and consecrated persons belonging to the educational community must take a meaningful part, even outside the walls of the Catholic school, in the life of the local Church. The members of the diocesan clergy and the lay persons of the local Christian community, who do not always have an adequate knowledge of the Catholic school, must discover it as a school of the Christian community, a living expression of the same Church of Christ to which they belong.
51. If lived authentically and profoundly, the ecclesial dimension of the educational community of the Catholic school cannot be limited to a relationship with the local Christian community. Almost by natural extension, it tends to open onto the horizons of the universal Church. In this sense, the international dimension of many religious families offers consecrated persons the enrichment of communion with those who share the same mission in various parts of the world. At the same time, it offers a witness to the living strength of a charism that unites, over and above all, differences. The richness of this communion in the universal Church can and must be shared, for example, through regional or world level formational occasions and meetings. These should also involve lay persons (educators and parents) who, because of their state of life, share the educational mission of the relative charisms.
52. Structured in this way, the Catholic school appears as an educational community in which ecclesial and missionary communion develops in depth and grows in breadth. A communion can be experienced in it that becomes an effective witness to the presence of Christ alive in the educational community gathered together in His name (cf. Matt 18:20) and that, precisely for this reason, opens to a deeper understanding of reality and a more convinced commitment to renewal of the world. In fact, «if we think and live by virtue of communion with Christ, then our eyes will be opened»[56], and we will understand that «real revolution, the decisive change in the world, comes from God ».[57].
53. The communion experienced in the educational community, animated and sustained by lay and consecrated persons joined together in the same mission, makes the Catholic school a community environment filled with the spirit of the Gospel. Now, this community environment appears as a privileged place for the formation of young people in the construction of a world based on dialogue and the search for communion, rather than in contrast; on the mutual acceptance of differences rather than on their opposition. In this way, with its educational project taking inspiration from ecclesial communion and the civilization of love, the Catholic school can contribute considerably to illuminating the minds of many, so that «there will arise a generation of new persons, the moulders of a new humanity»[58].

CONCLUSION

54. «In a world where cultural challenge is the first, the most provocative and the most effect-bearing»[59], the Catholic school is well aware of the onerous commitments it is called to face and it preserves its utmost importance even in present circumstances.
55. When it is animated by lay and consecrated persons that live the same educational mission in sincere unity, the Catholic school shows the face of a community that tends towards an increasingly deeper communion. This communion knows how to be welcoming with regard to people as they mature, making them feel, through the maternal solicitude of the Church, that God carries the life of each son and daughter of His in His heart. It knows how to involve young people in a global formation experience, to direct and accompany, in the light of the Good News, their search for meaning, even in unusual and often tortuous forms, but with an alarming urgency. A communion, finally, that inasmuch as it is based on Christ, acknowledges Him and announces Him to each and everyone as the only true Master (cf. Matt 23:8).

56. In presenting this document to those who live the educational mission in the Church, we entrust all Catholic schools to the Virgin Mary, Mother and educator of Christ and of persons, so that, like the servants at the wedding of Cana, they may humbly follow her loving invitation: «Do whatever He tells you» (Jn 2:5) and may they, thus, be together with the whole Church, «the home and the school of communion»[60] for the men and women of our time.

sThe Holy Father, during the Audience granted to the undersigned Prefect, approved this document and authorized its publication.
Rome, 8th September 2007, Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
Zenon Card. Grocholewski
Prefect
Msgr. Angelo Vincenzo Zani
Undersecretary

[6] In this document reference is made to the priests, men and women religious and persons who, with different forms of consecration, choose the path of following Christ to wholeheartedly devote themselves to him (Cf. John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation Vita consecrata (25th March 1996), nos. 1-12: AAS 88 (1996), 377-385.


Ibid., no. 46: 299. Ibid., no. 46: 300.


Ibid.


Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Starting Afresh from Christ*, no. 31.


Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Starting Afresh from Christ*, no. 31.


Ibid., no. 43.


Vatican Council II, Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum educationis*, no. 8: AAS 58 (1966), 734.


Ibid., no. 31.


Ibid., no. 19: 233.


**Abbrevs:**


John Paul II, Speech to Parents, Students and Teachers of Catholic Schools (23rd November 1991), n. 6: AAS 84 (1992), 1136.

Congregation for Catholic Education
(for Institutes of Study)

Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools
Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love
Vatican City 2013

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Introduction

It is a fact that today’s society has a multicultural make-up, accentuated by globalization. The overlapping presence of different cultures is a great resource, as long as the encounter between those different cultures is seen as a source of mutual enrichment. However, significant problems can arise if multicultural society is seen as a threat to social cohesion, or as a threat to the protection and exercise of rights pertaining to individuals or groups. It is not easy to balance and harmonize previously established cultures and new cultures, as the two often demonstrate usages and customs that are mutually opposed. For some time now, multicultural society has been an object of concern for both governments and international organizations. In the Church, too, institutions and organizations of education and study, on both the international level and on national and local levels, have started to study the phenomenon and undertake specific projects in the field.

Education contains a central challenge for the future: to allow various cultural expressions[1] to co-exist and to promote dialogue so as to foster a peaceful society. These aims are achieved in various stages: (1) discovering the multicultural nature of one’s own situation; (2) overcoming prejudices by living and working in harmony; and (3) educating oneself “by means of the other” to a global vision and a sense of citizenship. Fostering encounters between different people helps to create mutual understanding, although it ought not to mean a loss of one’s own identity.

Schools have a great responsibility in this field, called as they are to develop intercultural dialogue in their pedagogical vision. This is a difficult goal, not easy to achieve, and yet it is necessary. Education, by its nature, requires both openness to other cultures, without the loss of one’s own identity, and an acceptance of the other person, to avoid the risk of a limited culture, closed in on itself. Therefore, through their experience of school and study, young people must acquire theoretical and practical tools for amassing greater knowledge both of others and of themselves, as well as greater knowledge of the values both of their own culture and of other cultures. They can achieve this by open-mindedly comparing cultures. In this way, they will be helped to understand differences in a way that does not breed conflict, but
allows those differences to become opportunities for mutual enrichment, leading to harmony.

This is the context in which Catholic schools are called to give their contribution, drawing on their pedagogical and cultural traditions, and in light of their sound pedagogical vision. Attention to the intercultural aspect of life is not new to the tradition of Catholic schools, as these are used to accepting students coming from various cultural and religious backgrounds. However, what is required in this field today is courageous and innovative fidelity to one’s own pedagogical vision.[2] This is true wherever Catholic schools are found, both in countries where the Catholic community is a minority and in countries where the tradition of Catholicism is more rooted. In the former, one needs the ability to witness and dialogue, without falling into the trap of that facile relativism which holds that all religions are the same and are merely manifestations of an Absolute that no-one can truly know. In the latter group of countries, what is important is to give answers to the many young people “without a religious home”, the result of an ever more secularized society.

The Congregation for Catholic Education remains faithful to the task entrusted to it after the Second Vatican Council: to deepen the principles of Catholic education. Hence, the Congregation wishes to offer its own contribution to encouraging and guiding education, in schools and Catholic educational institutions, along the path to intercultural dialogue. Therefore, this document is primarily aimed at: (1) parents, who have the first and natural responsibility for the education of their children, as well as organizations that represent families in schools; (2) head teachers, teachers and other personnel in Catholic schools who, together with the students, make up the educational community; and (3) national and diocesan episcopal commissions, as well as religious institutes, bishops, ecclesial movements, associations of the faithful, and other organizations that exercise pastoral care for education. We are also pleased to offer this document as a means of dialogue and reflection to all who are concerned for the education of the whole person, for the building up of a peaceful society marked by solidarity.

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

Culture and Plurality of Cultures

1. Culture is the particular expression of human beings, their specific way of being and organizing their presence in the world. Using the resources of their cultural heritage, which they possess from the moment of their birth, people can thus develop in a serene and balanced way, in a healthy relationship with their environment and with other human beings. Their ties with their own culture are necessary and vital; yet these ties do not force people into closing in on themselves in a self-referential way. In fact, people’s cultural links are entirely compatible with encountering and knowing other cultures. Indeed, cultural differences are a richness, to be understood as expressions of the human race’s fundamental unity.

2. Globalization is one of the epochal phenomena of our time, and one which particularly touches upon the world of culture. It has shown the plurality of cultures that characterizes human experience, and facilitates communication among various areas of the world, involving all facets of life. This is not just something theoretical or general: in fact, every individual is
constantly affected by information and news that arrive, in real time, from every corner of the world. He or she encounters, in everyday life, a variety of cultures, and thus experiences an increasing sense of belonging to what can be called the “global village”.

3. Yet, this great variety of cultures is no proof for pre-existing ancestral divisions. Rather, it is the result of a continuous mixing of populations, denoted as the “mixed-race” factor, or “hybridization” of the human family in the course of its history. This means that there is no such thing as a “pure” culture. Different conditions of environment, history and society have introduced wide diversity within the one human community, in which, however, “each individual man is truly a person. His is a nature that is endowed with intelligence and free will. As such he has rights and duties, which together flow as a direct consequence from his nature. These rights and duties are universal and inviolable, and therefore altogether inalienable.”[3]

4. The current phenomenon of multiculturism, bound up with the advent of globalization, today risks accentuating, in problematic ways, the “diversity in unity” that characterizes people’s cultural outlook. In fact, the ever closer encounter between various cultures, in itself a dynamic process, creates much ambivalence. On the one hand, there is a push towards various forms of greater cultural uniformity. On the other hand, the specific nature of different cultures is exalted. One wonders what will be the fate of the specific identity of each culture, given the pressures of human migration, mass communication, the internet, social networks and, above all, the enormous expansion of customs and products resulting in a “westernization” of the world. However, although this inexorable tendency to cultural uniformity remains strong, there are also many elements, alive and active, of variation and distinction between groups. These often provoke reactions of fundamentalism and self-referential closing in on oneself. Thus, pluralism and the variety of traditions, customs and languages – which of their nature produce mutual enrichment and development – can lead to an exaggeration of individual identity, flaring up in clashes and conflicts.

5. Yet, it would be wrong to hold that ethnic and cultural differences are the cause of all the many conflicts that disturb the world. In truth, these conflicts have political, economic, ethnic, religious and territorial causes; and are certainly not exclusively, or primarily, cultural conflicts. However, cultural, historical and symbolic elements are used to stir people up, to the point of encouraging violence rooted in elements of economic competition, social contrasts and political absolutism.

6. The ever increasingly multicultural nature of society and the risk that, contrary to their true nature, cultures themselves may be used as elements of antagonism and conflict are reasons for encouraging even more the build up of profound intercultural relationships among both individuals and groups. In this light, schools are privileged places for intercultural dialogue.

Culture and Religion

7. Another aspect to be considered is the relationship between culture and religion. “Culture is broader than religion. According to one concept religion can be said to represent the transcendent dimension of culture and in a certain way its soul. Religions have certainly contributed to the progress of culture and the construction of a more humane society.”[4]
Religion is inculturated, and culture becomes fertile ground for a richer humanity that measures up to its specific and profound to be open to others and to God. Therefore, “it is time … to understand in a more profound way that the generating nucleus of every authentic culture is constituted by its approach to the mystery of God, in whom alone does a social order centred on the dignity and responsibility of the human person find its unshakeable foundation.”[5]

8. In general, religion presents itself as the meaningful answer to the fundamental questions posed by men and women: “Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men.”[6] This characteristic of religions demands that they dialogue not only among themselves, but also with the various forms of atheistic, or non-religious, interpretations of the human person and history, since these latter are also faced with the same questions about meaning. Today, states and civil society, too, see how fundamental is the need for interreligious dialogue – meaning the broadest exchange among both individuals and communities, each with a different viewpoint. To avoid facile reductions and distortions in this sensitive field, it is opportune to highlight the following considerations.

9. Western society, which is ever more marked by multiculturalism, has an accelerating process of secularization, with the danger of an extreme marginalization of religious experience, seen as only being legitimate within the private sphere. More generally, in the dominant mindset, the anthropological question is quietly eliminated, i.e. the question about the full dignity and destiny of human beings. Thus, the aim is pursued of eradicating from culture all religious expression. However, awareness is lacking of how precious the religious dimension is for fruitful, proficient intercultural dialogue. In addition to this general mindset, there are other notable phenomena that also risk undervaluing the importance for culture of the religious experience. One can think of the spread of sects and of New Age, the latter being so much identified with modern culture that it is almost no longer considered a novelty.[7]

10. Religion emphasizes ultimate and definitive truths and, therefore, truths that lie at the basis of meaning, from which the prevalent Western culture seems to be distanced. In any case, religion is a decisive contribution to the building up of social community, in respect for the common good and with the intention of promoting every human being. Therefore, those who wield political power are called to judge carefully the possibilities for emancipation and universal inclusion demonstrated and effected by each culture and each religion. An important criterion for such evaluation is the effective capacity that the religions have for showing the worth of the whole person and of all people. Christianity, the religion of God with a human face,[8] carries a similar criterion within itself.

11. Religion can make its contribution to intercultural dialogue “only if God has a place in the public realm.”[9] “Denying the right to profess one's religion in public and the right to bring the truths of faith to bear upon public life has negative consequences for true development. The exclusion of religion from the public square — and, at the other extreme, religious fundamentalism — hinders an encounter between persons and their collaboration for the progress of humanity. Public life is sapped of its motivation and politics takes on a domineering and aggressive character. Human rights risk being ignored either because they are robbed of their transcendental foundation or because personal freedom is not acknowledged. Secularism and fundamentalism exclude the possibility of fruitful dialogue and effective cooperation between reason and religious faith. Reason always stands in need of being purified by faith: this also holds true for political reason, which must not consider itself omnipotent. For its part, religion always needs to be purified by reason in order to show its authentically
human face. Any breach in this dialogue comes only at an enormous price to human development."[10] Faith and reason, therefore, must recognize each other and enrich each other.

12. In the dialogue between culture and religions, due weight must be given to the discussion between faith and the various forms of atheism and non-religious humanist viewpoints. At the centre of this discussion must be the search for whatever favours the integral development of the whole person and of all people, without becoming bogged down in a sterile partisan clash. It also needs society to recognize the individual’s right to his or her own identity. The Church, for her part, with the love that draws from the sources of the Gospel, following the pattern of the mystery of the Word’s Incarnation, will continue to “proclaim that man deserves honour and love for himself and must be respected in his dignity. Thus, brothers must learn again to call each other brothers, to respect each other, to understand each other, so that man himself can survive and grow in dignity, in freedom and in honour. The more he suffocates the dialogue of cultures, the more the modern world is caught up in conflicts that risk being lethal for the future of the human civilization. Beyond prejudices, cultural barriers, divisions of race, language, religion and ideology, men must recognize each other as brothers and sisters, accepting each other in their diversity.”[11]

The Catholic Religion and Other Religions

13. It is within this context that the dialogue among the various religions takes on a particular shape. It has its own profile, and particularly emphasizes the expertise of each religion’s authorities. Naturally, interreligious dialogue, situated within the religious dimension of culture, touches upon some aspects of intercultural education – though not all, since the two things are not identical.

