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Anthology of the Main Texts
on the Catholic School
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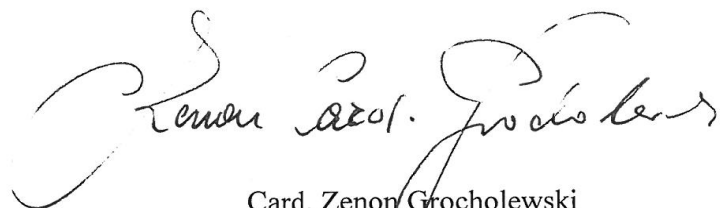
Preface

When researches were only published in paper book form, it was somehow easier to choose effective instruments for the study, the formation or the simple personal interest in knowledge. Now that we live in a society of communication and information technology, we are flooded with an unlimited amount of hastily produced information and knowledge whose quality has therefore not been checked. There is a risk to find ourselves lost “in a dark forest, having lost the right path”, to use the words of the great Dante Alighieri at the beginning of his itinerary of knowledge.

The present publication comes into the universe of communication as a humble but valuable “right path” toward what is essential – and which so escape the wearing effect of time – in the field of Catholic school education. This research, fruit of the passion for education that motivates the leaders of the European Committee for Catholic Education, draws on the main documents of the Congregation for Catholic Education published after the II Vatican Council’s Declaration on Christian education, commonly called *Gravissimum educationis* (28 October 1965).

The long history of the Catholic schools testifies in the world to the solicitude of the Church, concerned with offering to people from all peoples, of any race, religion or social condition, an effective instrument, which certainly “is designed (...) to develop with special care the intellectual faculties (...), 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. (...) and (...) fosters a spirit of mutual understanding” (*Gravissimum educationis*, n° 5) but also proposes the Gospel as a formation school. The selected documents shelter the vibrant heart of this long pedagogy of charity. That’s why this essential publication of an analytical index, together with a beautiful anthology of texts classified by themes, can be a very useful tool in the hands of educators, allowing them to access to a treasure which has reached maturity in the loving devotion of the Church to education, particularly with Catholic schools.

The recipients are all educators, and first of all the parents for whom children’s education is an essential, original and primary, irreplaceable and inalienable duty. Others also participate in this responsibility: the teachers, the school leaders and staffs, the State, the Church... I therefore hope that the use of this document can arouse in all those involved in education ever more enthusiasm and commitment in the wonderful work of formation of “persons who are responsible and inner-directed, capable of choosing freely in conformity with their conscience” (Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School*, n° 31). In these times of “educational emergency”, when educating “seems to have become even more complicated”, His Holiness Benedict XVI asks the educators “to pass on something worthwhile to the generations to come, sound rules for behaviour, and to point out lofty objectives to which to direct decisively their existence” (8 November 2009).



Card. Zenon Grocholewski
Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education

Foreword

Catholic schools strive to give their pupils integral education in an educational community inspired by a Christian spirit. They do so in accordance with the wishes of parents who entrust them with the care of their children. Any educator knows that he is at a crossroad between the present and the future, and also the past. For a Catholic school this means that it develops a dialogue between Catholic faith and culture transmitted from the past, but also between life and faith. Moreover, the school creates every day an own culture with and by its pupils. Witnesses to faith, the Christian educators thus make memory. They are present in the present and open a prospect of hope for the future. Society evolves and it also challenges the Catholic school. It is therefore not surprising that the Catholic school has to constantly rethink its educational project according to the context in which it operates. This process is again at work in our countries.

I am strongly convinced that it is now advisable to revive the great tradition of texts on the Catholic school. The Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome has published over the last fifty years a real richness of documents on the Catholic school. They are sources for reflection and they invite to action. Anyone who reads these texts is immediately aware of the diversity of themes and actors in the world of education. These texts also present the mission of the Church to bear witness to the Good News.

To support this renewal, I have composed an anthology of these texts, in a more schematic way in order to make the reading easier. It contains a selection of texts for the attention of the lay people who work in our schools. Whoever gets involved in a Catholic school must know what it means. The selection is limited to nursery, primary and secondary education. I kept the official numbering referring to the full texts, so that the reading of the original documents is facilitated. You also will find a practical index meticulously prepared by Myriam BADART, member of the CEEC staff, whom I warmly thank.

My greatest wish is that this publication may be an inspiring element to continue, on the basis of these sources, to renew the Catholic schools in a creative and intelligent way, and to bear witness to the Good News within our society.

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**The abbreviations refer to the French titles of the texts
(chronological order by publishing date)**

- DEC** [Déclaration sur l'Education Chrétienne]
Declaration on Christian Education (*Gravissimum educationis*)
28 October 1965
- EC** [L'Ecole Catholique]
The Catholic School
19 March 1977
- LC** [Le Laïc Catholique : Témoin de la Foi dans l'Ecole]
Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith
15 October 1982
- OEAH** [Orientations Educatives sur l'Amour Humain – Traits d'Education Sexuelle]
Educational Guidance in Human Love – Outlines for Sex Education
1st November 1983
- DR** [La Dimension Religieuse de l'Education dans l'Ecole Catholique]
The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School
7 April 1988
- ECAS** [L'Ecole Catholique au Seuil du Troisième Millénaire]
The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium
28 December 1997
- PC** [Les Personnes Consacrées et leur Mission dans l'Ecole – Réflexions et Orientations]
Consecrated Persons and their Mission in Schools – Reflections and Guidelines
28 October 2002
- EE** [Eduquer Ensemble dans l'Ecole Catholique]
Educating Together in a Catholic School
8 September 2007
- LCER** [Lettre circulaire sur l'Enseignement de la Religion dans l'Ecole]
Circular Letter on Religious Education in Schools
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spirituality of communion	PC 15, 24, 36, 41, 42 / EE 16, 17
style of education	PC 53 / ECAS 18
style of life	PC 8, 10, 50 / EE 38
subjects, disciplines	EC 37, 39, 41 / LC 64, 68 / OEAH 102 / DR 53, 54, 88, 101 / PC 39, 41, 50, 53, 72, 83 / ECAS 14 / LCER 18
subsidiarity (family - school)	EC 70 / OEAH 17 / PC 60 / ECAS 17 / LCER 8
synthesis faith - culture	EC 37, 38, 43, 71 / LC 29, 56, 64 / DR 52 / PC 6, 54 / ECAS 14
synthesis faith - life	EC 37, 43, 45, 71 / LC 31 / PC 6, 54
T	
teacher of religion	EC 71 / LC 59, 66 / DR 51, 65, 96, 97 / PC 54
teachers (formation, unity, witnesses, function)	DEC 8
transformation	EC 66 / LC 30, 67 / OEAH 105 / DR 66 / PC 69
transmission of (Christian) culture	EC 36, 49, 50, 62 / LC 20, 21, 24, 30 / DR 108 / EE 26-33

truth	EC 39, 41 / LC 16, 29, 30, 52, 55 / OEAH 87 / DR 49, 57, 82, 107 / PC 6, 10, 11, 18, 37-39, 41, 47, 50, 81 / ECAS 9, 14 / EE 3, 26-33, 38
U	
unity of purpose	EC 59
universities	DEC 10, 11 / LC 65 / DR 97 / PC 81
V	
value of life and humanity	EC 8, 30, 34 / LC 28 / DR 108
values	DEC 1, 5 / EC 11, 26, 29, 30, 32, 35, 39, 42, 53, 85 / LC 12, 21, 30, 31, 47, 49 / OEAH 16, 19, 32, 36, 37, 39, 52, 56, 62, 64, 70, 85, 88, 89, 91, 94, 97, 104, 105, 109 / DR 6, 25, 26, 45, 52, 53, 63, 100, 107 / PC 12, 20, 38, 41, 46, 53, 54, 58, 60, 63, 65, 75, 79, 84 / ECAS 9, 14, 15 / EE 5, 26-33, 39
values (Christian)	EC 53 / LC 30
vision of reality	EC 28-29, 33, 36 / DR 34 / EE 39
virtues	EC 36, 37, 47 / OEAH 35, 46 / DR 63, 76
vocation	DEC 5 / EC 36, 45 / LC 6, 19, 24, 27, 33, 37, 38, 43, 60, 61, 65, 68, 72-74, 78, / OEAH 2, 5, 18, 22, 24, 26, 27, 29-31, 33, 43, 46, 56, 62 / DR 61, 76 / PC 5, 6, 12, 13, 17, 21, 24, 30, 31, 50, 55, 56, 82 / ECAS 5, 12, 19 / EE 3, 6, 15, 21-25, 40, 41, 44-46, 47-48
W	
whole man	EC 8, 35 / ECAS 9
witness (personal, life)	LC 33, 40, 53, 54, 59 / DR 37, 38, 96, 110
witness, testimony	DEC 8 / EC 43, 46, 47, 53, 54, 78 / LC 9, 21, 32, 33, 40, 42, 46, 53, 54, 59 / OEAH 23, 53 / DR 37, 38, 45, 60, 95, 96, 103, 104, 110 / PC 38, 65, 75, 78 / EE 4, 15, 38, 39, 44-46 / LCER 16

Declaration on Christian Education

Gravissimum educationis

28 October 1965

Declaration on Christian Education

Gravissimum educationis

(28 October 1965)

DEC

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.”

The text situates education in the development of technology, scientific investigation and the new means of social communication. These evolutions offer an opportunity of attaining more easily the humanity’s cultural and spiritual heritage. There is an effort “to promote more education”.

It concerns a mission of the Church, the mission “of proclaiming the mystery of salvation to all men and of restoring all things in Christ”. In order to fulfil this mission 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. Therefore she has a role in the progress and development of education.”

DEC 1

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 that is in keeping with their ultimate goal.”

The aim of education:

“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 (...) 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 (...). Moreover they should be so trained to take their part in social life.”

Exhorting children to appreciate values and to know and love God:

“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.”

DEC 2

Christian Education

“Since all Christians have become by rebirth of water and the Holy Spirit a new creature, (...) they have a right to a Christian education. A Christian education does not merely strive for the maturing of a human person (...), but has as its principal purpose this goal: that the baptized, while they are gradually introduced the knowledge of the mystery of salvation, become ever more aware of the gift of Faith they have received.”

DEC 3

The Authors of Education

Parents as primary and principal educators:

“(...) parents (...) must be recognized as the primary and principal educators. (...) Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect 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 (...) that children should be taught from their early years to have a knowledge of God (...), to worship Him, and to love their neighbor.”

Society:

“(…) certain rights and duties belong indeed to civil society (…). 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 (…).”

The Church:

“Finally (…) the duty of educating belongs to the Church (…) 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, (…) of assisting men to be able to come to the fullness of this life. The Church is bound (…) 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.”

DEC 4 Various Aids to Christian Education

“In fulfilling its educational role, the Church, eager to employ all suitable aids (…). Foremost among these is catechetical instruction, which enlightens and strengthens the faith, nourishes life according to the spirit of Christ, leads to intelligent and active participation in the liturgical mystery and gives motivation for apostolic activity. The Church esteems highly and seeks to penetrate and ennoble with her own spirit also other aids (…) which are of great influence in forming souls and molding men, (…) in particular, schools.”

DEC 5 The Importance of Schools

“Among all educational instruments the school has a special importance. 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 vocation 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 vocation demands special qualities of mind and heart, very careful preparation, and continuing readiness to renew and to adapt.”

DEC 6 The duties and rights of parents. The public authorities

“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 (…) 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.”

“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 (…).”

“Therefore this sacred synod exhorts the faithful (and) the associations of parents (to) further with their assistance all the work of the school but especially the moral education it must impart.”

DEC 7 **Moral and religious education in all schools**

“(…) 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, but especially by the ministry of priests and laymen who give them the doctrine of salvation (…).”

The text encourages parents to demand, if need be, a catechesis class for their children, and “the Church esteems highly those civil authorities (…) which, 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.”

DEC 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.”

What is its proper function?

“(…) 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.”

Teachers in Catholic Schools:

“(…) let teachers recognize that the Catholic school depends upon them almost entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs.”

- (1) A good formation of teachers is needed: “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.”
- (2) Unity in charity: They have to be “linked in charity to one another and to their students”.
- (3) Witnesses to Christ: “(…) may teachers by their life as much as by their instruction bear witness to Christ, the unique Teacher.”
- (4) “Let them work as partners with parents.”
- (5) “Let them do all they can to stimulate their students to act for themselves.”
- (6) “After graduation (let them) continue to assist their former students with advice and friendship, and by establishing special associations imbued with the true spirit of the Church.”

Work of teachers and duty of parents:

“The work of these teachers (…) 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.”

DEC 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.”

(...)

“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.”

DEC 10 **Catholic Colleges and Universities**

This text concerns higher education schools, colleges and universities. “In these schools (...) an ever deeper understanding (...) may be obtained and (...) 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 (...).”

“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.”

Finally the Church wishes the establishment of “associations and university centers under Catholic auspices in which (...) abiding spiritual and intellectual assistance (should be given) to the youth of the university.”

DEC 11 **Faculties of Sacred Sciences**

The Faculties of Theology prepare their 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.”

DEC 12 **Coordination to be Fostered in Scholastic Matters**

“Cooperation (...) on a diocesan, national and international level (...) 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.”

DEC **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.”

The Catholic School

19 March 1977

The Catholic School

(19 March 1977)

I

THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Mission of the Church:

EC 6 **The Church fulfils her mission in relationship with Christ**

The Church, founded by Jesus Christ, is a visible organism, living by the power of the Spirit. It is through her living relationship with Christ that the Church discovers greater energy in fulfilling her mission.

EC 7 **This mission is evangelisation**

“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.”

EC 8 **The Catholic School: a privileged centre for integral education**

(..) “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.”

EC 9 **Education in the faith as part of the mission of the Church**

“The Catholic school forms part of the saving mission of the Church, especially for education in the faith. (...) and to foster in her children a full awareness of their rebirth to a new life.”
(*Gravissimum educationis*, 3)

The particular educational project “finds its definition in the Gospel, taking root in the minds and lives of the faithful”.

The Church's educational involvement and cultural pluralism:

EC 11 **The Christian thought: a valuable criterion before diversity**

“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." (Paul VI, OIEC, 1974)

Formation of autonomous personalities and united communities:

- EC 12** - To “insure strong character formation and responsible personalities” (...) capable of resisting the debilitating influence of relativism, and
- 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”.

EC 13-14 **The Catholic school: promotion of freedom in a plural world**

“The Church upholds the principle of a plurality of school systems in order to safeguard her objectives in the face of cultural pluralism. (...) By offering the alternative of the Catholic school, 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.” (*Gravissimum educationis*, 8)

- EC 15** **The Catholic School: an original contribution to cultural dialogue**
“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 for civilisation and for the natural and supernatural destiny of man.”

II
PRESENT DIFFICULTIES OVER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The religious dimension contributes to the development of other aspects of the personality

- EC 19** **Integral/Complete 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.”

III
THE SCHOOL AS A CENTRE OF HUMAN FORMATION

- EC 25** **The Catholic School: firstly a school**
“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.”

- EC 26** **The Catholic School: a place of integral formation through systematic and critical assimilation of culture**
The school is “a place of integral formation by means of a systematic and critical assimilation of culture”. In other words it “is a privileged place in which, through a living encounter with a cultural inheritance, integral formation occurs”. This function needs “personal contacts and commitments which consider absolute values in a life-context and seek to insert them into a life-framework”.

- EC 28** **Programmes and methods in the light of the vision**
“(…) the school has to review its entire programme of formation (….) and the methods used, in the light of that vision of the reality from which it draws its inspiration.”

- EC 29** **Reference to a determined attitude of life based on values**
So, either implicit or explicit reference to a determined attitude to life – that each member of the school community adopts, albeit with differing degrees of awareness – is unavoidable in education.
It is indeed this reference to values, on which this vision of reality is based, that “gives teachers and adults authority to educate”

An educational project aiming at the promotion of the whole person

“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.”

- EC 30** **Promotion of spiritual dynamism and moral freedom of the person**
The aim of any school is to “draw out the ethical dimension for the precise purpose of arousing the individual's inner spiritual dynamism and to aid his achieving moral freedom”. This moral freedom is not based on present-day values but on “those absolute values which alone give meaning and value to human life”.

EC 31 **Faced with the development of sciences and technologies: forming autonomous and responsible persons, capable of choosing freely and in conformity with their conscience**
If the school has “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.”

EC 32 **An array of values expressed through interpersonal relationships and adhesion to the vision**
“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

The foundation

EC 33 **Its reference to the Christian concept of reality centred on Christ**
First of all, what characterises the Catholic school as Catholic is ‘its reference to a Christian concept of life centred on Jesus Christ’.

EC 34 **Christ: foundation of the educational project**
“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.”
Explicit reference to the Christian vision
“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.”

EC 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.”
Christ as a model and example of life
“He is the One Who ennobles man, gives meaning to human life, and is the Model which the Catholic school offers to its pupils.”

EC 36 **Culture acquires its place in the integral vocation of man**
“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 vocational life of man." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 57).

Forming in the virtues

“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.” (*Gravissimum educationis*, 2)

EC 37 Programme and duties of the Catholic School

From this foundation, we can deduce the programme and duties of the Catholic School:

- (a) To reach a synthesis of culture and faith by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel;
- (b) To reach a synthesis of faith and life in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian.

(a) Synthesis of culture and faith through integrating human knowledge

EC 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.”

EC 39 In the respect of the autonomy and methodology of each subject

The different subjects of human knowledge contribute to integral education and help to develop faith only if they are taught according to their own particular methods, respecting their autonomy.

“The aim of the subjects is not merely the attainment of knowledge but the acquisition of values and the discovery of truth.”

EC 41 In search of the total truth

First of all, the school considers human knowledge as a truth to be discovered, if subjects are taught with honesty and intellectual rigour. In doing so the school creates the basis for searching the total truth, beyond partial truths. “A teacher, who is full of Christian wisdom and 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.”

EC 42 From human values to eternal values

“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.”

Towards the supreme Value, who is the Creator of all things

“This movement towards the Uncreated Source of all knowledge highlights the importance of teaching for the growth of faith.”

EC 43 The eminent role of the educator: revealing the Christian message

“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.”

(b) Synthesis of faith and life: integral formation of the Christian person

EC 45 “The Catholic school has as its specific duty the complete Christian formation of its pupils (...). 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.”

- The Catholic school helps “young people to share their personal lives with God”.
- It helps them “to overcome their individualism and discover, in the light of faith, their specific vocation to live responsibly in a community with others”.
- It helps them to find in their life the way “to commit themselves to serve God in their brethren and to make the world a better place for man to live in.”