Globalization has increased the interdependence of peoples, with their different traditions and religions. In this regard, there are those who affirm that differences are by their nature causes of division and, therefore, at the most to be tolerated. Others even believe that religions should simply be silenced. “Rather, [differences] provide a wonderful opportunity for people of different religions to live together in profound respect, esteem and appreciation, encouraging one another in the ways of God.”[12]

In this regard, the Catholic Church feels that the need for dialogue is ever more important. Such a dialogue, starting from an awareness of one’s own faith identity, can help people to enter into contact with other religions. Dialogue means not just talking, but includes all beneficial and constructive interreligious relationships, with both individuals and communities of other beliefs, thus arriving at mutual understanding.[13]

Dialogue with both individuals and communities of other religions is motivated by the fact that we are all creatures of God. God is at work in every human being who, through reason, has perceived the mystery of God and recognizes universal values. Moreover, dialogue finds its raison d’être in searching for the patrimony of common ethical values found within the different religious traditions. In this way, believers can contribute to affirming the common good, justice and peace. Therefore, “since many are quick to point out the readily apparent differences between religions, as believers or religious persons we are presented with the challenge to proclaim with clarity what we share in common.”[14]

Furthermore, the dialogue cultivated by the Catholic Church with other churches and Christian
communities does not stop at what we have in common, but tends towards the highest goal of rediscovering lost unity.[15] Ecumenism has as its goal the visible unity of Christians, for which Jesus prayed for his disciples: Ut omnes unum sint, that they may all be one (Jn 17: 21).

14. There are various ways that believers can dialogue: there is the dialogue of life, with its sharing of joys and sorrows; the dialogue of works, collaborating to promote the development of men and women; theological dialogue, when this is possible, with the study of each other’s religious heritage; and the dialogue of religious experience.

15. However, this dialogue is not a compromise, but rather a framework for reciprocal witnessing among believers who belong to different religions. In this way, one gets to know the other’s religion more deeply and better, as well as the ethical behaviours that derive from it. From direct and objective knowledge of the other person, and of the religious and ethical expectations that derive from his or her religious beliefs and practice, grow respect and reciprocal esteem, mutual understanding, trust and friendship. “In order to be true, this dialogue must be clear, avoiding relativism and syncretism, while at the same time it must be marked by sincere respect for others and by a spirit of reconciliation and fraternity.”[16]

16. Clarity in dialogue means especially faithfulness to one’s own Christian identity. “Christianity proposes Jesus of Nazareth. He, we believe, is the eternal Logos who became flesh in order to reconcile man to God and reveal the underlying reason of all things. It is he whom we bring to the forum of interreligious dialogue. The ardent desire to follow in his footsteps spurs Christians to open their minds and hearts in dialogue (cf. Lk 10:25-37; Jn 4:7-26).”[17] The Catholic Church proclaims that “Jesus Christ has a significance and a value for the human race and its history, which are unique and singular, proper to him alone, exclusive, universal, and absolute. Jesus is, in fact, the Word of God made man for the salvation of all.”[18] Therefore, this being the indispensable condition for interreligious dialogue, it is also the indispensable condition for adequate intercultural education which is not divorced from one’s own religious identity.

17. Catholic schools and institutes of higher education are important places for this education. What marks an educational institution as being “Catholic” is its addressing the Christian concept of reality, “its Catholic quality, namely its reference to a Christian concept of life centred on Jesus Christ.”[19] Therefore, “Catholic schools are at one and the same time places of evangelization, well-rounded education, inculturation and initiation to the dialogue of life among young people of different religions and social backgrounds.”[20] Pope Francis, addressing an Albanian school, which “after the long years of repression of religious institutions, resumed its activity in 1994, accepting and educating Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim children as well as several pupils born into agnostic milieus”, declared that “the school is thus becoming a place for dialogue and serene exchanges to encourage attitudes of respect, listening, friendship and a spirit of collaboration.”[21]

18. In this context, “education must make students aware of their own roots and provide points of reference which allow them to define their own personal place in the world.”[22] All children and young people must have the same possibilities for arriving at the knowledge of their own religion as well as of elements that characterize other religions. The knowledge of other ways of thinking and believing conquers fears and enriches ways of thinking about the other person and his or her spiritual traditions. Therefore, teachers are duty-bound always to respect the human person who seeks the truth of his or her own being, as well as to appreciate and spread the great cultural traditions that are open to the transcendent and that articulate the
desire for freedom and truth.

19. This knowledge is not sufficient in itself, but opens up to dialogue. The more abundant the knowledge, the more it can sustain dialogue and co-existence with people who profess other religions. In the context of an open dialogue among cultures, different religions can and must make a decisive contribution to forming an awareness of common values.

20. In turn, dialogue, the fruit of knowledge, must be cultivated for people to co-exist and build up a civilization of love. It is not a matter of playing down the truth, but of realizing the aim of education which “has a particular role to play in building a more united and peaceful world. It can help to affirm that integral humanism, open to life’s ethical and religious dimension, which appreciates the importance of understanding and showing esteem for other cultures and the spiritual values present in them.”[23] Within intercultural education, this dialogue aims “to eliminate tensions and conflicts, and potential confrontations by a better understanding among the various religious cultures of any given region. It may contribute to purifying cultures from any dehumanizing elements, and thus be an agent of transformation. It can also help to uphold certain traditional cultural values which are under threat from modernity and the levelling down which indiscriminate internationalization may bring with it.”[24] “Dialogue is very important for our own maturity, because in confronting another person, confronting other cultures, and also confronting other religions in the right way, we grow; we develop and mature … This dialogue is what creates peace”, affirmed Pope Francis.[25]

CHAPTER II

APPROACHES TO PLURALISM

Different Interpretations

21. Pluralism is a plain fact in today’s world. The question, then, is to evaluate dialogue’s potential, as well as the potential within the integration of different cultures. The path of dialogue becomes possible and fruitful when based on the awareness of each individual’s dignity and of the unity of all people in a common humanity, with the aim of sharing and building up together a common destiny.[26] Furthermore, the situation of the world today, as well as every culture’s, means choosing intercultural dialogue as a guiding concept, open to the future, when faced with the various interpretations of pluralism advanced and put into effect in society, politics and (with regard to our field of interest) education.

The reality of pluralism has been answered by two principal approaches: relativism and assimilation. Both are incomplete, though each has helpful points.

The Relativistic Approach

22. Being aware of the relative nature of cultures and opting for relativism are two profoundly different things. To recognize that reality is historical and changeable does not necessarily lead to a relativistic approach. Relativism, on the other hand, respects differences, but also separates them out into autonomous spheres, considering them as isolated and impermeable and making dialogue impossible. Relativistic “neutrality”, in fact, endorses the absolute nature of every culture within its own sphere, and impedes the use of metacultural critical judgement, which would otherwise allow for universal interpretations. The relativistic model is founded
on the value of tolerance, but limits itself to accepting the other person, excluding the possibility of dialogue and recognition of each other in mutual transformation. Such an idea of tolerance, in fact, leads to a substantially passive meaning of relationship with whoever has a different culture. It does not demand that one take an interest in the needs and sufferings of others, nor that their reasons may be heard; there is no self-comparison with their values, and even less sense of developing love for them.

23. An approach of this kind is at the basis of the political and social model of multiculturalism. This model offers no adequate solutions for co-existence, and fails to encourage true intercultural dialogue. “First, one may observe a cultural eclecticism that is often assumed uncritically: cultures are simply placed alongside one another and viewed as substantially equivalent and interchangeable. This easily yields to a relativism that does not serve true intercultural dialogue; on the social plane, cultural relativism has the effect that cultural groups coexist side by side, but remain separate, with no authentic dialogue and therefore with no true integration.”[27]

The Assimilation Approach

24. What is called the assimilation approach is certainly no more satisfying. Rather than indifference towards the other culture, this approach is characterized by the demand for the other person to adapt. An example would be when, in a country with mass immigration, the presence of the foreigner is accepted only on the condition that he renounce his identity and cultural roots so as to embrace those of the receiving country. In educational models based on assimilation, the other person must abandon his cultural references, to take on those of another group or of the receiving country. Exchange is reduced to the mere insertion of minority cultures in the majority one, with little or no attention to the other person’s culture of origin.

25. More generally, the assimilation approach is advanced by a culture with universal pretensions, which seeks to impose its own cultural values by means of its economic, commercial, military and cultural influence. Here the danger is evident: “that of cultural levelling and indiscriminate acceptance of types of conduct and life-styles.”[28]

The Intercultural Approach

26. Even the international community recognizes that the traditional approaches to dealing with cultural barriers in our society have shown themselves to be ineffective. Yet, how to overcome the barriers raised by positions incapable of giving a good interpretation to the multicultural factor? Opting for the logic of intercultural dialogue means not limiting oneself to strategies for the functional insertion of immigrants into the majority culture, nor to compensatory measures of a special nature. Indeed, it must be considered that the problem is not just one arising from immigration emergencies, but is the consequence of increased human mobility.

27. In fact, in a meaningful educational perspective, “today the possibilities of interaction between cultures have increased significantly, giving rise to new openings for intercultural dialogue: a dialogue that, if it is to be effective, has to set out from a deep-seated knowledge of
the specific identity of the various dialogue partners.”[29] From this point of view, diversity ceases to be seen as a problem. Instead, a community characterized by pluralism is seen as a resource, a chance for opening up the whole system to all differences of origin, relationships between men and women, social status and educational history.

28. This approach is based on a dynamic idea of culture, which neither is closed in on itself nor celebrates diversity with stereotypes or folkloristic representations. Intercultural strategies function when they avoid separating individuals into autonomous and impermeable cultural spheres; they rather should promote encounter, dialogue and mutual transformation, so as to allow people to co-exist and deal with possible conflict. In summary, the goal is to construct a new intercultural approach, which aims at realizing an integration of cultures in mutual recognition.

CHAPTER III

SOME FOUNDATIONS FOR AN INTERCULTURAL APPROACH

The Teaching of the Church

29. The intercultural aspect is undoubtedly part of the heritage of Christianity, which has a “universal”. In fact, in the history of Christianity there is the thread of dialogue with the world, in the search for greater fraternity among people. In the tradition of the Church, the intercultural perspective is not limited to appreciating differences, but helps to build up mankind’s peaceful co-existence. This is particularly necessary in complex societies, where the risks of relativism and cultural uniformity must be overcome.

30. Numerous Church teachings, especially in the Second Vatican Council and in subsequent Magisterium, have reflected on culture and its importance for the complete development of human potential.

The Second Vatican Council, in considering the importance of culture, asserted that there is no truly human experience without the context of a specific culture. In fact, “man comes to a true and full humanity only through culture.”[30] Every culture is a way of giving expression to the transcendental aspect of life; this includes reflection on the mystery of the world and, in particular, on the mystery of humanity. The essential meaning of culture consists “in the fact that it is a characteristic of human life as such. Man lives a truly human life thanks to culture. Human life is culture in the sense also that man is marked out and differentiated by it from all that exists elsewhere in the visible world: man cannot exist outside of culture. Man always lives in accordance with a culture that belongs to him and which, in turn, creates among men a bond that is also proper to them, determining the inter-human and social character of human existence.”[31]

31. Moreover, the term culture indicates all those means by which “man develops and perfects his many bodily and spiritual qualities; he strives by his knowledge and his labour, to bring the world itself under his control. He renders social life more human both in the family and the civic community, through improvement of customs and institutions. Throughout the course of time he expresses, communicates and conserves in his works, great spiritual experiences and desires, that they might be of advantage to the progress of many, even of the whole human family.”[32] Therefore, this includes both the subjective aspect – behaviours, values and
traditions that each person takes on – and the objective aspect, that is, the works of individuals.

32. Consequently, “culture has necessarily a historical and social aspect and … often assumes a sociological and ethnological sense. According to this sense we speak of a plurality of cultures. Different styles of life and multiple scales of values arise from the diverse manner of using things, of labouring, of expressing oneself, of practicing religion, of forming customs, of establishing laws and juridic institutions, of cultivating the sciences, the arts and beauty. Thus the customs handed down to it form the patrimony proper to each human community. It is also in this way that there is formed the definite, historical milieu which enfolds the man of every nation and age and from which he draws the values which permit him to promote civilization.”[33]

Cultures show their nature to be profoundly dynamic and historical; they undergo changes in time. Nevertheless, beneath their more superficial changes, they show significant common elements. “Cultural diversity should therefore be understood within the broader horizon of the unity of the human race”, in the light of which one can grasp the profound meaning of the very differences, instead of “the radicalization of identity which makes cultures resistant to any beneficial influence from outside.”[34]

33. Therefore, intercultural relations are born not out of a static idea of culture, but of its openness. It is above all the potential universality of every culture that establishes dialogue among cultures.[35] Consequently, “dialogue between cultures … emerges as an intrinsic demand of human nature itself, as well as of culture … based upon the recognition that there are values which are common to all cultures because they are rooted in the nature of the person … It is necessary to foster people’s awareness of these shared values, in order to nurture that intrinsically universal cultural ‘soil’ which makes for fruitful and constructive dialogue.”[36]

The openness to higher values common to the entire human race – based on truth and, moreover, universal, such as justice, peace, the dignity of the human person, openness to the transcendent, freedom of conscience and of religion – implies an idea of culture as being a contribution to a broader awareness of humanity. This is opposed to the tendency existing in the history of cultures, to build particular little worlds that are closed and introverted.

Theological Foundations

34. Defining human beings through their relationships with other human beings and with nature does not offer a complete answer to the unavoidable, fundamental question: who is man really? Christian anthropology places the basis of men and women and their ability to create culture in their being created in the image and likeness of God, a Trinity of Persons in communion. In fact, the patient pedagogy of God has been revealed to us from the very creation of the world. Throughout salvation history, God educates his people to covenant – that is, to a living relationship – and to open themselves ever more to all peoples. This covenant has its high-point in Jesus, who, by means of his death and resurrection, has made it “new and eternal”. From that moment, the Holy Spirit continues to teach the mission that Christ has entrusted to his Church: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations … teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20).