EC 46 To interpret the language of the universe

- The Catholic school teaches the pupils “to discern in the voice of the universe the Creator”;
- Action in the world as expression of God
It teaches the pupil “that he is called to be a living witness to God's love for men”

EC 47 A specific atmosphere

The Catholic school must create a specific climate. “The Catholic school tries to create within its walls a climate (*Gravissimum educationis*, 8) in which the pupil's faith will gradually mature and enable him to assume the responsibility placed on him by Baptism.”

- Formation in virtues
It gives particular attention to “the gradual formation of conscience in virtues”.
- The centre of the educational action is Christ
“Christ is the teaching-centre, the Model on Whom the Christian shapes his life.”
- A Catholic school differs from another school
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.

EC 48 Formation in self control in order to be capable to choose freely and to develop critical judgment

Alongside the so-called "parallel" environments that educate young people – family, parish, youth associations, etc. – the school must form the pupils' critical faculties to bring them to a measure of self control and the ability to choose freely and develop their critical and personal analysis.

EC 49 Teaching of the Gospel

“The Catholic school is aware of the importance of the Gospel-teaching as transmitted through the Church and of...”

EC 50 Religious teaching

... an explicit and systematic religious teaching.”

The Catholic school, a meeting place for the Christian educational community

EC 53 Catholic schools must become "meeting places for those who wish to express Christian values in education" (Paul VI, OIEC, 1974).

(...) a community whose aim is the transmission of values for living, which find their fulfilment in the Person of Christ.

“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.”

EC 54 The community dimension required by faith

“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. (...) The Catholic school (...) 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.”

EC 55 **Constant reference to the Gospel and recurrent encounter with Christ**
“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" (*Gravissimum educationis*, 8). In this setting the pupil experiences his dignity as a person before he knows its definition.”

EC 56 **The religious doctrine as a criterion of the educational work**
The criterion of the school community’s educational work is the religious doctrine of the Church.

Other aspects of the Catholic school’s educational project:

EC 57 **To prepare for meeting the others**
“The Catholic school prepares for and promotes the encounter 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.”

EC 58 **To contribute to establish justice**
The Catholic school contributes to establish justice. “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.”

A school open to all social classes

“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.”

EC 59 **An educational project developed with the free cooperation of all**
“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 (...) and as such can be refused.”

A project to be developed in the unity of purpose and conviction of all

“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.”

EC 60 **Participation of the community in the educational project**

A community inviting to an evangelical way of life

The educational community helps its members “to adopt a Christian way of life”. In such a community “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”.

EC 61 **In responsible cooperation**

That’s why it is for all the members of the educational community – teachers, parents, pupils, and administrative personnel – a duty in conscience to cooperate with responsibility to the realisation of the common educational project, each according his/her own role and skills.

EC 62 **The Catholic school as a service to the Church and to society**

- A social service through the realisation of the common good
These school communities aim at the realisation of the common good; they, therefore, are “an irreplaceable source of service (...) to society. Today especially one sees a world which clamours for solidarity and yet experiences the rise of new forms of individualism”.
- A service to the Church by ensuring the Christian presence in culture and school
“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.”

EC 63 **An apostolate**

In this way the Catholic school performs "an authentic apostolate".
(*Gravissimum educationis*, 8)

V

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL TODAY

EC 65 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.

Some difficulties which the Catholic school struggles with

EC 66 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 also recognise that the task of a Catholic school is infinitely more difficult and more complex today, since this is a time when Christianity demands to be incarnated in new ways of life according to the transformations that have been introduced in the Church and in society, particularly pluralism and increasing secularisation.

EC 67 **To make constant self-criticism and return to basic principles**

“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”(...) of its inspiration.

To search criteria

The Catholic school will probably not find a quick answer to contemporary problems, but at least criteria which can begin to solve them, according to the new pedagogical insights and in collaboration with all those who work honestly for the true development of mankind.

In cooperation with all the schools

This cooperation must be particularly developed with other Christian communities, in order to promote, in this field too, the unity of Christians. But cooperation must also be extended to State schools. Started through meetings of teachers and mutual research, it can be opened to the pupils and their families.

VI PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS

The text subdivides these questions in six themes:

- 1) The organisation and planning of the Catholic school
- 2) The distinctive Catholic character of the school
- 3) Involvement of Religious in the school apostolate
- 4) The Catholic school in mission countries
- 5) Pastoral care of teachers and professional associations
- 6) Economic situation of Catholic schools

1) The organisation and planning of the Catholic school

EC 70 The Second Vatican Council enunciated

The principle of participation and co-responsibility

This principle must apply to the Catholic school in the elaboration of the Christian educational project and its implementation. “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.”

The principle of subsidiarity

“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.”

EC 71 These principles are particularly applicable to the apostolate of the Catholic school: as well to teachers of religion as to all lay people involved. Some are invited to cooperate with the hierarchy in the field of religious instruction/teaching, others in more general religious education. “We endeavour to promote this religious education by assisting the pupils to a personal integration of culture and faith and of faith and living.”

A mandate from the bishop responsible for pastoral work

In this sense, we can say that the Catholic school receives a "mandate" from those who organise pastoral work, and more particularly from the local Bishop.

2) The distinctive Catholic character of the school

EC 73 We must ensure a framework which guarantees the protection and promotion of the distinctive Catholic character

- Hierarchical authorities watch over the orthodoxy of religious instruction and the observance of Christian moral principles.
- It is the task of the whole educative community to ensure that a distinctive Christian educational environment is maintained in practice.
- The role of parents: to contribute in Christian education. Firstly within their family but also through their active presence in the participation structures in order to make certain that the school remains faithful to Christian principles of education.
- The role of teachers: safeguarding and developing the distinctive mission of the Catholic school, particularly with regard to the Christian atmosphere which should characterise the school's life and teaching.

3) *Involvement of Religious in the school apostolate*

- EC 74 Some Religious Institutes have abandoned school work because of all kinds of reasons which must be examined.
- EC 75 The text underlines the direct character of school apostolate and its apostolic value. The apparent failure to gain perceptible results in pursuing certain apostolic objectives in education is “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” (*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, 22).

4) *The Catholic school in mission countries*

- EC 77 The Catholic school will be all the more effective if it appears as the true expression of the local and national Catholic community, and if it more contributes to development through its professional quality and willingness to cooperate.

5) *Pastoral care of teachers and professional associations*

- EC 78 **By their witness and their behaviour teachers of Catholic schools give the Catholic school its specificity**
“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.”
- EC 79 **Professional associations must take into account the specific mission of the Catholic school**
“Therefore, (lay people in) 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.”
- EC 80 **Respect and cooperation of the specific associations to the specific mission**
“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.”

VII
COURAGEOUS AND UNIFIED COMMITMENT

- EC 83** **With courage and audacity**
(...) “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 (...).”
- EC 84** **The fruits of grace and freedom**
“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.”
- EC 85** **The Christian educational project is offered to non-Christians in the respect of the spiritual goods and values of diverse civilisations**
“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.”
- EC 86** **To remain faithful to the specific educational project**
“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.”
- EC 88** **Never having doubts about the apostolic importance of Christian education**
“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.”

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith

15 October 1982

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith

(15 October 1982)

INTRODUCTION

- LC 1** “For it is the lay teachers, believers or not, who will substantially determine whether or not a school realizes its aims and accomplishes its objectives.”
- LC 2** “The most basic reason for this new role for Catholic laity, a role which the Church regards as positive and enriching, is theological.”

I

THE IDENTITY OF THE LAY CATHOLIC IN A SCHOOL

The Laity in the Church

- LC 6** The lay Catholic “is 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. (...) They have the same vocation to perfection”.

Called to apostolate

- LC 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” (*Lumen Gentium*, 36) 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.”
- LC 9** “(...) lay people must be ready to proclaim the message (i.e. the Gospel) through their words, and witness to it in what they do.”
- LC 10** “Because of the experiences that lay people acquire in their lives, (...) 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.”

The lay Catholics in the school

LC 12 The Catholic school

Parents, the first educators

While it is true that “parents are the first and foremost educators of their children” (*Gravissimum educationis*, 3) and that the rights and duties that they have in this regard are “original and primary with respect to the educational role of others”, (*Familiaris Consortio* AAS 74) 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.

The school

“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 judgment, 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. (*Gravissimum educationis*, 5) For all of these reasons, the school enters into the specific mission of the Church.”

LC 13 Social function of the school

“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.”

LC 14 Free choice of the school

“(…) the individual being educated has the right to choose the system of education - and therefore the type of school - that he or she prefers. (*Gravissimum educationis*, 3) 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, (*Gravissimum educationis*, 6) have the right to make this choice. In principle, a State monopoly of education is not permissible, and only a pluralism of school systems will respect the fundamental right and the freedom of individuals (...). The Church offers the Catholic school as a specific and enriching contribution to this variety of school possibilities.”

Evangelization function of the lay Catholic

“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

LC 16 Need of a professional preparation

“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.”

A specific characteristic of the educator: the communication of the truth

“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 Him who is 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.”

LC 17 Integral formation

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 ".(The Catholic School, 31)

LC 18 A Christian concept of the human person

“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.”

It also attributes to the human person:

- the dignity of a child of God;
- 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 (...). Finally, it proposes Christ as both model and means (...). Thus, Catholic educators can be certain that they make human beings more human. (...) 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 (...) possess this same exalted dignity.”

LC 19 Social commitment

“The vocation 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 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” a reality.

But lay educators must bring the experience of their own lives to this social development and social awareness.”

LC 20 Communicating culture in the perspective on faith

“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. (...); the Church embraces everything in human culture which is compatible with Revelation. (...) 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.”

not only in an organic way, but also in a critical, evaluative and historical way

“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 evaluation (...).”