“Every human being is called to communion because of his nature which is created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26-27). Therefore, within the sphere of biblical anthropology, man is not an isolated individual, but a person: a being who is essentially relational. The communion to which man is called always involves a double dimension, that is
to say vertical (communion with God) and horizontal (communion with people). It is fundamental that communion be acknowledged as a gift of God, as the fruit of the divine initiative fulfilled in the Easter mystery.”[37]

35. The vertical axis of the individual’s communion with God is authentically realized by following the Way that is Jesus Christ. In fact, “only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light … Christ … fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear.”[38] At the same time, this vertical axis grows in the Church which is “in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race.”[39] “With the richness of the salvation wrought by Christ, the walls separating the different cultures collapsed. God’s promise in Christ now became a universal offer … extended to all as a heritage from which each might freely draw. From their different locations and traditions all are called in Christ to share in the unity of the family of God’s children.”[40]

36. The horizontal axis of communion, to which men and women are called, is realized in interpersonal relationships.[41] Personal identity matures to the extent that people live such relationships in an authentic manner. Relationships with other people and with God are, therefore, fundamental, because through them men and women increase their own worth. Relationships among peoples, too, among cultures and among nations strengthen and enhance those who enter into relationship. In fact, “the human community does not absorb the individual, annihilating his autonomy, as happens in the various forms of totalitarianism, but rather values him all the more because the relation between individual and community is a relation between one totality and another. Just as a family does not submerge the identities of its individual members, just as the Church rejoices in each new creation (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17) incorporated by Baptism into her living Body, so too the unity of the human family does not submerge the identities of individuals, peoples and cultures, but makes them more transparent to each other and links them more closely in their legitimate diversity.”[42]

37. The experience of intercultural relationships, just like human development, is profoundly understood only in light of the inclusion of individuals and peoples in the one human family, founded on solidarity and on the fundamental values of justice and peace. “This perspective is illuminated in a striking way by the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity within the one divine Substance. The Trinity is absolute unity insofar as the three divine Persons are pure relationality. The reciprocal transparency among the divine Persons is total and the bond between each of them complete, since they constitute a unique and absolute unity. God desires to incorporate us into this reality of communion as well: ‘that they may be one even as we are one’ (Jn 17:22). The Church is a sign and instrument of this unity. Relationships between human beings throughout history cannot but be enriched by reference to this divine model. In particular, in the light of the revealed mystery of the Trinity, we understand that true openness does not mean loss of individual identity but profound interpenetration.”[43] The basis that Christian tradition gives to the unity of the human race is found primarily in a metaphysical and theological interpretation of the “humanum” in which relationality is an essential element.[44]

Anthropological Foundations

38. The authentically intercultural dimension can be pursued due to its anthropological
foundation. In fact, the encounter with another always happens between two flesh-and-blood individuals. Cultures take on life and continually redraw themselves starting from the encounter with the other person. To go out from oneself and consider the world from a different point of view is not a denial of oneself, but, on the contrary, is necessary for enhancing one’s own identity. In other words, interdependency and globalization among peoples and cultures must be centred on the human person. The end of last century’s ideologies, just like the spread today of ideologies that are closed to transcendent and religious reality, show how strong is the need to bring back central-stage the question about man and cultures. One cannot deny that men and women of our age, although progressing in many fields, have greater difficulty in defining who they are. The Second Vatican Council very well described this situation: “About himself [man] has expressed, and continues to express, many divergent and even contradictory opinions. In these he often exalts himself as the absolute measure of all things or debases himself to the point of despair. The result is doubt and anxiety.”[45] The most significant indicator of this loss is the loneliness of men and women today. “One of the deepest forms of poverty a person can experience is isolation. If we look closely at other kinds of poverty, including material forms, we see that they are born from isolation, from not being loved or from difficulties in being able to love. Poverty is often produced by a rejection of God’s love, by man’s basic and tragic tendency to close in on himself, thinking himself to be self-sufficient or merely an insignificant and ephemeral fact, a ‘stranger’ in a random universe. Man is alienated when he is alone, when he is detached from reality, when he stops thinking and believing in a foundation. All of humanity is alienated when too much trust is placed in merely human projects, ideologies and false utopias. Today humanity appears much more interactive than in the past: this shared sense of being close to one another must be transformed into true communion. The development of peoples depends, above all, on a recognition that the human race is a single family working together in true communion, not simply a group of subjects who happen to live side by side.”[46]

39. Therefore, in order to establish intercultural relationships correctly, there needs to be a sound anthropological foundation. This latter must take as its starting-point the fact that human beings are, in their most intimate nature, relational beings, who can neither live nor develop their potential without being in relationship with others. Men and women are not just individuals, like self-sufficient monads, but are open and grow towards that which is different from them. Man is a person, a being in relationship, who understands himself in relationship with others. Moreover, his relationships arrive at their most profound level if they are based on love. Every individual aspires to love so as to feel fully realized, both in the love received and the capacity to give love in return. “Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it … In this dimension man finds again the greatness, dignity and value that belong to his humanity.”[47]

40. The idea of love, in different forms, has accompanied the history of the various cultures. In ancient Greece, the most frequently used term was eros, love as passion, associated in general with sensual desire. Also used were the terms philia, often understood as love as friendship, and agape, to designate a high esteem towards the thing or person loved. The Biblical and Christian tradition underlines the oblative aspect of love. Yet, over and beyond these distinctions, there is a profound unity in diversity within the reality of love, which impels people to “an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of
41. Love, when freed from egoism, is the way par excellence to fraternity and reciprocal help towards perfection among people. Love is an irrepressible desire, inscribed into the nature of every man and woman on earth. Not to receive love leads perforce to a lack of meaning and to desperation, and can lead to destructive behaviours. Love is the individual’s true nobility, above and beyond his or her belonging to any culture, ethnic group, social stratum or position. It is the strongest, most authentic and most desired bond, which unites people among each other and makes them able to listen to each other, to pay attention to each other and to give other people the esteem they deserve. One can say that love is the method and goal of life itself. It is the true treasure, sought and witnessed to, in various ways and in various contexts, by thinkers, saints, people of faith and charismatic figures who, throughout the centuries, have been living examples of self-sacrifice as the sublime and necessary path to spiritual and social change and renewal.

Pedagogical Foundations

42. The above-mentioned theological and anthropological foundations lay sound foundations for an authentic intercultural pedagogy, which, by its very nature, cannot be separated from an understanding of man as person. Therefore, it is primarily not cultures but persons who enter into contact with each other – persons who are rooted in their own history and relationships. Hence, understanding interpersonal relationships is the basic pedagogical paradigm, both the means and the end for developing the person’s very identity. This paradigm guides the idea of dialogue, ensuring that it is neither abstract nor ideological, but rather marked by respect, understanding and mutual service. It is then nourished by the idea of culture as situated in history and dynamic, refusing to push the other person into a sort of cultural prison. Finally, it is aware that the relative nature of cultures is not the same as relativism; the latter, while respecting differences, simultaneously separates them into autonomous cosmoses, considering them as isolated and impermeable. Rather, our paradigm seeks, by every means, to foster a culture of dialogue, of understanding and mutual transformation, so as to reach the common good.

43. From this perspective, the understanding of intercultural relationships is neither differentialistic nor relativistic. Rather, it considers cultures as inserted into the moral order, within which the fundamental value is primarily the human person. Recognizing this basic fact allows people of different cultural universes who come into contact with each other to overcome their initial feelings of strangeness. This is not just a matter of mutual respect: the process implies that the subjects question their preconceptions, and that everyone understand and discuss the other’s point of view.

44. From a pedagogical point of view, to develop such a difficult theme requires the courage and effort to become ever more aware of this complex and essentially multicultural reality. In particular, the discussion must be put into different words, so as to seek more intensely and more broadly for a common idea of education. Indeed, one seeks an idea of education to intercultural dialogue, understood as the individual’s journey towards what must be, with a view to dialogue and mutual life-long learning.

CHAPTER IV
CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN VIEW OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

The Contribution of Catholic Education

45. The idea of cultures in dialogue is the light guiding the necessarily shared effort to overcome division. Within a framework of mutual learning, one must know how to enter into the practical details of the dialectic that is provoked by some of the basic categories of life and culture (“clash/encounter”, “closure/openness”, “monologue/dialogue”, etc.).

In this educational process, the search for peaceful and enriching co-existence must be anchored in the broadest understanding of the human being. This must be marked by a continual search for self-transcendence, seen not just as a psychological and cultural effort to supersede all forms of egocentricism and ethnocentricism, but also as spiritual and religious fervour, in harmony with an understanding of integral and transcendent development, of both the individual and society.

46. Therefore, communities that draw their inspiration from the values of the Catholic faith (families, schools, groups, youth organizations, etc.) must give voice and reality to an education truly based around the human person, in line with Christian humanist culture and tradition. There must be new commitment to the individual seen as “person in communion” and a new sense of his or her belonging to society. Otherwise, a looked-for society of free and equal individuals undoubtedly hides the risk of limitless, uncontrolled conflict and ambiguity.

Furthermore, the crucial link among individuals that together make up a society or community “requires a deeper critical evaluation of the category of relation. This is a task that cannot be undertaken by the social sciences alone, insofar as the contribution of disciplines such as metaphysics and theology is needed if man’s transcendent dignity is to be properly understood.”[49]

In light of the Trinitarian mystery of God, interpersonal relationships must be seen not just in their processes of communication; instead, like Love, they are the fundamental law of Being. This love is not generic, indistinct and merely tied to emotions; nor is it simply bound up with convenience or the rules of give-and-take. Rather, it is “free”, as strong and generous as the love with which Jesus Christ loved. In this sense, love is the will to “promote”; it is trust in the other person and, consequently, is a fundamentally educational act.

47. The concept of “love” in education directly implies those of “gift” and “reciprocity”, which are fundamental aspects of education itself. Schools, both students and teachers, families and the wider community should promote that two-directional, to-and-fro movement which is love. We could thus summarize in outline the two movements: from love received to love given. Here, reciprocity is understood not simply in its final result, as equality of outcome, but primarily as a proactive step taken by the educator, whose is to be the first to love.

These concepts will have to be examined again courageously, so as to further a pedagogy of communion. The goal is an educational ideal that moves educators to be credible witnesses in the eyes of young people. Reflection must follow on the crucial, strategic link binding “love of education” with “education to love”. These two ideas are essential and indivisibly linked to each other. In them, both the educator and the student look towards the good, towards respect
and dialogue.

Presence in Schools

48. John Paul II stressed this idea, and saw in the spirituality of communion[50] the most important challenge to be addressed in culture, everyday life, the family, at school and in the Church.

Before all other practical initiatives, there must be a spirit of unity that lives among individuals and groups. This is the perspective in which every value finds its foundation. It is the vital element forming the basis of all others. This is not just a spiritual challenge but also a cultural one, for all men and women of good will. Therefore, Catholic educators, teachers and students who find themselves in any type of school, who are united in the same art of love, must also take up this invitation.

49. Consequently, it is not the law by itself or any juridical form that builds up a community and keeps it alive. Rather, the spirit of the law creates active and responsible citizens, precisely in the measure in which the law is at the service of the common good and puts everyone in a condition of reciprocity. Therefore, a community’s identity is mature to the extent that it takes on and continually and faithfully seeks to renew the values of co-operation and solidarity.

50. Schools are entrusted with great responsibility for intercultural education. During their formation, students find themselves interacting with different cultures, and need necessary tools for understanding them and relating them to their own culture. Schools are to be open to encountering other cultures. They have the task of supporting individuals so that each person develops his or her own identity in an awareness of its richness and cultural tradition.

From the pedagogical and intercultural points of view, the finest gift that Catholic education can make to a school is that of witness. Catholic schools give witness to a constant, personal network of relationships, which are lived out between the poles of personal identity and otherness. This network is marked by dynamic osmosis, in the various dealings between adults (teachers, parents, educators, those in charge of institutions, etc.), between teachers and students, and among students – without prejudices of culture, sex, social class or religion.

Where Freedom of Education is Denied

51. In many areas of the world, for political or cultural reasons, it is not always possible to have Catholic schools. Sometimes, the Catholic presence is very limited and faces hostility. The issue is not merely one about claiming a right, the right to freedom of teaching and of schooling, but needs to be expressed in terms of a cultural offering that makes everyone richer. Therefore, one must ask: what can Catholic education offer in these situations?

Fundamentally, one must start by recognizing in others the same desire that is to be found in many religions and cultures, in the important precept called the golden rule of humanity: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you; do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you”. This is a moral law and is absolutely essential for social living. Love must be offered to all. This is the source of a new civilization, of humanity’s true humanization, and is the opposite of all egoistic instincts to violence and war.[51]

52. This is the newness of education that flows also from Christian pedagogy, whose basis is
to be found in the words of Jesus: “may they all be one” (Jn 17: 21). In fact, it shows the heart of all Christianity, the bearer of the mystery of God, who is Being in relationship, pure act of love. Here is found the newness of the Gospel, whose full acceptance implies, certainly, the faith, but whose effects transform the meaning of any encounter between individuals, groups, cultures and institutions.

53. Only this spirit of the search for unity can hold together the social order. This is solidarity in its totality, in every sense (religious, political, social, economic and professional). This is the alternative to that state of permanent rivalry which condemns people to be ever more incommunicado, even though they live in a globalized world – which condemns them to a increasing indifference both to the God proclaimed by Christianity and to any form of the Absolute.

Therefore, young people are robbed of culture and faith, of their true meaning and of a suitable goal for which to strive. Thus, they risk dehumanizing life itself, in various ways. In these many “frontier” situations, where faith is daily put to the test, going against the current is often today, more than it has ever been, the Gospel choice. The pinnacle, the greatest gift, is the gift of oneself, giving one’s life for others wherever justice and truth are violated.

54. Hence, in these very different contexts (atheism, fundamentalism, relativism, secularism), the “priority of value” must be placed back at the centre. This is principally a coherent witnessing; the gift of self; the capacity for seeking and granting forgiveness, not out of exhibitionism or false moralising, but “for love”, to assist in the world’s development.

There exists an “important anthropological fact: the desire, which is proper to the human person, to have others share in one’s own goods. The acceptance of the Good News in faith is thus dynamically ordered to such a communication,” especially with those who “are lacking a tremendous benefit in this world: to know the true face of God and the friendship of Jesus Christ, God-with-us. Indeed ‘there is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know him and to speak to others of our friendship with him’.”[52]

CHAPTER V

THE CONTRIBUTION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Responsibility of Catholic Schools

55. In today’s social context, demands are placed on Catholic schools in relation to the specific contribution that they can offer. Yet, this is not an easy task: indeed, it is facing ever greater obstacles. Catholic schools are seeing an ever growing presence of students with different nationalities and religious beliefs. In many countries of the world, most students profess a non-Catholic religion and the theme of interreligious encounter is now unavoidable. To avoid closing in upon “identity” as a goal in itself, educational pedagogy must take into account the growing multireligious component of society, with the consequent need to know about different beliefs and dialogue both with those beliefs and with non-believers.

56. It is important for Catholic schools to be aware of the risks that arise should they lose sight of the reasons why they exist. That can happen, for example, when they unthinkingly conform to the expectations of a society marked by the values of individualism and competition. It can
also happen through bureaucratic formalism, the consumerist demands of families, or the unbridled search for external approval. Catholic schools are called to give dutiful witness, by their pedagogy that is clearly inspired by the Gospel – a fortiori in a culture that demands that schools be neutral and removes all religious references from the field of education.[53] Catholic schools, being Catholic, are not limited to a vague Christian inspiration or one based on human values. They have the responsibility for offering Catholic students, over and above a sound knowledge of religion, the possibility to grow in personal closeness to Christ in the Church. In fact, “one of the fundamental human rights, also with reference to international peace, is the right of individuals and communities to religious freedom … It is becoming increasingly important to promote this right not only from the negative point of view, as freedom from – for example, obligations or limitations involving the freedom to choose one’s religion – but also from the positive point of view, in its various expressions, as freedom for – for example, bearing witness to one’s religion, making its teachings known, engaging in activities in the educational, benevolent and charitable fields which permit the practice of religious precepts, and existing and acting as social bodies structured in accordance with the proper doctrinal principles and institutional ends of each.”[54]

57. Catholic schools’ primary responsibility is one of witness.[55] In the various situations created by different cultures, the Christian presence must be shown and made clear, that is, it must be visible, tangible and conscious. Today, due to the advanced process of secularization, Catholic schools find themselves in a missionary situation, even in countries with an ancient Christian tradition. The contribution that Catholicism can make to education and to intercultural dialogue is in their reference to the centrality of the human person, who has his or her constitutive element in relationships with others. Catholic schools have in Jesus Christ the basis of their anthropological and pedagogical paradigm; they must practise the “grammar of dialogue”, not as a technical expedient, but as a profound way of relating to others. Catholic schools must reflect on their own identity, because that which they can give is primarily that which they are.[56]

The Educational Community as an Experience of Intercultural Relationships

58. The model that school structures must take as their inspiration is the educating community, a place of differences living together in harmony.[57] The school community is a place for encounter and promoting participation. It dialogues with the family, which is the primary community to which the students that attend school belong. The school must respect the family’s culture. It must listen carefully to the needs that it finds and the expectations that are directed towards it. In this way, the school can be considered a true experience of intercultural relationships, lived out rather than just spoken about.

59. Neutral societies and schools, which lack reference values and are uninvolved with any moral formation, do not develop participation. Nor, at the other extreme, does participation develop in societies or schools permeated by fundamentalist viewpoints. Rather, it flourishes in a climate of dialogue and mutual respect, in an educational setting where all are assured of being able to increase their capacities to the full, with the constant aim of pursuing the good of all. In this way, a constant climate of mutual trust, availability, of listening and of fruitful exchange can be developed, which must characterize the whole period of formation. Classes, which aim to give expression both to life and thought, are geared to creating a constant dialogue between teachers and students; enhancing the personal contribution of students in the common search for knowledge; and giving rise to interdisciplinary teaching, with the
contribution of teachers of various disciplines.

60. In schools, understood as educational communities, families have a most important place and role. Catholic schools appreciate their value, and promote their participation in the school, where they can assume various forms of co-responsibility. Even given that some families live in difficult circumstances and there are parents who do not follow the school’s recommendations, families are always considered an indispensable reference-point, as bearers of appreciable resources. “Partnership between a Catholic school and the families of the students must continue and be strengthened: not simply to be able to deal with academic problems that may arise, but rather so that the educational goals of the school can be achieved.”[58]

Educational Programme for Education to Intercultural Dialogue

61. The education offered by Catholic schools flows from their witness to the Gospel and their love for all that is free and open. This education is concerned with developing an intercultural approach in all school settings: relationships between individuals, the view taken of human knowledge in its totality and in the various academic disciplines, and everyone’s integration and rights.

An indispensable condition for co-operation is openness to plurality and differences. Experience shows that the Catholic religion knows how to encounter, respect and esteem different cultures. The love for all men and women is necessarily also a love for their culture. Catholic schools are, by their very, intercultural.

62. Catholic schools’ educational programme foresees an harmonious meeting and merging of study and life. This allows students to enjoy a quality formative experience, enriched by intellectual research in the various branches of knowledge and, at the same time, a source of wisdom due to its context: life nourished by the Gospel. In this way, one avoids the risk of an education that fails, in the first place, to foster the individual’s whole formation. In fact, “school is one of the educational environments in which we develop through learning how to live, how to become grown-up, mature men and women who can travel, who can follow the road of life … It helps you not only by developing your intelligence, but also by an integral formation of all the aspects of your personality.”[59]

63. The educational programme’s principal areas of attention are the following:

The criterion of Catholic identity. The goal of Catholic schools, in all their forms, is to live in fidelity to their educational mission, which has Christ as its foundation. “The fact that in their own individual ways all members of the school community share this Christian vision, makes the school ‘Catholic’: principles of the Gospel in this manner become the educational norms since the school then has them as its internal motivation and final goal.”[60] This explicit identity gives meaning to the school’s other responsibilities.

Building up a common vision. Education can help identify within itself whatever is essential and universal, uniting individuals in their differences. The role of education today is precisely to promote dialogue, enabling communication between different people, helping them to “translate” their different ways of thinking and feeling. This is not just a matter of carrying forward dialogue as a process or method. It is a question, rather, of helping people to revisit their own cultures, with the cultures of others as their starting-point: in other words, helping
people to reflect on themselves within a perspective of “openness to humanity”.

Reasoned openness to globalization. An educating community like the school should not form people to be parochial. Instead, it should offer students the knowledge necessary to understand man’s current condition, as citizen of the whole planet, a condition characterized by numerous relationships of interdependency.

One seeks to form strong personal identities, which are not in opposition to each other. In fact, an awareness of one’s own tradition and culture is the starting-point from which one can dialogue and recognize the equal dignity of the other person.

Self-awareness is developed by habitually rethinking one’s own experiences; reflecting on one’s own behaviour; and becoming more self-aware, including by means of cognitive strategies and formation away from self-centredness.

The values of other cultures and religions must be respected and understood. Schools must become places of pluralism, where one learns to dialogue about the meanings that people of different religions attribute to their respective signs. This allows one to share universal values, such as solidarity, tolerance and freedom.

One educates to sharing and responsibility. Schools must not be a hiatus in life, purely artificial places dedicated solely to developing the cognitive dimension. While respecting the students’ individual timeframes for reaching maturity as well as their personal freedom, schools must assume responsibility for helping the students to understand life’s social and cultural situations. Schools must also encourage the students to take on responsibility for improving these situations. Moreover, given schools’ attention to the whole person and to all human experience, they do not limit their responsibilities to the merely didactic. Schools also care for many other aspects of the students’ lives, in informal ways (parties, fun moments, etc.), formal ways (presentations from informed guest speakers, discussion times, etc.) and religious experiences (times for liturgy and spirituality, etc.).[61]

The Curriculum as the Expression of the School’s Identity

64. The curriculum is how the school community makes explicit its goals and objectives, the content of its teaching and the means for communicating it effectively. In the curriculum, the school’s cultural and pedagogical identity are made manifest. Developing the curriculum is one of the school’s most demanding tasks, because here one makes explicit what are the school’s reference values, subject priorities and practical choices.

65. For a Catholic school, examining its curriculum leads to strengthening what is specific to its nature. It means strengthening the particular way it serves individuals, using the tools offered by culture. Thus, the school’s programmes can be effectively harmonized with the school’s original mission. One cannot be content merely with an up-to-date didactic offering that simply responds to the demands deriving from the ever-changing economic situation. Catholic schools think out their curricula to place centre-stage both individuals and their search for meaning. This is the reference value, in view of which the various academic disciplines are important resources and take on greater value to the extent that they are tools for educating. From this perspective, what is taught is not neutral, and neither is the way of
teaching it.

66. It has been said that we live in a knowledge-based society. However, Catholic schools are encouraged to promote a wisdom-based society, to go beyond knowledge and educate people to think, evaluating facts in the light of values. They educate people to take on responsibility and duties, and exercise active citizenship. Among matters taught specifically in Catholic schools, pride of place must be given to the knowledge of different cultures, with attention given to helping the students encounter and compare the various cultures’ many different viewpoints. The curriculum must help the students reflect on the great problems of our time, including those where one sees more clearly the difficult situation of a large part of humanity’s living conditions. These would include the unequal distribution of resources, poverty, injustice and human rights denied. “Poverty” implies a careful consideration of the phenomenon of globalization, and suggests a broad and developed vision of poverty, in all its various forms and causes.[62]

67. A good curriculum can merge theoretical lessons with presentations from informed speakers, where life-experiences are presented in light of faith’s view of the world. A good curriculum can also contain practical experiences for sharing and assuming responsibilities. The two poles are directed towards each other: lessons are informed by hearing about the life-experiences; knowledge becomes experience; and experience acquires the force of a cultural offering, of proclamation.

In teaching the various academic disciplines, teachers share and promote a methodological viewpoint in which the various braches of knowledge are dynamically correlated, in a wisdom perspective. The epistemological framework of every branch of knowledge has its own identity, both in content and methodology. However, this framework does not relate merely to “internal” questions, touching upon the correct realization of each discipline. Each discipline is not an island inhabited by a form of knowledge that is distinct and ring-fenced; rather, it is in a dynamic relationship with all other forms of knowledge, each of which expresses something about the human person and touches upon some truth.

68. Schools are challenged by the multicultural make-up of their classes. They must be able to rethink what is taught; the learning methods; their own internal organization, roles and relationships with families; and the social and cultural context where they are to be found. A curriculum that is open to the intercultural perspective presents the students with a study of civilizations that were previously unknown to them, or were remote from them, but which now are brought to their attention, as well as being brought much “closer” thanks to globalization and modern means of communication, crossing barriers of space and ideological defences. Teaching that aims to help students understand the reality in which they live cannot ignore the aspect of encounter. On the contrary, teaching has the duty to favour dialogue, as well as cultural and spiritual exchanges.

69. On the didactic level, schools must present their own intercultural concerns while remembering the two levels of learning: the cognitive and the relational-affective. On the cognitive level, schools develop the contents of the curriculum: areas of knowledge to be taught and skills to be promoted. On the relational-affective level, schools develop attitudes and ways of talking about others, teaching the students to respect diversity and take different viewpoints into account, cultivating empathy and collaboration.
Teaching the Catholic Religion

70. In today’s context, human societies seek to give themselves broader, trans-national structures, moving towards a system of global governance. Moreover, the immense symbolic patrimonies that different peoples have built, defended and handed down for centuries, through their specific cultural and religious traditions, seem to be ignored in their true humanizing capacity; instead, they become reasons for separation, in mutual diffidence. Therefore, the biggest challenge in intercultural education lies ever more in the dialogue between one’s own identity and other visions of life.

71. Today’s cultural shift shows clear signs of oscillation between dialogue and conflict. Especially when faced with this crisis of direction, then, the contribution of Christians is seen to be indispensable. Therefore, it is fundamental that the Catholic religion, for its part, be an inspiring sign of dialogue. In fact, it can be stated absolutely that the Christian message has never been so universal and fundamental as today.

72. Therefore, religion passes on the witness and message of integral humanism. This humanism, enriched by religion’s identity, appreciates religion’s great traditions such as: faith; respect for human life from conception until its natural end; and respect for the family, for community, for education and for work. These are opportunities and tools not of closure but of openness and dialogue with everyone and everything, leading to what is good and true. Dialogue remains the only possible solution, even when faced with the denial of religious sentiment, with atheism and agnosticism.

73. From this perspective, teaching the Catholic religion in schools takes on a meaningful role.[63] Primarily, it is a question of the right to education, based on an anthropological understanding of men and women that is open to the transcendent. Together with moral formation, it also helps to develop personal and social responsibility, as well as the other civic virtues, for the common good of society. The Second Vatican Council recalls that “parents, moreover, have the right to determine, in accordance with their own religious beliefs, the kind of religious education that their children are to receive … The rights of parents are violated, if their children are forced to attend lessons or instructions which are not in agreement with their religious beliefs, or if a single system of education, from which all religious formation is excluded, is imposed upon all.”[64] This statement is echoed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[65] as well as in other declarations and conventions of the international community.[66]

74. Moreover, it must be pointed out that teaching the Catholic religion in schools has its own aims, different from those of catechesis. In fact, while catechesis promotes personal adherence to Christ and maturing of the Christian life, school teaching gives the students knowledge about Christianity’s identity and the Christian life. Thus, one aims “to enlarge the area of our rationality, to reopen it to the larger questions of the truth and the good, to link theology, philosophy and science between them in full respect for the methods proper to them and for their reciprocal autonomy, but also in the awareness of the intrinsic unity that holds them together’. The religious dimension is in fact intrinsic to culture. It contributes to the overall formation of the person and makes it possible to transform knowledge into wisdom of life.” Therefore, with the teaching of the Catholic religion, “school and society are enriched with true laboratories of culture and humanity in which, by deciphering the significant contribution of Christianity, the person is equipped to discover goodness and to grow in responsibility, to seek comparisons and to refine his or her critical sense, to draw from the gifts of the past to
understand the present better and to be able to plan wisely for the future.”[67]

Finally, it counts that the teaching of religion is a field of study in schools. This gives it status, placing it alongside the other disciplines in the school’s curriculum, in a necessary interdisciplinary dialogue and not as a mere appendix.

75. Consequently, the twin aims of broadening what reason engages and supporting interdisciplinary and intercultural dialogue can be effectively promoted by a confessional teaching of religion. In fact, “if religious education is limited to a presentation of the different religions, in a comparative and ‘neutral’ way, it creates confusion or generates religious relativism or indifferentism.”[68]

The Formation of Teachers and Administrators

76. The formation of teachers and administrators is of crucial importance. In most countries, the state provides the initial formation of school personnel. Good though this may be, it cannot be considered sufficient. In fact, Catholic schools bring something extra, particular to them, that must always be recognized and developed. Therefore, while the obligatory formation needs to consider those disciplinary and professional matters typical of teaching and administrating, it must also consider the cultural and pedagogical fundamentals that make up Catholic schools’ identity.