“Here too, lay educators have a special role to play. (...) 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.”

LC 21 Priority to direct and personal contacts through dialogue

“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.”

LC 22 The educational community

“Everything that the Catholic educator does in a school takes place within the structure of an educational community (...). 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.”

LC 23 Relationships with the educational community, the local Church and the social environment

“The communitarian structure of the school brings the Catholic educator into contact 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.”

LC 24 To summarize: a definition of the lay ministry

“To summarize: The Lay Catholic educator is a person who exercises a specific mission within the Church by living, in faith, a secular vocation 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

LC 25 This part of the text is divided into: (A) the common elements of an Identity that is being lived, and (B) the elements of the Catholic educational vocation which are specific to different types of schools.

A. Common elements of an Identity that is being lived (LC 26-37)

1. Realism combined with hope
2. Professionalism. A Christian Concept of Humanity and of Life
3. Synthesis of Faith, Culture and Life
4. Personal Life Witness. Direct and Personal Contact with Students
5. Communitarian aspects
6. A Vocation, rather than a Profession

1. Realism combined with hope

LC 26 “The educator is confronted with many difficulties in the family, school and society. 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.”

2. Professionalism. A Christian Concept of Humanity and of Life

LC 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 vocation, 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.”

LC 28 **Concept of man and life**

“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.”

3. Synthesis of Faith, Culture and Life

LC 29 “An organic, critical, and value-oriented communication of culture 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.”

LC 30 **Presenting Christian values**

“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.”

LC 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 fullness 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.”

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

LC 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 (...). It must never be forgotten that, in the crises, (...) 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". (John Paul II, Discourse to UNESCO, June 2, 1980)

LC 33 Giving witness through personal dialogue with the pupil/student

“(...) 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 need 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 vocation in the Church. They should try to discover and cultivate vocations to the priesthood or to Religious life, or the call to live a private commitment in a Secular Institute or Catholic apostolic organization (...). And they should also help students to discern a vocation to marriage or to celibacy. 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.”

5. Communitarian aspects

LC 34 Communication with the other members of the educational community

“Along with a proper development of their individual personalities, (...) 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” therefore, there is a special duty to accept willingly and even to encourage opportunities for contact with the parents of students.”

LC 35 Being attentive to the socio-cultural environment

“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.”

LC 36 Collaborating within professional associations

“Lay Catholic educators must 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.”

6. *A Vocation, rather than a Profession*

LC 37 “The work of a lay educator (...) is marked by, and raised to, a super-natural Christian vocation. The life of the Catholic teacher must be marked by the exercise of a personal vocation in the Church, and not simply by the exercise of a profession. In a lay vocation, detachment and generosity are joined to legitimate defence of personal rights; but it is still a vocation, with the fullness of life and the personal commitment that the word implies. It offers ample opportunity for a life filled with enthusiasm.”

B. Elements of the Catholic educational vocation which are specific to different types of schools

The text distinguishes the Catholic school (LC 38-46), schools with diverse educational projects (LC 47-52) and other schools (LC 53-55).

In the Catholic School

LC 38 The text mentions the distinctive feature of the Catholic school as defined in *Gravissimum educationis* (n° 8) and The Catholic School (N° 34): “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”.

“From all this, it is obvious that the Catholic school fully enters into the mission of the Church, especially in the need for education in the faith.”

“The Catholic school is the school in which the vocation 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: the great heterogeneity of both students and teachers within the Catholic schools of many countries today.”

- LC 39 Identifying with the educational project and carrying it out**
“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 charisma 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.”
- LC 40 Participating in the liturgical and sacramental life**
“As a visible manifestation of the faith they profess and the life witness they are supposed to manifest, 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.”
- LC 41 Contributing to create a community of faith**
“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.”
- LC 42 Relationships with non-Catholic pupils/students**
“Faith does not admit of violence. 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.”
- LC 43** “The educational community represents the richness of the ecclesial community: priests, men and women Religious, and lay people are all present together in a school (...). For each of these types of ecclesial vocation 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.”
- LC 44 Openness to outside world**
“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 (...). 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.”

LC 45 **Replacing priests and religious people**

Before the decline in number of religious vocations, lay people 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 (...). 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”.

LC 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. (...) This does not diminish the importance of the unique kind of witness that men and women Religious give in their own teaching centres.”

In Schools That Have Different Educational Philosophies

LC 47 “We now consider all those schools, public or private, whose educational philosophy is different from that of the Catholic school, but is not essentially incompatible with the Christian concept of the human person and of life. (...) These schools may admit the coexistence of a variety of philosophies and ideologies; (...) in such schools, each educator gives lessons, explains principles, and promotes values according to his or her own concept of the human person, and specific ideology.”

LC 48 **The lay educator is the only way in which Church is present**

“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. (...) A clear awareness of this fact will be a great help to encourage lay Catholics to assume the responsibility that is theirs.”

LC 49 **Teaching the subjects in a faith vision**

“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.”

LC 50 **Respect and dialogue with other convictions**

“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.”

LC 51 **Active participation of lay people**

“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.”

LC 52 The lay person, image of man inspired by the Gospel

“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

LC 53 “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 (...): 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. Everything that has been said above about awareness of responsibility, a Christian perspective in teaching, 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.”

LC 54 In countries where the Church is persecuted

“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.”

LC 55 Attitude towards non-Catholic pupils/students

“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

LC 56 Religion must be taught in the school

“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 (...) 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 (...) ought to form a part of the curriculum of every school.”

LC 57 **The teaching of religion in schools: an eminent form of the lay apostolate**
The teaching of religion is, along with catechesis, “an eminent form of the lay apostolate”.

LC 58 “(...) in this field of religious education (...) the Church depends on lay collaboration.”

LC 59 **Being careful and faithful to the Magisterium**
“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". 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 fulfilment of their role; and 'they should refrain from upsetting the minds of children and young people ... with outlandish theories ". 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

LC 60 “The concrete living out of a vocation 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.”

Awareness and Stimulation

LC 61 Lay Catholics “(...) 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 vocation. To what extent they actually do have such an awareness is something that these lay people should be asking themselves”.

LC 62 **The need to update religious formation**
“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.”

LC 63 The purpose is (...) “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

LC 64 **A professional formation, preferably in formation centres under the direction of the Church**
“If the ideological orientation of a centre 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 centre for teacher formation under the direction of the Church.”

LC 65 **A permanent religious formation**
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 vocation. This means that religious formation must be oriented toward both personal sanctification and apostolic mission, for these are two inseparable elements in a Christian vocation. “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”.
“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” and help to keep intensely alive the kind of social sensitivity that is needed.
(...) 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.”

LC 66 **Preparation in religious pedagogy**
“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

LC 67 “Our age is characterized by change that is constant and accelerated, (...): the need for new attitudes and new methods is constant.”

LC 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 vocation of an educator requires “a constant readiness to begin anew and to adapt”. (*Gravissimum educationis*, 5) 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.”

IV
**THE SUPPORT THAT THE CHURCH OFFERS
TO LAY CATHOLICS WORKING IN SCHOOLS**

LC 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 the giving up of teaching responsibilities. So, they should always be able to count on the support of the Church.”

Support in the Faith, in the Word and in Sacramental Life

LC 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 vocation.(...) 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.”

Community Support

LC 73 **The educational vocation of lay Catholics should be publicized**

“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.”

LC 74 **This vocation must be understood and esteemed**

“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.”

LC 75 **Encouraging Catholic associations of educators**

“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 (...).”

The Support of the Educational Institutions themselves – The Catholic School and the Laity

LC 77 **Cordial atmosphere and equality relationships**

“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.”

LC 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.”

Adequate salary

“First, lay people must receive an adequate salary, guaranteed by a well defined contract, for the work they do in the school (...).”

Participation

“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. (...) To achieve the kind of participation that is desirable, several conditions are indispensable: genuine esteem of the lay vocation, 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.”

LC 79 Care for permanent formation

“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. frequently in need of, and do not easily find elsewhere.”

LC 80 Assistance to families

“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 should recognize the level of their responsibility for a support that extends to all aspects of the school: interest, esteem, collaboration, and economic assistance. (...) Collaboration of the families should extend to a share in accomplishing the objectives of the school, and also sharing in responsibility for the school.”

Educational Guidance in Human Love
Outlines for Sex Education

1st November 1983

Educational Guidance in Human Love **Outlines for sex education**

(1st November 1983)

INTRODUCTION

- OEAH 1** APPLICATION OF CONCILIAR RULES. 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". Treating Christian education, Vatican Council II drew attention to the necessity of offering "a positive and prudent sex education" to children and youth. The Congregation for Catholic Education (...) considers it proper to make its contribution for the application of the Conciliar Declaration.
- OEAH 2** OBJECT OF THE DOCUMENT. This document (...) 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 vocation 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.
- OEAH 3** ADAPTATION TO THE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES. 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 Bishops to the pastoral necessities of each local Church.

SIGNIFICANCE OF SEXUALITY

- OEAH 4** IMPORTANCE OF SEXUALITY IN EDUCATION. 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".
- OEAH 5** SEXUALITY AND GENITALITY. 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 vocation 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.
- OEAH 6** SEXUALITY ORIENTED BY LOVE. 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 PRESENT SITUATION

- OEAH 7** DANGER AND DISORIENTATION. 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.