77. The time spent in formation must be used for reinforcing the idea of Catholic schools as being communities of fraternal relationships and places of research, dedicated to deepening and communicating truth in the various scholarly disciplines. Those who have leadership positions are duty-bound to guarantee that all personnel receive adequate preparation to serve effectively. Moreover, they must serve in coherence with the faith they profess, and be able to interpret society’s demands in the actual situation of its current configuration.[69] This also favours the school’s collaboration with parents in education,[70] respecting their responsibility as first and natural educators.[71]

78. Formation that is particularly dedicated to promoting sensitivity, awareness and competence in the intercultural field can be advanced by paying attention to the following three essential markers:

a) integration: this has to do with the school’s ability to be adequately prepared for receiving students of different cultural backgrounds, responding to their needs regarding scholastic achievement and personal enhancement;

b) interaction: this has to do with knowing how to facilitate good relationships among peers and among adults. There is an awareness that simply being in the same physical environment is not enough. Encouragement must be given to curiosity about other people, openness and friendship, both in class and in places and times outside the school. Thus, situations of distancing between people, discrimination and conflict can be avoided and repaired.

c) recognizing the other person: one must avoid falling into the trap of imposing one’s own views on the other person, asserting one’s own lifestyle and one’s own way of thinking without taking into account the other person’s culture and particular emotional situation.

79. One must pursue the task of promoting unity, on the cultural level, among the various
branches of knowledge. This means overcoming compartmentalization and abstraction, searching instead for meaning in its broader sense. It is no less important, indeed it is essential, for the educational community to task itself with overcoming compartmentalization in relationships – of interpersonal, communitarian and collective natures. Where there is no awareness of unity – in the richness of diversity, of both the individual and society – there can be no development of knowledge that is wholly “human”, and not merely functional – knowledge that both preserves tradition and is open to innovation.

80. Catholic schools develop, in a manner wholly particular to them, the basic hypothesis that formation covers the whole arc of professional experience and is not limited to the period of initial formation or formation in the early years. Catholic schools require people not only to know how to teach or direct an organization; they also require them, using the skills of their profession, to know how to bear authentic witness to the school’s values, as well as to their own continuing efforts to live out ever more deeply, in thought and deed, the ideals that are stated publicly in words.

Hence, it is important that schools know how to be communities of formation and of study, where relationships among individuals colour relationships among academic disciplines. Knowledge is enhanced from within by this reclaimed unity, in the light of the Gospel and Christian doctrine, and so can make its own essential contribution to the integral growth of both individuals and the evermore heralded global society.

Being Teachers, Being Administrators

81. Formation is always guided by how one defines the professions involved in education. Therefore, one must answer the questions: what does it mean to be a teacher; what does it mean to be an administrator in a Catholic school? What are the areas of expertise that must characterize these professions?

82. Teachers today are members of a professional community. They contribute to writing the curriculum; and they have responsibility for relationships with various other subjects, especially the students’ families. A good school is where the teachers, as a group, know how to become something more than a mere recognized corps, in which the members are bound together by ties of mere bureaucracy. Instead, they should be a community, living out professional and personal relationships not just on a superficial level, but on a much deeper level, bound together by a shared concern for education.

83. Good teachers know that their responsibilities do not end outside the classroom or school. They know that their responsibilities are also connected with their local area, and are demonstrated by their understanding for today’s social problems. Professional preparation and technical competence are necessary prerequisites for teaching, but they are not enough. An expression of education lies in helping young people to understand their own time and plan their lives around a credible premise. Multiculturalism and pluralism are characteristic traits of our times; thus, teachers must be able to provide their students with the cultural tools necessary for giving direction to their lives. Moreover, teachers must allow their students, in the routine of the classroom, to experience real listening, respect, dialogue and the value of diversity.

84. Being ever more multicultural, schools are tasked with helping people with different experiences to relate to each other. Schools must also act as mediators between such people.
People’s different experiences need to be acknowledged and recognized. Teachers and school administrators require new professional skills, aimed at reconciling differences, allowing them to dialogue with each other. Teachers and school administrators need to offer shared perspectives, while respecting the individual nature of different people’s development and world visions.

85. For those who occupy positions of leadership, there can be a strong temptation to consider the school like a company or business. However, schools that aim to be educating communities need those who govern them to be able to invoke the school’s reference values; they must then direct all the school’s professional and human resources in this direction. School leaders are more than just managers of an organization. They are true educational leaders when they are the first to take on this responsibility, which is also an ecclesial and pastoral mission rooted in a relationship with the Church’s pastors. School leaders have the particular duty of providing what support is necessary for spreading the culture of dialogue, encounter and mutual recognition between different cultures. Both inside and outside the school, they promote all possible forms of collaboration that help to realize intercultural harmony.

86. So that schools can develop as professional communities, it is necessary that their members learn to reflect and seek together. Schools are communities of shared practices, of communality of ideas and research.

Moreover, the union of the educating community is fostered by strong ties with the Christian community. In fact, Catholic schools are ecclesial subjects. “This ecclesial dimension is not a mere adjunct, but is a proper and specific attribute, a distinctive characteristic which penetrates and informs every moment of its educational activity, a fundamental part of its very identity and the focus of its mission.”[72] Therefore, “the whole Christian community, and particularly the diocesan Ordinary, bear the responsibility ‘of arranging everything so that all the faithful have a Catholic education’ (c. 794 §2 CIC) and, more precisely, of having ‘schools which offer an education imbued with a Christian spirit’ (c. 802 CIC; cf. c. 635 CCEO).”[73] The ecclesial nature of Catholic schools, which is inscribed in the very heart of their identity as schools, is the reason for “the institutional link they keep with the Church hierarchy, which guarantees that the instruction and education be grounded in the principles of the Catholic faith and imparted by teachers of right doctrine and probity of life (cf. c. 803 CIC; cc. 632 e 639 CCEO).”[74]

CONCLUSION

The tradition of Catholic schools is familiar with the intercultural aspect. Today, however, faced with the challenges both of globalization and of cultural and religious pluralism, it is essential to develop a greater awareness of its meaning. In this way, Catholic schools will communicate better – in their presence, witness and teaching – their own particular way of being, being Catholic. They are schools that are open to the universality of knowledge and, at the same time, have their own specific nature, which comes from their being rooted in their believing in Christ the Teacher and their belonging to the Church.

Catholic schools avoid both fundamentalism and ideas of relativism where everything is the same. Instead, they are encouraged to progress in harmony with the identity they have received from their Gospel inspiration. They are also invited to follow the pathways that lead to encountering others. They educate themselves, and they educate to dialogue, which consists in
speaking with everyone and relating to everyone with respect, esteem and listening in sincerity. They should express themselves with authenticity, without obfuscating or watering down their own vision so as to acquire greater consensus. They should bear witness by means of their own presence, as well as by the coherence between what they say and what they do.

To all educators we want to address the encouraging and guiding words of Pope Francis: “Do not be disheartened in the face of the difficulties that the educational challenge presents! Educating is not a profession but an attitude, a way of being; in order to educate it is necessary to step out of ourselves and be among young people, to accompany them in the stages of their growth and to set ourselves beside them. Give them hope and optimism for their journey in the world. Teach them to see the beauty and goodness of creation and of man who always retains the Creator’s hallmark. But above all with your life be witnesses of what you communicate. Educators … pass on knowledge and values with their words; but their words will have an incisive effect on children and young people if they are accompanied by their witness, their consistent way of life. Without consistency it is impossible to educate! You are all educators, there are no delegates in this field. Thus collaboration in a spirit of unity and community among the various educators is essential and must be fostered and encouraged. School can and must be a catalyst, it must be a place of encounter and convergence of the entire educating community, with the sole objective of training and helping to develop mature people who are simple, competent and honest, who know how to love with fidelity, who can live life as a response to God’s call, and their future profession as a service to society.”[75]

The Holy Father Pope Francis has given his approval for the publication of this document.

Rome, 28 October 2013, 48th anniversary of the promulgation of the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration Gravissimum Educationis.

Zenon Cardinal Grocholewski
Prefect

Archbishop Angelo Vincenzo Zani
Secretary


Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (19 May 1991), n. 45.


[9] Ibid., n. 56.

[10] Ibid.


[13] Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration Dominus Iesus on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church (6 August 2000), n. 7. The International Theological Commission underlined how interreligious dialogue is “connatural to the Christian. It is inscribed in the dynamism of the living tradition of the mystery of salvation, whose universal sacrament is the Church” (Christianity and the World Religions, 30 September 1997, n. 114). As an expression of this tradition, interreligious dialogue is not an individual or private initiative, because “it is not Christians who are sent, but the Church; it is not their ideas that they present but Christ’s; it will not be their rhetoric that will touch hearts but the Spirit, the Paraclete. To be faithful to the ‘sense of the Church’, the interreligious dialogue begs for the humility of Christ and the transparency of the Holy Spirit” (Idem, n. 116).


[18] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration Dominus Iesus on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church, n. 15.


[21] Pope Francis, Speech to the Students of the Jesuit Schools of Italy and Albania (7 June 2013).


[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.


[33] Ibid.

[34] John Paul II, Dialogue Between Cultures for a Civilization of Love And Peace, nn. 7 and 9.


[37] Congregation for Catholic Education, Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared
Mission Between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful (8 September 2007), n. 8.

[38] Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes, n. 22.


[41] Cf. Benedict XVI, Speech to the General Assembly of the Italian Bishops’ Conference (27 May 2010): “the essential fact is that the human person becomes himself only with the other. The ‘I’ becomes itself only from the ‘thou’ and from the ‘you’. It is created for dialogue, for synchronic and diachronic communion. It is only the encounter with the ‘you’ and with the ‘we’ that the ‘I’ opens to itself.”


[43] Ibid., n. 54.

[44] Cf. Ibid., n. 55.


[51] Cf. International Theological Commission, In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law (2009), n. 51: “‘Do not do to another that which you would not want done to you’. Here we encounter the golden rule, which today is posited as the very principle of a morality of reciprocity.”

[52] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization (3 December 2007), n. 7.


[54] Benedict XVI, Blessed are the Peacemakers, Message for the World Day of Peace (2013), n. 4.


[59] Pope Francis, Speech to the Students of the Jesuit Schools of Italy and Albania.


[61] Pope Francis, addressing the Jesuits that run schools, encouraged them “to seek new forms of non-conventional education in accordance with ‘the needs of the times and of people’” (7 June 2013).


[64] Second Vatican Council, Declaration Dignitatis Humanae (7 December 1965), n. 5; cf. Code of Canon Law, can. 799; cf. also Holy See, Charter of the Rights of the Family (22 October 1983), art. 5, c-d.


[70] Cf. Code of Canon Law, can. 796 § 1.

CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION
(for Educational Institutions)

Challenge

[1] “We should always remember that we are brothers and sisters, and therefore teach others and teach ourselves not to consider our neighbour as an enemy or as an adversary to be eliminated.” POPE FRANCIS, Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace, Message for World Day of Peace (2014), n. 8.


[5] “Wake up the World!”. Conversation between Pope Francis and Religious Superiors, in
The Members of the Congregation for Catholic Education’s Plenary Assembly, meeting in 2011, accepted the suggestion of Pope Benedict XVI and entrusted to the Dicastery the task of preparing for the anniversary celebrations of the Declaration Gravissimum Educationis (50 years) and the Apostolic Constitution Ex Corde Ecclesiae (25 years), both of which fall in 2015. The aim is to give new stimulus to the Church’s involvement in the field of education.

There have been two principal events that have taken place in these subsequent years of preparation. The first was a seminar that took place in June 2012, with the participation of experts from all over the world. The second was the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation’s Members, which met in February 2014.

The indications that emerged in these two meetings are reflected in this Instrumentum Laboris, “Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion”. The text recalls the essential reference-points of both aforementioned documents, the fundamental characteristics of Catholic schools and universities, going on to describe the challenges to which Catholic educational institutions are called to respond, with the development of their own specific mission.
In the years following the Second Vatican Council, Papal Magisterium has repeatedly insisted on the importance of education in general, as well as on the contribution that the Christian community is called to offer education. The Congregation for Catholic Education, too, has frequently addressed this theme in its documents. Therefore, the anniversaries of 2015 are a suitable and invaluable opportunity for taking on board the recommendations of the Magisterium and sketching out guidelines for the coming decades.

The Instrumentum Laboris has been prepared for just such a purpose. It has been translated into various languages, and is addressed principally to Bishops’ Conferences, to the Union of Superiors General and to the International Union of Female Superiors General of Religious Congregations. The text is also addressed to national and international associations of teachers, parents and students and former students, as well as associations of those who run schools and universities. Finally, the Instrumentum Laboris is also addressed to Christian communities, so that they may reflect on the importance of Catholic education in the context of the New Evangelization. The text can be used to effect a pastoral evaluation of this area of the Church’s apostolate; and it can also be used to promote various activities for updating and forming those who work in Catholic schools and universities.

The Instrumentum laboris can be found online at the following addresses:

http://www.educatio.va/content/cec/it/documentazione-e-materiali/documenti-della-congregazione.html

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/index_it.htm

The Instrumentum Laboris concludes with a questionnaire. We invite everyone to give their answers, so as to provide the Congregation for Catholic Education with indications, suggestions and proposals that will be considered with a view to the events that are being planned, in particular the Global Convention that will take place in Rome on 18-21 November 2015. To that end, answers to the questionnaire must be sent to the Dicastery no later than 31 July 2014 (to: educat2015@gmail.com).

Zenon Cardinal Grocholewski, Prefect

Vatican City, 7 April 2014

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary culture is affected by several problems that are causing a widespread “educational emergency”: this expression refers to the difficulty in establishing educational relations which, in order to be genuine, should convey vital values and principles to younger generations, not only to help individual growth and maturation, but also to contribute to building the common good.
Catholic education, with its many schools and universities that are scattered all over the world, provides a remarkable support to ecclesial communities that are engaged in the new evangelization, and contributes to the fostering of anthropological and ethical values in individual consciences and cultures, which are necessary in order to build a society that is based on fraternity and solidarity[1].