- OEAH 8** NECESSITY OF SEX EDUCATION. 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.
- OEAH 9** INSUFFICIENT PREPARATION. 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.
- OEAH 10** PARTICULAR DIFFICULTIES IN SOME MILIEUS. 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.
- OEAH 11** A DELICATE UNDERTAKING. 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.
- OEAH 12** PRAISEWORTHY INITIATIVES. Some Catholic organisations in different parts (...) 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.
- OEAH 13** SCIENTIFIC SERIOUSNESS. 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

- OEAH 14** THE JUST PERSPECTIVE FOR SEXUAL EDUCATION. 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. Vatican Council II in the "Declaration on Christian Education" presents the perspective in which sex education must be set, (...). 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".
- OEAH 15** FAMILY: THE PREFERENTIAL PLACE... 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. 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. 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.

- OEAH 16** ... INTERPRETER OF ESSENTIAL VALUES. 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".
- OEAH 17** SUBSIDIARITY OF THE SCHOOL. 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".
- OEAH 18** EDUCATION FOR CHASTITY. 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". 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 vocation 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".
- OEAH 19** IN RELATION WITH MORAL PRINCIPLES. 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".
- OEAH 20** A DOCUMENT DESTINED FOR EDUCATORS. This document (...) 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

- OEAH 21** CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ROOTED IN FAITH. 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".

CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF SEXUALITY

- OEAH 22** THE BODY REVEALS THE MEANING OF LIFE... 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 vocation. 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, "expresses the person" 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".
- OEAH 23** THE BODY REVEALS THE LOVE OF GOD... 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".
- OEAH 24** IT EXPRESSES THE VOCATION OF THE MUTUAL GIFT OF ONESELF. The body, in as much as it is sexual, expresses the vocation of man and woman to reciprocity, which is to love and to the mutual gift of self. The body, in short, calls man and woman to the constitutive vocation to fecundity as one of the fundamental meanings of their being sexual.
- OEAH 25** MAN AND WOMAN, DIFFERENT TO COMPLETE EACH OTHER. The sexual distinction, which appears as a determination of human being, is diversity, but in equality of nature and dignity. The human person, through his or her intimate nature, exists in relation to others, implying 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.
- OEAH 26** THEY FORM A COMMUNITY OF LOVE. 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 vocation not only as single persons, but also as couples, which are communities of love. 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.
- OEAH 27** SIN: AN OBSTACLE TO NUPTIAL EXPERIENCE. The presence of sin obscures original innocence, rendering less easy to man and woman the perception of these truths: their decipherment 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". Faced with this capacity of the body to be at the same time sign and instrument of ethical vocation, one can establish an analogy between the body itself and sacramental economy, which is the concrete means through which grace and salvation reach us.
- OEAH 28** TENDENCY TO DEVALUATE SEX. 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.
- OEAH 29** CHRIST, THE PERFECT MAN. "It is only in the Mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear", and human existence acquires its full meaning in the vocation to the divine life. Only by following Christ does man respond to this vocation and become so fully man, growing finally to reach the perfect man in the measure approaching the full maturity of Christ.

- OEAH 30** IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST: MARRIAGE... In the light of the Mystery of Christ, sexuality appears to us as a vocation to realise that love which the Holy Spirit instils in the hearts of the redeemed. Jesus Christ has enriched such vocation with the Sacrament of Marriage.
- OEAH 31** ... AND VIRGINITY. Furthermore, Jesus has pointed out by word and example the vocation to virginity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Virginity is a vocation to love: it renders the heart more free to love God. 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. 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.
- OEAH 32** VALUE OF SEXUALITY... In synthesis, sexuality is called to express different values to which specific moral exigencies correspond. Oriented towards interpersonal dialogue, it contributes to the integral maturation of people, opening them to the gift of self in love; furthermore, tied 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.
- OEAH 33** ... IN THE VARIOUS VOCATIONS. The affective life, proper to each sex, expresses itself in a characteristic mode in the different states of life: conjugal union, consecrated celibacy (...), 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

- OEAH 34** OBJECTIVES OF SEXUAL EDUCATION: KNOWLEDGE... 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 is called. 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.
- OEAH 35** ... FORMATION, MATURATION, AND... 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.
- OEAH 36** ... CAPACITY FOR OFFERING. 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".

- OEAH 37** INFORMATION ENLIVENED BY VALUES. 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, 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.
- OEAH 38** REPERCUSSIONS OF SEXUALITY IN THE PERSON. 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 reactions, of the pupil, education of the will, and the degree of development of spiritual life sustained with the help of grace.
- OEAH 39** PROPOSING AUTHENTIC IDEALS TO YOUNG PEOPLE. 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.
- OEAH 40** CLEAR MOTIVATION. 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.
- OEAH 41** VARIOUS SIGNIFICANCES OF SEXUALITY ACCORDING TO THE AGE. 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.
- OEAH 42** PROGRESSIVE STAGES OF SEXUALITY. 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: genitivity, 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.
- OEAH 43** EDUCATION IS REALISED IN FULL ONLY IN FAITH. 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. 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 vocation 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.
- OEAH 44** SIN AND OTHER NEGATIVE FACTORS. 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. 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.

- OEAH 45** THE HELP OF GRACE. 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.
- OEAH 46** INNER LIFE, BEYOND EVERY MORALISM. 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 vocation 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.
- OEAH 47** THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST AND THE VIRGIN MARY. 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

- OEAH 48** EDUCATION IS FIRSTLY THE DUTY OF THE FAMILY. Education, in the first place, is the duty of the family, which "is the school of richest humanity". It is, in fact, the best environment to accomplish the obligation of securing a gradual education in sexual life. The family has an affective dignity which is suited to making acceptable without trauma the most delicate realities and to integrating them harmoniously, in a balanced and rich personality.
- OEAH 49** RECIPROCAL AFFECTION AND TRUST, AND DIALOGUE WITH THEIR CHILDREN. 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.
- OEAH 50** MODEL OF CONDUCT GIVEN BY ADULTS. In order to be able to give efficacious guidance, this 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.

- OEAH 51** COLLABORATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND EDUCATORS. 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.
- OEAH 52** PERMANENT INFLUENCE OF LIVED VALUES. 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. 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

- OEAH 53** ECCLESIAL DIMENSION IN SEX EDUCATION. 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. 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.
- OEAH 54** COLLABORATION BETWEEN FAMILY AND ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY. 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.
- OEAH 55** CO-RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. 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

- OEAH 56** THE POSITIVE VALUES OF SEXUALITY. 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 vocation of the Christian is to love, and that the vocation to love is realised in two diverse ways: in marriage, or in a life of celibacy for love of the kingdom. "Marriage and virginity are the two modes of expressing and living the one mystery of the Covenant of God with His people".
- OEAH 57** CATECHESIS IN HARMONY WITH THE MAGISTERIUM. 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.
- OEAH 58** INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION. 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.

OEAH 59 HELP TO FAMILY. 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 easier the solution of sexual problems.

PRE-MARRIAGE CATECHESIS

OEAH 60 EXACT VISION OF THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC ON SEXUALITY. 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.

OEAH 61 PREPARATION FOR MARITAL CHASTITY. 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.

OEAH 62 KNOWLEDGE OF THE VALUE OF MARRIAGE... Instructed in the value and greatness of the Sacrament of Matrimony, which specifies for them the grace and vocation 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".
... AND THE RELATED DUTIES. Therefore, in order to live their sexuality and to carry out their responsibilities in accord with God's plan, 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". Evidently, contraception, insistently propagated today, contrasts 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

OEAH 63 DIALOGUE WITH THE NEW GENERATIONS. 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 is 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

- OEAH 64** CARE FOR THE COMMON GOOD, PARTICULARLY IN THE SCHOOL. 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, 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.
- OEAH 65** SAFEGUARD OF PUBLIC MORAL. 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

- OEAH 66** MEDIA CONDITIONING... 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".
- OEAH 67** ... AND THEIR MODERATE USE. 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".
- OEAH 68** DISCERNMENT IN THE EXERCISE OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION MEANS... 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.
- ... AND DUTIES OF THE CIVIL AUTHORITY. "Particular duties in this matter are incumbent on civil authority in view of the common good", which requires the juridical regulation of the instruments of social communication to protect public morality, in particular the world of youth, especially with regard to magazines, films, radio and television programmes, exhibitions, shows and publicity.

TASK OF THE SCHOOL WITH REGARD TO SEX EDUCATION

- OEAH 69** ROLE OF THE SCHOOL. It being understood from what has been said on the primary duty of the family, the role 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".

- OEAH 70** DIALOGUE BETWEEN EDUCATORS AND YOUNG PEOPLE. 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.
- OEAH 71** OCCASIONAL INTERVENTIONS IN GROUPS. 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 EDUCATION. Individual sex education always retains prior value and cannot be entrusted indiscriminately 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.
- OEAH 72** SPECIFIC EDUCATION IN GROUP. 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 accommodate 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. 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.
- OEAH 73** INTERVENTION OF PARENTS IN PARTICULAR CASES. 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.
- OEAH 74** EXPERTS FOR PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS. 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.
- OEAH 75** COLLABORATION BETWEEN PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE. 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

OEAH 76 THE PREPARATION WORK. 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 crudely 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

OEAH 77 IMPORTANCE OF "GROUPS". 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

OEAH 78 DELICACY OF THIS EDUCATION. 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

OEAH 79 AFFECTIVE MATURITY OF EDUCATORS. 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.

OEAH 80 BEYOND PROFESSIONAL FORMATION... 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 recourse to Christian principles, which, by supernatural means, must sustain the educational enterprise.