I. ESSENTIAL REFERENCES

Two events will be remembered in 2015: the fiftieth anniversary of Gravissimum Educationis[2], the document on education issued by the 2nd Vatican Council on October 28, 1965, and the twenty-fifth anniversary of Ex Corde Ecclesiae[3], the Apostolic Constitution on Catholic universities’ identity and mission, promulgated by John Paul II on August 15, 1990; irrespective of their different nature, both documents are essential references for the Congregation for Catholic Education.

This Instrumentum Laboris is aimed at providing guidance to particular Churches and associations in organizing their educational initiatives, as well as ecclesial and cultural events. At the same time, it also provides inspiration for future educational projects and activities.

1. The Declaration Gravissimum Educationis

The purpose of Gravissimum Educationis was to draw the attention of all baptized to the importance of education by providing basic guidelines on educational issues: it should be considered within the Council’s overall teachings and read together with the other texts approved by the Council. Gravissimum Educationis, as it is stated in the introduction, should not be seen as the ultimate answer regarding all problems related to education, but as a document that was supposed to be later passed on to a special post-Council Commission – which later became the Congregation for Catholic Education’s School Office – in order to further develop the principles of Catholic education, as well as to Bishops’ Conferences, so that it could be applied to the various local situations. Among the many connections that the Declaration has with other Council documents (concerning the liturgy, bishops’ ministry, ecumenism, the role of the laity, social communications …), perhaps the most significant ones refer to the two main Constitutions, Lumen Gentium (which was promulgated on November 21, 1964) and Gaudium et Spes (December 7, 1965). Gravissimum Educationis often refers to the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium; whereas the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the contemporary world Gaudium et Spes, mentions Gravissimum Educationis in Part II, Chapter II (dedicated to The Promotion of Progress and Culture). The joint reading of all three documents proves to be particularly insightful to appreciate the two dimensions that education necessarily encompasses, when it is being analyzed from the standpoint of faith: i.e the secular and theological-spiritual dimensions.

a) Historical and Social Context. The Role of Christians

Since the Council, the historical and social context has changed remarkably, both in terms of world vision, as well as ethical and political concepts. The 1960s were a time of confident expectations, following the Council’s announcement and the possibility of more peaceful relations between States. Compared to that time, the scenario has deeply changed. The drive towards secularization has become more apparent. The increasingly faster globalization
process, rather than favoring the promotion of individual development and a greater integration amongst peoples, seems to limit individual freedom and exacerbate conflicts between different ways of looking at personal and collective life (with positions ranging from strict fundamentalism to skeptical relativism). Other economic and political developments are equally significant: such as the encroachment on the Welfare State and social entitlements or the triumph of liberalism, with its dreadful impact on schools and education. However, all the changes that have taken place since the 1960s not only have not weakened the teachings provided by the Council on educational issues, but have actually enhanced their prophetic scope. Both *Gravissimum Educationis* and *Gaudium et Spes* (nn. 59-60) contain extremely farsighted and fruitful hints, that can help us face many contemporary challenges:

Stating the Church’s willingness to work in order to support the edification of an increasingly humane society and personal development.

Recognizing education as a ‘common good’.

Claiming the universal right to education and schooling for all, which is also amply reiterated by international declarations issued by organizations such as UNESCO (EFA: Education for All).

Implicitly supporting all individuals and international institutions who oppose rampant liberalism through their fight for the right to education.

Asserting that culture and education cannot be subservient to economic power and its workings.

Recalling everybody’s duty – whether communities or individuals – to support women’s participation in cultural life.

Outlining a cultural context of “new humanism” (GS, n. 55), that the Magisterium is constantly addressing[4].

**b) Theological and Spiritual Vision**

The contribution that Council teachings have given to Christian education, as the spiritual and theological formation of the baptized and their conscience, is equally important. N. 2 of *Gravissimum Educationis* and nn. 11 and 17 (in addition to nn. 35 and 36) of *Lumen Gentium* contain several interesting insights, amongst which it is worth quoting:

The description of Christian education as a work of evangelization/mission (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 17).

The emphasis on the necessarily sacramental character of education for the baptized: whereby it must be centered around baptism and the Eucharist (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 11).

The need for Christian education to grow at the same time as human education, albeit respecting its Christian character, to prevent a situation in which the life of faith is experienced or perceived as being separate from other activities in human life.
The urging to envisage Christian education within the context of faith of a poor Church for the poor (Lumen Gentium, n. 8), in line with one of the pivotal points of the Church’s current message.

2. The Apostolic Constitution Ex Corde Ecclesiae

Gravissimum Educationis devoted a special attention to Catholic schools and universities, providing significant indications regarding this specific subject; the Constitution underlined the need for universities to serve societies, and not just the Church, and that “they should be noteworthy not so much for their numbers as for their high standards” (Gravissimum Educationis, n. 10), because it is better to have fewer excellent Catholic Universities than many mediocre ones. In the Council fathers’ reasoning, the essential purpose of Catholic higher education was to allow students to fully take on the cultural, social and religious responsibilities that would be required of them. For these reason, they believed Catholic universities had to strive to promote real academic research.

In 1990, John Paul II issued the Apostolic Constitution Ex Corde Ecclesiae, which aimed at drawing people’s attention to the importance of Catholic universities, as a privileged instrument to gain access to the truth regarding nature, man and God in order to favor an open dialogue between the Church and men and women of all cultures. In line with the Council Declaration, the Constitution reiterated that Catholic universities, as such, were supposed to adequately engage in research, teaching and cultural services like any other academic institution. As Catholic universities, they would have to a) be inspired by Christian values not only in so far as individuals are concerned, but also the entire university community as such; b) promote constant reflection, in the light of Catholic faith, on the processes and achievements of study and knowledge, providing their original contribution; c) be faithful to the Christian message, as it is presented by the Church; d) serve the people of God and mankind in the efforts they undertake to access truth.

Furthermore, John Paul II urged Catholic faculty members to become aware of the ethical and moral implications of their research, to foster dialogue between different disciplines in order to avoid any isolated and particularistic approach and favor the development of a synthetic view of things, albeit without challenging each discipline’s integrity and methodology. A special role was assigned to the dialogue between different kinds of knowledge and theology, since the latter could help other disciplines to delve into the reasons and meaning of their activity, just like other forms of knowledge could stimulate theological research to address life issues and achieve a better understanding of the world. Therefore, he thought that every Catholic university had to include a Faculty or, at least, a chair of theology (cf. Ex Corde Ecclesiae, n.19).

If we think about how fragmented academic studies are nowadays, we cannot but realize how John Paul II’s idea - whereby universities should promote dialogue between the various disciplines, albeit being faithful to their original vocation – is extremely topical nowadays and might provide precious indications to people working in higher education.

II. WHAT KIND OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES?

In the light of Church teachings and considering the needs and challenges of contemporary society, what should Catholic schools and universities be like?
Schools and universities are places where people learn how to live their lives, achieve cultural growth, receive vocational training and engage in the pursuit of the common good; they provide the occasion and opportunity to understand the present time and imagine the future of society and mankind. At the root of Catholic education is our Christian spiritual heritage, which is part of a constant dialogue with the cultural heritage and the conquests of science; Catholic schools and universities are educational communities where learning thrives on the integration between research, thinking and life experience.

1. Building an Educational Context

Catholic schools and universities educate people, first and foremost, through the living context, i.e. the climate that both students and teachers establish in the environment where teaching and learning activities take place. This climate is pervaded not only by the values that are being expressed in universities, but also by the values that are lived out, by the quality of interpersonal relations between teachers and students and students amongst each other, by the care professors devote to student and local community needs, by the clear living testimony provided by teachers and educational institutions’ entire staff.

Although cultural contexts vary, as well as educational possibilities and influences, there are a number of quality hallmarks that Catholic schools and universities must be able to ensure:

- respect for individual dignity and uniqueness (hence the rejection of mass education and teaching, which make human beings easier to manipulate by reducing them to a number);
- a wealth of opportunities that are offered to young people for them to grow and develop their abilities and talents;
- a balanced focus on cognitive, affective, social, professional, ethical and spiritual aspects;
- encouragement for every pupil to develop their talents, in a climate of cooperation and solidarity;
- the promotion of research as a rigorous commitment towards truth, being aware that human knowledge has its limits, but also with a great openness of mind and heart;
- respect of ideas, openness to dialogue, the ability to interact and work together in a spirit of freedom and care.

2. Introducing Students to Research

Schools and universities are places where students are introduced to knowledge and scientific research. One of teachers’ main responsibilities is to attract younger generations towards knowledge and understanding its achievements and applications. Engagement in knowledge and research cannot be separated from a sense of ethics and transcendence: no real science can disregard ethical consequences and no real science drives us away from transcendence. Science and ethics, science and transcendence are not mutually exclusive, but come together for a greater and better understanding of man and the world.

3. Teaching as an Instrument for Education
Nowadays, the “way” in which students learn seems to be more important than “what” they learn, just like the way of teaching seems to be more important than its contents. Teaching that only promotes repetitive learning, without favoring students’ active participation or sparking their curiosity, is not sufficiently challenging to elicit motivation. Learning through research and problem-solving develops different and more significant cognitive and mental abilities, whereby students do more than just receiving information, while also stimulating teamwork. However, the value of learning contents must not be underestimated. If the way students learn is relevant, the same applies to what they learn: teachers must know how to select the essential elements of cultural heritage that has accumulated over time and how to present them to students. This approach also applies to the study of the major questions mankind is facing and has faced in the past. Otherwise, the risk could be to provide a kind of teaching that is only focused on what seems to be useful now, because it is being required by contingent economic or social demands, forgetting what is indispensable for the human person.

Teaching and learning are the two terms in a relationship that does not only involve the subject to be studied and the learning mind, but also persons: this relationship cannot be based exclusively on technical and professional relations, but must be nourished by mutual esteem, trust, respect and friendliness. When learning takes place in a context where the subjects who are involved feel a sense of belonging, it is quite different from a situation in which learning occurs in a climate of individualism, antagonism and mutual coldness.

4. The Centrality of Learners

Schools and – even more so – universities, work to provide students with training that will enable them to enter the labor market and social life with adequate skills. Albeit indispensable, this is not enough: the measure of good schools and universities is also given by their ability to promote a kind of learning that is more focused on developing general and higher-level skills through education. Learning is not just equivalent to content assimilation, but is an opportunity for self-education, commitment towards self-improvement and the common good. It allows our students to develop their creativity, strive for constant learning and become more open towards others. Learning can also provide the opportunity to open students’ hearts and minds to the mystery and wonder of the world and nature, to self-consciousness and awareness, to responsibility towards creation, to the Creator’s immensity.

In particular, schools would not be a complete learning environment if, what pupils learnt, did not also become an occasion to serve the local community. Today, many students still consider learning as an obligation or an imposition: probably this depends upon schools’ inability to pass on to students the passion that is absolutely required for research, in addition to knowledge. Instead, when students have the opportunity to experience how important what they learn is for their lives and their communities, their motivation does change. It would be advisable for teachers to provide their students with opportunities to realize the social impact of what they are studying, thus favoring the discovery of the link between school and life, as well as the development of a sense of responsibility and active citizenship.

5. The Diversity of Learners

Teachers are called upon to rise up to a major educational challenge, which is the recognition, respect and enhancement of diversity. Psychological, social, cultural and religious diversity should not be denied, but rather considered as an opportunity and a gift. By the same token,
diversities related to the presence of particular situations of frailness, affecting cognitive abilities or physical autonomy, should always be recognized and embraced, to prevent them from turning into penalizing inequalities. It is not easy for schools and universities to be “inclusive”, open to diversity and able to truly help those who are going through difficulties. Teachers must be open and professionally knowledgeable when they are leading classes where diversity is recognized, accepted and appreciated as an educational asset that is beneficial to everyone. Those who find themselves in greater difficulties, who are poorer, more fragile or needy, should not be seen as a burden or obstacle, but as the most important students, who should be at the center of schools’ attention and concerns.

6. Pluralism of Educational Establishments

Catholic schools and universities fulfil their task, which is mission and service, in very different cultural and social contexts, where their work is sometimes recognized and appreciated and, at other times, stymied by serious economic difficulties and hostility, which sometimes can even turn into forms of violence. The way in which their presence in different States and world regions is experienced varies remarkably, but the basic reasons for their educational work do not change. School communities that are inspired by the values of Catholic faith transpose their personalistic vision - which is the hallmark of humanistic-Christian tradition - into their organization and syllabi, not in order to oppose other cultures and religious faiths, but to engage in dialogue with them.

It is really important for Catholic educational establishments are able to interact with other non-Catholic institutions in the countries where they are located, with a listening attitude to engage in a constructive dialogue, for the common good.

Today, these establishments are found worldwide and the majority of their students come from different religious backgrounds, nations and cultures. However, students’ confessional allegiances should not be seen as a barrier, but as a condition for intercultural dialogue, helping each pupil grow in their humanness, civic responsibility and learning.

7. Teacher Training

The importance of schools’ and universities’ educational tasks explains how crucial training is for teachers, managers and the entire staff that has educational responsibilities. Professional competence is the necessary condition for openness to unleash its educational potential. A lot is being required of teachers and managers: they should have the ability to create, invent and manage learning environments that provide plentiful opportunities; they should be able to respect students’ different intelligences and guide them towards significant and profound learning; they should be able to accompany their students towards lofty and challenging goals, cherish high expectations for them, involve and connect students to each other and the world. Teachers must be able to pursue different goals simultaneously and face problem situations that require a high level of professionalism and preparation. To fulfil such expectations, these tasks should not be left to individual responsibility and adequate support should be provided at institutional level, with competent leaders showing the way, rather than bureaucrats.

III. CURRENT AND FUTURE EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES
At the heart of Catholic education there is always Jesus Christ: everything that happens in Catholic schools and universities should lead to an encounter with the living Christ. If we look at the great educational challenges that we will face soon, we must keep the memory of God made flesh in the history of mankind – in our history – alive.

Catholic schools and universities, as subjects in the contemporary Church, are a place of testimony and acceptance, where faith and spiritual accompaniment can be provided to young people who ask for it; they open their doors to all and uphold both human dignity, as well as the dissemination of knowledge, to the whole of society, irrespective of merit.

First and foremost, they are places where the transmission of knowledge is key; however, knowledge too has undergone major changes that are affecting our educational approach. As a matter of fact, we are witnessing a remarkable differentiation, privatization and even expropriation of knowledge.

Schools and universities are also living environments, where an integral education is provided, that includes religious formation. The challenge will be to make young people realize the beauty of faith in Jesus Christ and of religious freedom in a multireligious universe. In every environment, whether it is favorable or not, Catholic educators will have to be credible witnesses.