OEAH 81 ... PSYCHO-PEDAGOGIC FORMATION. The teacher who carries out his or her task outside the family context needs a suitable and serious psycho-pedagogic training which allows the seizing of particular situations which require a special solicitude. A high degree of this is needed when, in consultation with the parents, a boy or girl needs a psychologist.

- OEAH 82** A RANGE OF PROBLEMATIC CASES. 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

- OEAH 83** KNOWING THE SITUATION AND ADOPTED METHODS. 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

- OEAH 84** AN EDUCATION ADAPTED TO THE INDIVIDUAL. 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.
- OEAH 85** GRADUALITY AND... 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

- OEAH 86** ... OBJECTIVITY AND PRUDENCE IN INTERVENTIONS. 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 role 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.
- OEAH 87** A TRUE FORMATION. 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.
- OEAH 88** CONFIDENCE IN THE EDUCATIONAL ACTION. 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.

OEAH 89 INTEGRAL VISION OF THE PERSON. 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

OEAH 90 RESPECT OF THE DIGNITY OF THE PERSON. 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.

OEAH 91 ATTRACTIVE MODELS OF VIRTUE. To such an end, concrete and attractive models of virtue are to be presented, the aesthetic sense 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.

OEAH 92 FRIENDSHIP IS NOT CAMARADERIE. 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.

OEAH 93 THE VALUE OF FRIENDSHIP FOR AFFECTIVE MATURITY. 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.

OEAH 94 PRE-MATRIMONIAL RELATIONSHIPS. 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, 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.

- OEAH 95** RELATIONSHIPS OF SEXUAL INTIMACY ONLY IN THE MARRIAGE. 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" - mediating the realisation of a love that is "human" "total" "faithful" "creative" 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; they are a language which is not found in the objective reality of the life of the two persons, not yet constituted in definitive communion with the necessary recognition and guarantee of civil and, for catholic spouses, religious society.
- OEAH 96** DISORGANISED MANIFESTATIONS OF SEXUAL KIND. 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.
- OEAH 97** THE PROFOUND VALUES OF LOVE. 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.
- OEAH 98** SELF-EROTICISM. 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, 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.
- OEAH 99** THE CAUSES. 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 autoeroticism 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. Whilst taking account of the objective gravity of masturbation, it is necessary to be cautious in evaluating the subjective responsibility of the person.
- OEAH 100** HELP AGAINST SELF-EROTICISM. 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". 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 autoeroticism, 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.

- OEAH 101** **HOMOSEXUALITY.** 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-adaptation, 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 order, homosexual relations are acts deprived of their essential and indispensable rule".
- OEAH 102** **THE CAUSES.** 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; 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, depravation 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.
- OEAH 103** **NECESSITY TO OFFER AN EFFICACIOUS HELP.** 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.
- OEAH 104** **DRUGS AND SEXUAL DISORDER.** 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 defence. 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.
- OEAH 105** **RE-EDUCATION AND PREVENTIVE ACTION.** 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

- OEAH 106** URGENCY OF SEXUAL EDUCATION. 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 opportunely inform their own children, offering them a positive and convincing education.
- OEAH 107** A PRIORITY DUTY FOR PARENTS. The defence 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.
- OEAH 108** INTERVENTION OF THE SCHOOL... 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.
...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.
- OEAH 109** INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION. 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.
- OEAH 110** EDUCATION ENLIGHTENED BY FAITH. 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.
- OEAH 111** EXHORTATION TO BISHOPS' CONFERENCES. 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.

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School

7 April 1988

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School

(7 April 1988)

- DR 1** This text repeats the characteristics of a Catholic school described in *Gravissimum educationis*, n° 8.
- To generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love.
 - 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.
 - 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.

The Council, therefore, declared that what makes the Catholic school distinctive is its religious dimension.

- a) in the educational climate,
- b) in the personal development of each student
- c) in the relationship established between culture and the Gospel,
- d) in the illumination of all knowledge with the light of faith.

- DR 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. 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. 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."

PART ONE

THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION IN THE LIVES OF TODAY'S YOUTH

The Catholic school is attentive to the life conditions of the pupils

- DR 22** "Catholic schools are spread throughout the world and enrol 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."

PART TWO

THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF THE SCHOOL CLIMATE

1. What is a Christian school climate?

DR 24 Educational environment/circle

"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 are: persons, space, time, relationships, teaching, study, and various other activities."

DR 25 **Permeated with freedom and love**

Gravissimum educationis n° 8 spoke of an environment permeated with the Gospel spirit of love and freedom. 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 Gospel spirit should be evident in a Christian way of thought and life which permeates all facets of the educational climate.

DR 26 **Teachers as prime responsables**

"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."

2. The physical environment of a Catholic school

DR 27 **The Catholic school reflects the family circle**

"It is natural that pupils who attend a Catholic school 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."

DR 28 **An environment rich at human and spiritual levels**

"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. "

DR 29 **Simplicity and evangelical poverty**

"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. (...)

Catholic schools, therefore, have a right to expect the help from others that will make the purchase of modern educational materials possible. 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."

DR 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. 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

DR 31 **From the school as an institution to the school as a community**

"The declaration *Gravissimum educationis* 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."

- DR 34** The Catholic school finds its true justification in the mission of the Church; it is based on an educational project 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 the people. Pope John Paul II said 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 nature 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”.
- DR 37** “Lay teachers offer their competence and their faith witness to the Catholic school.”
- DR 38** “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.”
- DR 39** **Community climate and participation**
 “Community presupposes a real willingness to collaborate among all its members. Channels of communication should be open in all directions in order to realize the objectives of the school.”
- DR 40** **Climate of trust and spontaneity**
 “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 an essential condition 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.”

4. The Catholic school as an open community

- DR 42** **Collaboration with families**
 Close cooperation between the Catholic school and the families of the pupils aims above all to achieve the educational goals of the school.
- DR 43** **Making families aware**
 “The first and primary educators of children are their parents.” (*Gravissimum educationis*, 3) It is the school's responsibility to give parents this awareness if they don't have it. The way to follow is the one of service, meeting and collaboration.
- DR 44** **Involvement of the Church**
 “The Church, through which the Redemption of Christ is revealed and made operative, is where the Catholic school receives its spirit. Love for and fidelity to the Church is the organizing principle and the source of strength of a Catholic school.”

DR 45

Sensitivity

“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.”

“As it does for national events, the Catholic school also reflects 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.”

DR 46

Loyal service towards civil society

“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.”

PART THREE

THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF SCHOOL LIFE AND WORK

1. The religious dimension of school life

DR 47

“‘School’ is often identified with ‘teaching’; actually, classes and lessons are only a part of school life. (...) 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.”

DR 48

Christian itinerary

“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.”

DR 49

The intellectual work of the pupil/student

“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.”

2. The religious dimension of the school culture

DR 51 **Coordination between human culture and faith**

“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 (*Gravissimum educationis*, 8). In a Catholic school, 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; 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. 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.”

DR 52 **Faith is challenged**

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.

DR 53 **Faith enlightening culture**

“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 rescind 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" (John Paul II, 1982).

DR 54 **Religious nature and dimension**

“In a number of countries, the school programmes give 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.

(...) 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.”

DR 55 **The study of man**

“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 (...). 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.”

DR 57 **Philosophy and religious dimension**

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:

- (1) Respect for those who seek the truth, who raise fundamental questions about human existence.
- (2) Confidence in our ability to attain truth, at least in a limited way - a confidence based not on feeling but on faith. God created us "in his own image and likeness" and will not deprive us of the truth necessary to orient our lives.
- (3) The ability to make judgments about what is true and what is false.
- (4) Making use of a systematic framework, such as that offered by our philosophical heritage, with which to find the best possible human responses to questions regarding the human person, the world, and God.
- (5) Lively dialogue between culture and the Gospel message, which embraces and integrates the wisdom of all cultures, and enriches them with the divine revelation.

DR 58 **The teaching of history**

“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: (...) the drama of human grandeur and human misery. (...) History is, then, a monumental struggle between these two fundamental realities.”

DR 60 **History of literature, History of art, Philosophy**

“The increased attention given to science and technology must not lead to a neglect of the humanities: philosophy, history, literature and art. (...) 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.”

DR 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. Furthermore, an adequate religious formation has been the starting point for the vocation 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.”

DR 63 **Pedagogy: integral education**

We can speak about a Christian education.

“Students should be helped to realize that any genuine educational philosophy has to be based on the nature of the human person, with his/her physical and spiritual powers, his/her ability to be an active and creative agent in service to society, and his/her 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.”

DR 64 **Through interdisciplinary work**

Interdisciplinary work, introduced into Catholic schools, must include religious themes; they arise naturally when dealing with topics such as the human person, the family, society, or history.

DR 65 **Teachers of religion**

“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.”

PART FOUR
RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN THE CLASSROOM
AND THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF FORMATION

1. The nature of religious instruction

DR 66 “The mission of the Church is to evangelize, for the interior transformation and the renewal of humanity. (...) The school is one of the ways for this evangelization to take place. (...) 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.”

DR 70 **Specificity of school religious education**

“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 (curriculum), 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

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

DR 74 **Christ**

“The task of the teacher is to summarize Christology and present it in everyday language.”

- DR 76** **The mystery of man**
 “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.
 (...) 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 vocation, as a fulfilment of God's will.”
- DR 77** Ecclesiology has an extremely important educational value.
- DR 78** The value of the Sacraments, accompanying the believer on his/her journey through life.

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

- DR 82** **Knowledge of God**
 “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.”
- DR 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 family life (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.”
- DR 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.”
- DR 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.”

- DR 91** **The evil**
 “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.”
- DR 94** “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.”
- DR 95** “The Lord calls us to limitless perfection. Our apostolic witness must make this perfection visible in the world, today and in the future.”

5. The religion teacher

- DR 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.”
- DR 97** “We need to promote the establishment of formation centres for teachers of religion; ecclesiastical universities and faculties should do what they can to develop appropriate programs.”

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

1. What is a Christian formation process?

- DR 98** “The declaration of the Council insists on the dynamic nature of integral human formation, 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 knowledge of the mystery of salvation, he or she may daily grow more conscious of the gift of faith which has been received ...” (*Gravissimum educationis*, 2)
 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" (*Gravissimum educationis*, 8). 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. 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.”

DR 99 **The integral promotion of the student**

“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.”

2. Educational goals (project)

DR 100 **Characteristics of the educational project**

“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.

DR 101 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.

DR 102 “The educational goals (...) will be achieved through a formation process which takes place in stages (...). The end of the school year is not only the time for examinations. (...) It 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.”

DR 103 The religious dimension of the school climate strengthens the quality of the formation process. Some of the conditions for creating a positive and supportive climate are the following:

- (1) that everyone agree with the educational goals and cooperate in achieving them;
- (2) that interpersonal relationships be based on love and Christian freedom;

- (3) that each individual, in daily life, be a witness to Gospel values;
- (4) that every student be challenged to strive for the highest possible level of formation, both human and Christian.
- (5) 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.

DR 104 Some examples of potential problems are these:

- (1) the educational goals are either not defined or are defined badly;
- (2) those responsible for the school are not sufficiently trained;
- (3) concern for academic achievement is excessive;
- (4) relations between teachers and students are cold and impersonal;
- (5) teachers are antagonistic toward one another;
- (6) discipline is imposed from on high without any participation or cooperation from the students;
- (7) relationships with families are formal or even strained, and families are not involved in helping to determine the educational goals;
- (8) some within the school community are giving a negative witness;
- (9) individuals are unwilling to work together for the common good;
- (10) the school is isolated from the local Church;
- (11) there is no interest in or concern for the problems of society;
- (12) religious instruction is "routine".
- (13) Religious instruction can become empty words falling on deaf ears, because the authentically Christian witness that reinforces it is absent from the school climate.

DR 105 The students' active cooperation

Since the students are active agents in their own formation process, their cooperation is essential.

DR 106 Modality of participation

“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, and 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.”

DR 107 Religious values and motivation in the education process

“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.

(...) 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.”

DR 108 **Catholic school and school pluralism**

“Referring to the fact that, in many parts of the world, the school population in a Catholic school includes increasing numbers of young people from different faiths and different ideological backgrounds, it becomes 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.”

DR 109 **The Catholic school, centre of life**

“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.”

DR 110 **Interpersonal relationship between teachers and pupils/students**

“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.”

DR 111 **Reciprocal prayer**

“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/her own life, family and social background, and these are not always happy situations. (...) 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.”

DR 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.”

**The Catholic School on the Threshold
of the Third Millennium**

28 December 1997

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium

(28 December 1997)

Identity of the Catholic School

(The Catholic School, 19 March 1977, n° 34)

- I. The Catholic school as a place of integral education of the human person through a clear educational project of which Christ is the foundation.
- II. Its ecclesial identity.
- III. Its cultural identity.
- IV. Its mission of education as a work of love
- V. Its service to society.
- VI. The traits which should characterize the educating community.

Contribution of the Catholic School

ECAS 5

- The Catholic school contributes to the evangelization 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.
- The Catholic school contributes 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.
- Catholic schools contribute 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.

ECAS 8

“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.”

ECAS 9

I

A CATHOLIC SCHOOL IS A SCHOOL FOR THE HUMAN PERSON AND FOR HUMAN PERSONS

According to Pope John Paul II (Address to the I National Meeting of the Catholic School in Italy) : “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”. 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” (The Catholic School, 35). 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.

ECAS 10

No reduction

“Catholic education cannot be reduced to its purely technical and practical aspects. (...) For Catholic educators education always presupposes and involves a definite concept of man and life. (...) A correct pedagogical approach ought to be open to the more decisive sphere of ultimate objectives, (...) restoring to the educational process the unity which saves it from dispersion amid the meandering of knowledge (...), 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” (II Vatican, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22).

ECAS 11

II

THE ECCLESIAL IDENTITY OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

II.1. The Catholic school participates in the evangelization mission of the Church and is a place in which Christian education is carried out

“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.” (John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, 102)

The ecclesial nature of the Catholic school, therefore, is written in the very heart of its identity as a teaching institution.

ECAS 12

II.2. The Catholic school fulfils its vocation to be a genuine experience of Church only if it takes its stand within the organic pastoral work of the Christian community

ECAS 13

II.3. Following the inspiration of the saintly founders, many Religious Institutes have dedicated themselves to education with particular effectiveness

ECAS 14

III

CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

- The synthesis between culture and faith is one of the most significant elements of the Catholic school’s educational project.
- 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.” (The Catholic School, 39)
- All of which demands an atmosphere characterized by the search for truth, in which educators 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.

ECAS 15

IV

THE MISSION OF EDUCATION AS A WORK OF LOVE

- The Catholic school is a school for all, with special attention to those who are weakest (see Calasanz, De la Salle, Don Bosco).
- 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.
- It may concern material poverty, but also new forms of poverty: young people 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.

ECAS 16

V

THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL AS A SERVICE TO SOCIETY

- The school 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 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.
- 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.

ECAS 17

The Catholic school undertakes its service of public usefulness In a dialogue with the States and civil authorities

- The Catholic 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.” (John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 40; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Libertatis conscientia*, 94)

- 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”. (*Gravissimum educationis*, 6)
- “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.”

ECAS 18

VI

THE TRAITS WHICH SHOULD CHARACTERIZE THE EDUCATING COMMUNITY

- In a Catholic school, the climate and the style of personal relations have a very particular importance. It is question here 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.” (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, 22.)
- This community dimension in the Catholic school is not a merely sociological category; it has a theological foundation as well.
- The educational community, taken as a whole, is thus called to further the objective of a school as a place of complete formation through interpersonal relations.

ECAS 19

All the educators are responsible for this Christian style

- In the Catholic school, “prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teachers, as individuals and as a community”. (Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic school, 26)

Personal relationship

- Teaching has an extraordinary moral depth and is one of man's most excellent and creative activities. The personal relations between the teacher and the students, therefore, assume an enormous importance and are not limited simply to giving and taking.

A Church mission

- Moreover, we must remember that teachers and educators fulfil a specific Christian vocation 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”. (*Gravissimum educationis*, 8)

ECAS 20

The role of parents

- 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.
- The constant aim of the school 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.

Consecrated Persons and their Mission in Schools

Reflections and Guidelines

28 October 2002

Consecrated Persons and their Mission in Schools

Reflections and Guidelines

(28 October 2002)

PC 1 - - -

PC 2 A PROPHETIC TASK. Consecrated persons feel the importance of the prophetic task entrusted to them by the Church in these momentous but fascinating times: “*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”.

PC 3 (...), 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, (...).

PC 4 AS A CONTINUATION OF PREVIOUS ECCLESIAL GUIDELINES. 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.

PC 5 THE CULTURAL MEDIATION OF THE FAITH TODAY. 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 vocations present in schools. (...)

PC 6 A RENEWED COMMITMENT IN THE EDUCATIONAL SPHERE. 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. At the same time, (...) certain difficulties induce religious Communities to abandon the school sector. The dearth of religious vocations, estrangement from the teaching apostolate, the attraction of alternative forms of apostolate seemingly more gratifying. Far from discouraging, these difficulties (...) invite discernment and an attitude of constant *renewal*.

EVANGELISE BY EDUCATING. The Holy Spirit, moreover, guides us to rediscover the charisma, 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.

I

PROFILE OF CONSECRATED PERSONS

At the school of Christ the teacher

PC 7 ECCLESIAL GIFT FOR REVEALING THE WORD. “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.” The aim of the consecrated life is “conformity to the Lord Jesus in *his total self-giving*,” so that every consecrated person is called to assume “his mind and his way of life,” his way of thinking and of acting, of being and of loving.

- PC 8** IDENTITY OF CONSECRATED LIFE. *The direct reference to Christ* and the *intimate nature of a gift* for the Church and the world 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 charismas.
- PC 9** AT CHRIST'S SCHOOL TO HAVE HIS MIND. 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.
- PC 10** ALLOWING ONESELF TO BE EDUCATED AND FORMED BY CHRIST, TO BE SIMILAR TO HIM. 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.
- PC 11** GIFT FOR EVERYONE. The school of the mind of the Son gradually opens the consecrated life to the urgency for testimony, (...). 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

- PC 12** ANTHROPOLOGICAL VALUE OF THE CONSECRATED LIFE. 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 vocation, 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." 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.
- PC 13** Consecrated persons communicate the richness of their specific vocation 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 vocation. This "confrontation-sharing" with the Church and with the world is of great importance for the vitality of the various religious charismas and for their interpretation in line with the modern context and their respective spiritual roots. It is the principle of *charismatic circularity*, as a result of which the charisma *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.

PC 14 CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE IN THE PAST AND IN THE PRESENT. The validity of this principle is confirmed by history; the consecrated life has always woven a constructive dialogue with local culture, (...) 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 (...).

In the Church communion

PC 15 THE CHURCH MYSTERY OF COMMUNION. At a pastoral level, "to make the Church *the home and the school of communion*" is the great challenge that we must know how to face (...). 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.