People who work with faith, passion and professionalism cannot be forgotten; they deserve all our attention and encouragement. We should not also forget that, for the most part, this educational mission and professional commitment are principally sustained by women.

First of all, we must express the anthropology underpinning our educational vision for the 21st century in different terms: it is a philosophical anthropology that must also be an anthropology of truth, i.e. a social anthropology whereby man is seen in his relations and way of being; an anthropology of recollection and promise; an anthropology that refers to the cosmos and cares about sustainable development; and, even more, an anthropology that refers to God. The gaze of faith and hope, which is its foundation, looks at reality to discover God’s plan hidden therein. Thus, starting from a profound reflection on modern man and the contemporary world, we must redefine our vision regarding education.

The young people we are educating today will become the leaders of the 2050s. What will religion’s contribution be to educating younger generations to peace, development, fraternity in the universal human community? How are we going to educate them to faith and in faith? How will we establish the preliminary conditions to accept this gift, to educate them to gratitude, to a sense of awe, to asking themselves questions, to develop a sense of justice and consistency? How will we educate them to prayer?

Education requires a strong alliance between parents and educators to present a life that is good, rich in meaning, open to God and others as well as the world; this alliance is even more necessary, since education is a personal relationship. It is a journey that reveals the transcendental elements of faith, family, Church and ethics, highlighting their communal character.

Education is not just knowledge, but also experience: it links together knowledge and action; it works to achieve unity amongst different forms of knowledge and pursues consistency. It encompasses the affective and emotional domains, and is also endowed with an ethical
Education is based on participation, shared intelligence and intelligence interdependence; dialogue, self-giving, example, cooperation and reciprocity are also equally important elements.

1. Challenges for Catholic Schools

Nowadays education is going through rapid changes. The generation to which it is addressed is changing quickly as well, therefore each educator must constantly face a situation which, as Pope Francis put it, “provides us with new challenges which sometimes are difficult for us to understand.”[5]

At the heart of the global changes we are called upon to embrace, love, decipher and evangelize, Catholic education must contribute to the discovery of life’s meaning and elicit new hopes for today and the future.

a) The Challenge of Identity

The redefinition of Catholic schools’ identity for the 21st century is an urgent task. Going back to the documents issued by the Congregation for Catholic Education[6] can be quite helpful in this respect, together with the experience that has been made over time in Catholic teaching, both in diocesan and congregational schools. This experience is supported by three pillars: Gospel tradition, authority and freedom.

Contemporary educators have a renewed mission, which has the ambitious aim of offering young people an integral education as well as assistance in discovering their personal freedom, which is a gift from God.

Spiritual poverty and declining cultural levels are starting to produce their dismal effects, even within Catholic schools. Often times, authoritativeness is being undermined. It is really not a matter of discipline – parents greatly appreciate Catholic schools because of their discipline – but do some Catholic school heads still have anything to say to students and their families? Is their authority based on formal rules or on the authoritativeness of their testimony? If we want to avert a gradual impoverishment, Catholic schools must be run by individuals and teams who are inspired by the Gospel, who have been formed in Christian pedagogy, in tune with Catholic schools’ educational project, and not by people who are prone to being seduced by fashionability, or by what can become an easier sell, to put it bluntly.

Many Catholic school students belong to a multiplicity of cultures, therefore our institutions must proclaim the Gospel beyond believers, not only with words, but through the power of our educators’ lives, which must be consistent with the Gospel. Teachers, school heads, administrative staff: the whole professional and educational community is called upon to present faith as an attractive option, with a humble and supportive attitude. The model is provided by Jesus Christ and his disciples in Emmaus: we must start from young people’s life experience but also from that of co-workers, to provide an unconditional service. Actually, educating young people to serve and give themselves freely is one of the hallmarks of Catholic schools, in the past as well as the future.
b) The Challenge for School Communities

If we think about our societies’ rampant individualism, we realize how important it is for Catholic schools to be true living communities that are animated by the Holy Spirit. The friendly and welcoming ambiance that is established by teachers who are believers – who sometimes are the minority – together with the common engagement of all those who have educational responsibilities, irrespective of their beliefs or convictions, might allow students to overcome moments of loss or discouragement and open new prospects of evangelical hope. The complex network of interpersonal relations is schools’ real strength, when it expresses love of truth, and teachers who are also believers must be supported, so that they might provide the leaven and benevolent power to edify the community.

In order for this to happen, a particular attention must be devoted to the formation and selection of school heads. They are not only in charge of their respective schools, but are also Bishops’ reference persons inside schools in matters of pastoral care. School heads must be leaders who make sure that education is a shared and living mission, who support and organize teachers, who promote mutual encouragement and assistance.

Another challenging terrain for Catholic schools is relations with families, many of which are going through a deep crisis and need support, solidarity, involvement and even formation.

Teachers, parents and school heads – together with students – make up a broad educational community that is called upon to work together with Church institutions. Lifelong learning must focus on the promotion of a just community based on solidarity, that is sensitive to individual needs and is able to systematically help poorer students and families.

c) The Challenge of Dialogue

The world, in all its diversity, is eager to be guided towards the great values of mankind, truth, good and beauty; now more than ever. This is the approach Catholic schools should have towards young people, through dialogue, in order to present them with a view regarding the Other and others that is open, peaceful and enticing.

Sometimes, when relating to young people, asymmetry creates a distance between educators and learners. Today, the circular character of communication between teachers and students is being appreciated a lot more: its greater openness is remarkably more favorable to mutual listening. This does not mean that adults must relinquish their role as authority figures, but a differentiation must be introduced between the kind of authority that is only linked to a specific role or institutional function, and the authority that comes from credible testimony.

Schools are communities that learn how to improve, thanks to constant dialogue among educators, between teachers and their students and amongst students in their relations.

d) The Challenge of a Learning Society

However, we should not forget that learning does not take place exclusively within schools: in the current context, which is strongly characterized by the pervasiveness of new technological languages and new opportunities for informal learning, schools have lost their traditional educational primacy. Our contemporary age has been defined as the age of knowledge. Today, people talk about the knowledge-based economy. On the one hand, young
people are required to achieve unprecedented learning levels and abilities, on the other hand, schools have to deal with scenarios where information is more broadly available, in massive and uncontrollable amounts. Some degree of humility is necessary when considering what schools are able to do in times like these, when social networks are becoming more important, and learning opportunities outside of schools are increasingly widespread and impactful. Since schools are no longer the only learning environment for young people, and not even the most important one, and virtual communities are acquiring a remarkable importance, schooling must face a new challenge: that is, helping students develop the necessary critical tools to avoid being dominated by the power of new media.

**e) The Challenge of Integral Education**

Educating is a lot more than just instructing people. The European Union, OECD and World Bank highlight instrumental reason and competitiveness and have a merely functional view of education, as if it were legitimized only if it served the market economy and the labor market: all this strongly reduces the educational content of many international documents, something that we see reflected also in several texts issued by education ministries. Schools should not yield to this technocratic and economic rationale, even if they are exposed to outside forces as well as market attempts to use them instrumentally, even more so in the case of Catholic schools. We do not mean in any way to belittle the demands of the economy or unemployment’s seriousness, but students need to be respected as integral persons and be helped to develop a multiplicity of skills that enrich the human person, such as creativity, imagination, the ability to take on responsibilities, to love the world, to cherish justice and compassion.

Proposing an integral education, in a society that is changing so quickly, requires a constant reflection that is able to renew it and make it increasingly rich quality-wise. Anyhow, there is a clear stance that must be taken: the kind of education that is promoted by Catholic schools is not aimed at establishing an elitist meritocracy; the pursuit of quality and excellence is indeed important, but we should never forget that students have very specific needs: they are often going through difficult circumstances, and deserve a pedagogical attention that takes their needs into account. Therefore, Catholic schools must engage in high-level global debates about inclusive education\[7\] to provide the benefit of their experience and educational vision.

An increasing number of students have been wounded during their childhood. Poor school performance is rising and requires a preventive kind of education, as well as specific training for teachers.

Nowadays, school systems are asked to promote skill development, and not just to convey knowledge; the skill paradigm, interpreted according to a humanistic vision, goes beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge or abilities: it involves the development of students’ total personal resources, establishing a meaningful bond between school and life. It is important for schooling to enhance not only skills that are related to knowing and knowing how to do things, but also skills that apply to living alongside others and growing as human beings. These are reflective skills, for instance, by which we are responsible for our actions, or intercultural, decision-making, citizenship skills, that are becoming increasingly important in our globalized world and affect us directly, as is the case with skills related to consciousness, critical thinking and creative and transforming action.
f) The Challenge of Limited Means and Resources

Schools that are not subsidized by States are facing increasing financial difficulties to provide their services to the poorest students, at a time of dire economic crisis, when the choice to introduce new technologies becomes inevitable and costly. All schools, whether they are subsidized or not, must deal with increasing social divisions due to the economic crisis. Of course, this situation mandates diversified pedagogical approaches that are addressed to everyone; but this choice requires financial resources, in order to be feasible, as well as human resources, namely well trained teachers and leaders. Undoubtedly, missionary openness towards new forms of poverty must not only be safeguarded, but also further stimulated.

Teaching is not simply a job but a vocation that we must encourage. Nowadays, teachers have to deal with an increasing number of tasks. Some countries are having problems in finding school heads and teachers for specific subjects: many young people would rather work for businesses, hoping to receive a higher salary. Plus, teachers are not valued by society as they used to be, and their job has become more cumbersome because of increasing administrative duties. This leads many school heads to look for volunteers. The challenge will be for them to keep motivating and encouraging volunteers in their unconditional gift.

g) Pastoral Challenges

A growing number of young people are drifting away from the institutional Church. Religious ignorance or illiteracy are rising. Catholic education is an unglamorous mission. How can students be educated to exercise their freedom of conscience and take a stance in the immense domain of values and beliefs in a globalized society?

In many countries, Catholic schools do not receive adequate pastoral guidance in the multireligious context they are supposed to evangelize.

As far as educators are concerned, “deculturation” is limiting their knowledge of cultural heritage. Easy access to information, which nowadays is broadly available, when it is not selected with critical awareness, ultimately favors widespread superficiality among both students and teachers, not only impoverishing reason, but also imagination and creative thinking.

The number of educators and teachers who are believers is shrinking, hence making Christian testimony more rare. How can a bond with Jesus Christ be established in this new educational context?

In some Bishops’ Conferences, Catholic teaching is not considered as a pastoral priority. But once the crisis hits, parishes realize that Catholic schools are often the only places where young people encounter the bearers of Good News. In many instances, these schools have become open to cultural and religious pluralism and, in some countries, priests and religious men and women are not present there. This is an unprecedented situation, which requires the presence of committed lay people, who are well prepared and willing to engage in a very demanding task. In many cases, this awareness has led many lay Catholics to organize their action but, quite often, their commitment is also characterized by diffidence towards the institutional Church, who has become uninterested in Catholic schools. Hence, one of the major challenges for some Bishops’ Conferences will be to urgently redefine their relations...
with the laity, in order to cater to the Gospel’s proclamation. Bishops must urgently
rediscover how, among different modes of evangelization, an important place must be given
to the religious formation of new generations, and schools are a precious instrument for this
service.

**h) The Challenge of Religious Formation for Young People**

In a number of countries, Catholic religion courses have been threatened and risk
disappearing from syllabi. Since religion courses fall under the responsibility of Bishops, it is
extremely important to always remember that this teaching cannot be neglected, although it
should constantly be renewed.

Religion courses require an in-depth knowledge of young people’s real needs, because this
will provide the foundation on which the proclamation can be built, although the difference
between “knowing” and “believing” must be respected.

Since, in many countries, the population of Catholic schools is characterized by a multiplicity
of cultures and beliefs, religious formation in schools must be based on the awareness of the
existing pluralism and constantly be able to be meaningful in contemporary society. This
scenario is extremely diversified, therefore religion cannot be taught in the same way
everywhere: in some situations, religion classes can provide the occasion where the Gospel is
proclaimed for the first time; in other circumstances, educators will provide students the
opportunity to experience interiority and prayer, prepare for the sacraments, and invite them
to engage in youth movements or social service activities.

Since international organizations are dealing with religious matters increasingly often, it will
be important for Bishops’ Conferences to put forward their own proposals about religion
courses that are able to provide knowledge and critical learning concerning all religions in
our society. And they should also be able to clearly differentiate between the specificity of
religion courses and others dedicated to responsible citizenship. Otherwise, governments will
come up with their own agenda to educate free citizens, who are able to be supportive,
compassionate and responsible, without the contribution of Christian and Catholic views in
school syllabi.

**i) Specific Challenges for Multireligious and Multicultural Societies**

The multiculturalism and multireligiosity of Catholic school students are a challenge for all
people who have educational responsibilities. When schools’ identities are weakened, several
problems arise, due to the inability to deal with new situations. The answer cannot be to seek
shelter in indifference, nor to adopt a kind of Christian fundamentalism, nor – lastly – to
define Catholic schools as schools that support “generic” values.

Hence, one of the most important challenges will be to foster a greater cultural openness
amongst teachers and, at the same time, an equally greater willingness to act as witnesses, so
that they are aware and careful about their school’s peculiar context in their work, without
being lukewarm or extremist, teaching what they know and testifying to what they believe in.
In order for teachers to interpret their profession in this way, they must be formed to engage
in the dialogue between faith and cultures and between different religions.: there cannot be
any real dialogue if educators themselves have not been formed and helped to deepen their
faith and personal beliefs.
Promoting cooperation among students of different religious persuasions in civil service initiatives is an opportunity that should not be underestimated, where learning contexts are pluralistic. Would it not be wonderful if, as a minimum, all Catholic schools provided their students with opportunities to engage in civil service, accompanied by their teachers or, perhaps, their parents?

**j) The Challenge of Teachers’ Lifelong Training**

In this kind of cultural context, teacher training becomes essential and requires rigour and depth; without this, their teaching would be considered as not credible, unreliable and, therefore, unnecessary. This kind of training is urgent, if we want to rely on teachers who are committed to and concerned with our Educational Project’s evangelical identity and its implementation in the future. It would not be advisable to have a “double population” of teachers in Catholic schools: what is needed, instead, is unity among the teachers, who together are willing to embrace and share a specific evangelical identity, as well as a consistent lifestyle.

**k) Places and Resources for Teacher Training**

Who can ensure this kind of training? Can specific places be dedicated to this task and be identified? Where can these kinds of trainers be found for teachers?

Here are some possible suggestions:

National structures and their offices.

Diocesan structures: vicars or diocesan directors of teaching activities, in synergy or partnership with training institutions. We should really think about the opportunity to centralize the training of lay people with ecclesial responsibilities and religion teachers in one single diocesan facility. On the one hand, this choice would lead to a stronger identity, but it would not provide the answer to a difficult question: how can this kind of training be adapted to needs that are typical of learning contexts? We should not forget that teachers have specific professional identities, with their peculiar features, that should be taken into account during training.

Religious congregations.

Catholic universities or institutes.

Parishes, deaneries or monasteries as centers for retreats or spiritual support for educators.

Networking, e-learning.

**l) Legal Challenges**

Some governments are quite keen on marginalizing Catholic schools through a number of rules and laws that, sometimes, trample over Catholic schools’ pedagogical freedom. In some cases, governments hide their animosity by using lack of resources as an excuse. In these situations, the existence of Catholic schools is not ensured.
Another threat that might emerge once again is related to rules to avoid discrimination. Under the guise of a questionable “secularism”, there is hostility against an education that is openly based on religious values and which, therefore, has to be confined to the “private” sphere.

2. Challenges for Catholic Higher Education

Are the challenges related to Catholic higher education, university education, any different from the ones Catholic schools must face, in primary and secondary education? For the most part, they are the same. For universities too, we must recognize that the fundamental issues education must face are mostly related, in one way or another, to the new cultural – and even sociological – contexts our societies are experiencing and Catholic university students mostly come from.

There are a number of systemic and structural differences that refer to higher education establishments’ peculiarity in so far as size, history and legal frameworks are concerned, as well as governance; then there are also differences regarding plans and procedures, educational levels, research and the way in which activities are carried out. Lastly, there are differences in the status and prestige that is associated to individual institutions, as well as in the typology of students and academic staff.

Differentiation processes should be seen as a reaction to the changes and challenges that have involved higher education systems in the last three decades: during that time, access to universities stopped being limited to elites, but became generalized, while demands have increased for universities to respond to social needs and become factors for economic development. The challenge stemming from these trends is the same practically everywhere: i.e. how can these changes affecting universities’ role be reconciled with the values that have characterized university tradition? How can the centrality of scientific research and the formation of highly-skilled human capital be restored, being aware that universities must not only be places where knowledge is processed but also shared, in order to respond to social needs, and become instruments not just for cultural and civil development but for economic growth as well?

Governments’ reply to these questions was to differentiate between systems of curricula and degrees, or introduce new functions inside institutions, or structure higher education systems based on increasingly complex labor market needs.

Considering these changes - that are still happening - it is natural to redefine universities’ goals and functions: in addition to engaging in scientific, research and educational activities, universities are also becoming a reference point or supporting agencies for social, political and economic decision makers.

These changes mandate a conceptual redefinition of universities, and Catholic higher education cannot elude this effort too: in this context, it is urged to better specify its identity and peculiar academic and scientific tasks.

a) Internationalization of University Studies

In recent years, the international dimension of higher education has been enhanced, through agreements between countries and universities, supported by instruments and programs that have been introduced by continental or global international organizations. Experiences in this
domain have been characterized by several aspects: broader course offerings, growing foreign student presence, innovation in educational methodologies, and in process and research management. Joint university courses involving different universities are an effective internationalization tool because they allow for the exchange of ideas and experiences, favor the encounter of various people (students, teachers and researchers, administrative staff), coming from different cultures and traditions, and allow for the development of expertise in universities that have different missions, visions and profiles. This is a new and growing development that gives rise to many questions for institutions regarding openness, teaching methods and research activities.

b) The Use of Online Resources in University Studies

In contemporary society, web-based applications are being used increasingly frequently and ubiquitously in the management of personal knowledge. Over the last few years, digital proficiency – in its different aspects – has been at the center of growing attention. Various documents and communications, published by international organizations, have highlighted the relevance of this specific skill for Lifelong Learning and to participate in the so-called “information society”. But what does it mean to be a cultivated or even educated person in the 21st century? This issue goes beyond preparing young people for future jobs and challenges, but refers to being conscious citizens, irrespective of having been born or become digitally savvy individuals, who are fully autonomous in accessing and using digital society’s resources, contents, relations, tools and potential. In this framework, the necessary skills to manage and enrich our knowledge, using online and offline resources, become extremely important. This set of skills, which is defined as Personal Knowledge Management, coupled with personal learning and/or personal learning network concepts, should help every individual to independently select and evaluate information sources, to search for online data, and be able to store, reprocess, transmit and share such data.

Next to these skills, others are needed, such as: connectedness, which involves not only technological aspects but also communication, as well as relational and identity management skills in a global communication context; critical ability, i.e. a critical approach to the web, that refers to the ability to use the web as a resource repository, also considering the context in which such resources are used; creativity, that is developing creative attitudes towards Lifelong Learning in order to benefit from educational experiences where formal and informal learning situations coexist.

c) Universities, Businesses and the Labor Market

One of the main problems we are facing today is joblessness. What opportunities can universities provide in terms of future jobs and business opportunities? Businesses, professionals and universities should have occasions to meet, in order to provide inspiration and opportunities for young people who are thinking about starting their own business, and for them to test their ideas and abilities. University students need to know about possible job opportunities early on in their career, participating in projects and competitions and accessing grants and scholarship to become more specialized. In this respect, guidance and counselling activities in upper secondary schools and universities become absolutely essential.

Regarding work-related issues, unemployment and training future leaders through higher education, we must remember that universities, as it is stated in Ex Corde Ecclesiae, have the fundamental mission to confidently serve “truth through their research, and the preservation
and communication of knowledge for the good of society.” (n. 30). Catholic universities contribute to this mission by fulfilling their ministry of hope in the service of others, forming people who are endowed with a sense of justice and profound concern for the common good, educating them to devote a particular attention to the poor and oppressed and trying to teach students to be responsible and active global citizens.

d) Quality of Academic Institutions

One of the goals that has been at the center of international attention recently, in different countries and institutions, is to ensure the quality of academic systems, identifying specific evaluation criteria and instruments to enhance individual institutions’ responsibilities and transparency. This goal has been fully accepted and shared by all and many national and international agreements have been signed with specialized agencies in order to identify and share measurement indicators that do not simply evaluate external statistical data and procedures, but also consider higher education goals and contents within a system of values.

Promoting the quality of a Catholic academic center means to highlight the value of its activities, strengthening positive aspects and, when necessary, improving shortcomings. This monitoring and evaluation activity has become indispensable and performs two major functions: first of all, a public function, making sure that the study system is reliable and transparent, fostering awareness and a healthy emulation amongst the various teaching establishments; secondly, an internal function, aimed at helping players in the system to achieve their institutional goals and reflect on the outcome of their activities in order to improve and develop them further.

e) Governance

The changes mentioned so far also affect Catholic universities as institutions, including their governance. Since universities are “impartial” (they do not cater to partisan attitudes) and are not linked to “people’s sovereignty” (university heads are not representatives of the people), governance can be seen from many different viewpoints, such as: conditions for student access, funding sources and mechanisms, levels of autonomy, universities’ role in modern society and governance structures in academic institutions.

What is university autonomy all about? In many countries, the State has great power while individual universities need to be able to act freely to pursue their academic goals, without being unduly influenced by the fact of receiving public funding (which, in some cases, accounts for most of or even all their financial coverage). Nowadays, since States fund universities, they are actively present in them through the control they exercise over them remotely, by defining goals and evaluation instruments and trying to increasingly involve them in ensuring financial responsibility and sustainability.

While autonomy is being emphasized, universities are increasingly urged to meet the needs of their local areas, by providing courses that favor economic and social development, within a context of lifelong learning, and serving communities in supporting public and private decision makers. This growing multiplicity of functions that universities are developing, prompted by social pressures, has led many countries to introduce different organizational models for higher education which, on the one hand, are characterized by greater autonomy and academic freedom and, on the other hand, by growing responsibilities towards States and stakeholders in general.
Education must guide students to face reality, to enter the world with a sense of awareness and responsibility and, in order for this to happen, knowledge acquisition is always necessary. However, the real expected result is not the acquisition of information or knowledge but, rather, personal transformation. In this respect, motivation is not just a preliminary condition, but must be built: it is a result.

Catholic higher education aims at forming men and women who are able to engage in critical thinking, who are endowed with high level professionalism but also with rich humaneness, through which their skills are put to the service of the common good. “If need be, a Catholic University must have the courage to speak uncomfortable truths which do not please public opinion, but which are necessary to safeguard the authentic good of society. “ (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, n. 32). Research, teaching and various kinds of services that are in line with its mission, are the fundamental dimensions that should guide university education, in a constant dialogue amongst them. Catholic education’s contribution nourishes this twofold growth: in knowledge and humanity. In Catholic universities, Christian inspiration permeates the life of academic communities, nourishes engagement in research, by providing guidance and meaning to it, and supports the task of forming young people, to whom broader and more meaningful prospects can be offered beyond their – albeit legitimate – professional expectations.

Catholic university professors are called upon to provide an original contribution to overcome the fragmentation of specialized knowledge, favoring dialogue amongst the various disciplines, looking for a unitarian reconciliation of knowledge, which is never fixed but constantly evolving; in this task, they should be guided by the awareness of the one single underlying meaning of all things. Within this dialogue, theology provides an essential contribution.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays, a lot of attention has been devoted to verifying the outcome of students’ learning activities. International surveys draw up rankings and compare countries. Public opinion is very sensitive to these messages. Transparent results, social reporting, the drive towards improving existing standards: they all point to the current trend to improve the quality of education. However, it is important not to lose sight of one of education’s fundamental aspects, which is respecting each person’s readiness to adjust and the awareness that real changes usually take a long time to happen. Education, right now, is like the metaphor of the Good Sower who is busy sowing without always having the possibility to see the fruits of his work. Educating requires working with hope and confidence. Education and teaching must be concerned with constant self-improvement and verifying the effectiveness of its tools, being aware that not all expected results can always be seen or ascertained.

Each person’s formation takes place within a process that is implemented over many years by several educators, starting with parents. Schooling occurs in the midst of a continuous growth process that has already started, which might have been positive and enriching, or riddled with problems and constraints, and this must be taken into account. Catholic education finds its place within a specific time in a person’s history, and is all the more
effective if it is able to connect to this history, build alliances, share responsibilities and build educating communities. Within a framework of educational cooperation, teaching is not only a process through which knowledge or training are provided, but also guidance for everyone to discover their talents, develop professional skills and take important intellectual, social and political responsibilities in local communities. Even more than this, teaching means to accompany young people in their search for truth and beauty, for what is right and good. The effectiveness of collective action, involving both teaching and administrative staff, is given by shared values and the fact of being a learning community, in addition to teaching.

Future challenges for Catholic schools and universities are immense. However, Pope Francis’ words encourage us to renew our passion to educate younger generations: “Do not be disheartened in the face of the difficulties that the educational challenge presents! Educating is not a profession but an attitude, a way of being; in order to educate it is necessary to step out of ourselves and be among young people, to accompany them in the stages of their growth and to set ourselves beside them. Give them hope and optimism for their journey in the world. Teach them to see the beauty and goodness of creation and of man who always retains the Creator’s hallmark. But above all with your life be witnesses of what you communicate. Educators […] pass on knowledge and values with their words; but their words will have an incisive effect on children and young people if they are accompanied by their witness, their consistent way of life. Without consistency it is impossible to educate! You are all educators, there are no delegates in this field. Thus collaboration in a spirit of unity and community among the various educators is essential and must be fostered and encouraged. School can and must be a catalyst, it must be a place of encounter and convergence of the entire educating community, with the sole objective of training and helping to develop mature people who are simple, competent and honest, who know how to love with fidelity, who can live life as a response to God’s call, and their future profession as a service to society”[8].

QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questionnaire serves as a basis for reflection and suggestions. It can be used with a certain flexibility.

1. Identity and Mission

- In your country, how are Catholic schools and universities consistent with their nature and aims?

- What elements principally characterize the service that Catholic schools and universities offer students and their families?

- Can we say that Catholic schools and universities are concerned for evangelization, and not just for offering a quality service that is superior to that of other institutions? How does local or national pastoral care include, as one of its integral parts, the world of schools and universities?

- What place is there for the teaching of the Catholic religion in Catholic schools and non-Catholic schools?
- Do Catholic schools and universities promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue?

2. Subjects

- Is there provision for accompaniment in the faith for teachers, students and the families of students who attend Catholic schools and universities?

- Are students encouraged to participate in the life of the educational institution?

- Are families encouraged to participate?

- What expectations have the young people who attend high school and university, and how does the education they receive enter into dialogue with these expectations?

- Is there care for students from an economically disadvantaged background?

- Is there care for students who have learning difficulties or are physically disadvantaged?

- Are activities promoted for former students?

- How have religious congregations with a charism for education “updated” their presence in schools and universities? What difficulties have they faced and what beneficial results have they achieved?

- How does one promote the shared mission of consecrated persons and lay faithful in Catholic schools and universities?

3. Formation

- How does one recruit personnel, particular teachers and administrators?

- How does one organize and guarantee the ongoing formation, both professional and Christian, of administrators, teachers and non-teaching staff?

- Is there care to form also those who work in non-Catholic schools and universities?

- Is there care to form also parents?

- Is there care for cooperation among the various Catholic schools and universities?

4. Challenges and Outlook

- The *Instrumentum Laboris* lists many challenges that Catholic education today is called upon to face. Which of these are considered, in your context, to be the most demanding?

- How are Catholic schools and universities placed with respect to these challenges?

- Briefly, what are the best experiences of Catholic schools and universities in your country?

- What, on the other hand, are the greatest weaknesses?
- What strategies and activities have already been prepared or are being sketched out for the future?

[1] “We should always remember that we are brothers and sisters, and therefore teach others and teach ourselves not to consider our neighbour as an enemy or as an adversary to be eliminated.” POPE FRANCIS, Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace, Message for World Day of Peace (2014), n. 8.


[8] POPE FRANCIS, Address to the Students of the Jesuit Schools of Italy and Albania (June 7, 2013).
ABBREVIATION OF DOCUMENT TITLES

G.E: Gravissimum Educationis

TCS: The Catholic School

LCS: Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith

EGL: Educational Guidance in Human Love

RD: The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School

3rd M

CP: Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools

ET: Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission…

ICH: Educating to Inter-cultural Harmony in Catholic Schools

ARM: Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion

Please Note - Throughout the index M means multiple entries, to frequent to number.
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