PC 16 CONSECRATED PERSONS IN THE CHURCH-COMMUNION. (...) Consecrated persons (...) 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.

PC 17 WITH THE DYNAMISM OF THE SPECIFIC CHARISMA. (...) Consecrated persons are called, through their vocations, 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 vocations 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 (...) 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.

PC 18 A CONSECRATED PERSON EDUCATES....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*.

PC 19 AND FORMS. (...) 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!

PC 20 IN SCHOOLS, EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITIES. 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, (...) 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."

PC 21 BY DEVELOPING THE SPECIFICITY OF ALL THE VOCATIONS PRESENT IN THE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY. The different vocations 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 vocation 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 vocation in a gratitude-filled comparison with others. By avoiding both confrontation and homologation, the reciprocity of vocations seems to be a particularly fertile prospect for enriching the ecclesial value of educational communities. In them the various vocations carry out a service for achieving a culture of communion. They are correlative, different and mutual paths that converge to bring to fulfilment the charisma of charismas: love.

Before the world

PC 22 ACCOUNTING FOR HOPE. 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.

PC 23 DISCERNMENT AND CONTEMPLATIVE GAZE. 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.

PC 24 IN SCHOOLS FOR EDUCATING TO SILENCE AND TO MEETING GOD. By living their vocations 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.

PC 25 FOR LIVING THE GOSPEL TO THE FULL. 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." 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.

PC 26 AND TESTIFYING A CHASTE, POOR AND OBEDIENT LIFE. 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 unreservedly 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.

PC 27 AND EXPRESSING THEIR DONATION. 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. (...)

PC 28 LOOKING AT MARY. 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

PC 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. (...) 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 "vertical" relationism, that is to the opening to God and lastly formation to "horizontal" 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)

PC 30 THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF CONSECRATED PERSONS. (...) The Church must be concerned with the progress and development of education. (...) The educational commitment for consecrated persons is a vocation and 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

- PC 31** THE GLOBALISATION PROCESS. The process of globalisation (...) 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 vocation 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.
- PC 32** NEW TECHNOLOGIES. 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.
- PC 33** SCHOOLS' TASK. 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.
- PC 34** FOR THE FUTURE OF MAN. 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 unsolved 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

- PC 35** NECESSITY FOR AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL FOUNDATION. 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.

- PC 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 truest root in the mystery of Christ, the Word Incarnate, who wished to become close to man.
- PC 37** WITHIN THE DIMENSION OF A PLENARY HUMANISM. 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.” 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. 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.
- PC 38** WITNESSES OF THE TRUTH ABOUT THE HUMAN PERSON. 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.”
- PC 39** WITH CULTURAL MEDIATION. 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. 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.
- PC 40** AND COMMITMENT IN THE FIELD OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION. 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

- PC 41** IN THE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY. 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 charisma in the service of all men.
- PC 42** WITHIN THE SPHERE OF THE CHURCH COMMUNION. 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 charisma, 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 charismas 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 charismas with greater clarity.”

The relational dimension

- PC 43** PROMOTING AUTHENTIC RELATIONS. (...) 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.
- PC 44** EDUCATING TO RECIPROCITY. (...) 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.

PC 45 THROUGH ENHANCING RELATIONS. 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

PC 46 CREATING AN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT. 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.

PC 47 AWARE OF THE FAMILY'S TASK. 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. (...) Acknowledgement of (their) educational 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.

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.

PC 48 AND OF THE IMPORTANCE OF BROTHERHOOD AS A PROPHETIC SIGN. 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." 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.

PC 49 IN NETWORK WITH OTHER EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES. 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

PC 50 A LIFESTYLE THAT QUESTIONS. 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 vocation. 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

PC 51 DEVELOP THE GIFT FOR SEARCHING. 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.

PC 52 EDUCATING TO FREEDOM. 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.

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.

THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION, A LOST LINK. 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.

PC 53 WITH A STYLE OF INTERPELLANT EDUCATION. 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

PC 54 SPECIALIZED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ITINERARIES. 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. There is the duty (of consecrated persons) 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.

CULTURAL PROPOSAL OFFERED TO EVERYONE. 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 vocation

PC 55 LIFE AS A GIFT AND AS A TASK. Together with other Christian educators, consecrated persons know how to grasp and enhance the vocational 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 vocational dimension guides the person to interpret his existence in the light of God's plan.

The absence or scarce attention to the vocational 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 vocations

PC 56 REAWAKENING A TASTE FOR THE BIG QUESTIONS. The promotion of a *new* vocational 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 vocational maturation, that leads to a specific vocation.

Consecrated persons especially are called to promote the *culture of vocations* in schools. They are a sign for all Christian people not only of a specific vocation, but also of vocational dynamism as a form of life, thus eloquently representing the decision of those who wish to live with attention to God's call.

PC 57 SHARING THEIR EDUCATIONAL CHARISMA. 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." 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 charisma and try to develop it in response to the new social-cultural situations.

PC 58 BECOMING PRIVILEGED INTERLOCUTORS IN THE SEARCH FOR GOD. 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 vocational 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.

PC 59 THE VOCATIONAL DIMENSION OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION. 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 (...) propose formation itineraries for teachers. It is opportune in these to emphasize the vocational 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. Consecrated persons can reveal, to those who so desire, the richness of the spirituality that characterizes them and of the charisma 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

PC 60 PRIORITY ATTENTION TO THE PERSON. 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.*"

PC 61 CHARACTERIZING CONCRETE CHOICES IN THAT SENSE. 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

PC 62 GIVING PRECEDENCE TO DIALOGUE AND ATTENTIVE LISTENING. 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" and that, consequently, an authentic formative process can only be initiated through a personal relationship.

PC 63 REAWAKENING THE DESIRE FOR INTERNAL LIBERATION. 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.

The dignity of woman and her vocation

PC 64 THE PRESENCE AND ACTION OF WOMEN. The sensitivity of consecrated persons, so attentive to the need to develop the single-dual dimension of the human person (...), 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, 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, are born from that *female genius* that promotes sensitivity for all human beings in all circumstances. 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*. 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

PC 65 CONTRIBUTION OF CONSECRATED PERSONS TO INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE. (...) 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.” 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

PC 66 EDUCATION APPLICATION NECESSARY. 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, 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.”

Coexistence of differences

PC 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.

PC 68 COMMITMENT TO SEEK THE ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE VARIOUS CULTURES. 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, 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

PC 69 PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR. 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

PC 70 POOR YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE CENTRE OF THE EDUCATION PROGRAMME. 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.

PC 71 IDENTIFY SITUATIONS OF POVERTY. 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

PC 72 CONSIDERING THE LEAST. 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.

PC 73 COMMITMENT IN FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION. By listening to the poor, consecrated persons know *where* to commit themselves even within the sphere of non-formal education and how to bring the most underprivileged to have access to instruction.

Acquaintance with countries where schools are reserved for the few or encounter serious difficulties in accomplishing their task could give rise in the educational communities of the more developed countries to initiatives of solidarity, among which twinning between classes or schools. The formative advantages would be great for everyone, especially for the pupils of the more developed countries. They would learn what is essential in life and they would be assisted in not following the cultural fashions induced by consumerism.

PC 74 AND IN THE DEFENCE OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS. The defence of children's rights is another particularly important challenge. The exploitation of children, in different, often aberrant, forms, is among the most disturbing aspects of our time. Consecrated persons involved in the educational mission have the inescapable duty to devote themselves to the protection and promotion of children's rights. The concrete contributions that they can make both as individuals and as an educational institution will probably be insufficient with respect to the needs, but not useless, inasmuch as aimed at making known the roots from which the abuses derive. Consecrated persons willingly unite their efforts to those of other civil and ecclesial organizations and persons of good will, to uphold the respect of human rights in for the good of everyone, starting from the most weak and helpless.

PC 75 WILLING EVEN TO GIVE THEIR LIVES. The preferential option for the poor requires living a personal and community attitude of readiness to *give one's life* where necessary. It might therefore be necessary to leave perhaps even works of prestige which are no longer able to implement suitable formative processes and consequently leave no room for the characteristics of the consecrated life. In fact, "if a school is excellent as an academic institution, but does not bear witness to authentic values, then both good pedagogy and a concern for pastoral care make it obvious that renewal is called for." Consecrated persons are therefore called to check to see if, in their educational activity, they are mainly pursuing academic prestige rather than the human and Christian maturation of the young people; if they are favouring competition rather than solidarity; if they are involved in educating, together with the other members of the school community, persons who are free, responsible and *just* according to evangelical justice.

PC 76 TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH. Precisely because of their religious consecration, consecrated persons are pre-eminently free to leave everything to go to preach the gospel even to the ends of the earth. For them, even in the educational field, the announcement "*ad gentes*" of the Good News remains a priority. They are therefore aware of the fundamental role of Catholic schools in mission countries. In many cases, in fact, schools are the only possibility for the Church's presence, in others they are a privileged place of evangelising and humanising action, responsible both for the human and cultural development of the poorest people. It is important in this regard to consider the necessity of the participation of the educational charisma between the religious families of the countries of ancient evangelisation and those born in mission territories, which inspire them. In fact, "the older Institutes, many of which have been tested by the severest of hardships, which they have accepted courageously down the centuries can be enriched through dialogue and an exchange of gifts with the foundations appearing in our own days." Such sharing is also transferred into the field of formation of consecrated persons, in sustaining new religious families and in cooperation between various institutes.

Culture of peace

PC 77 PEACE THROUGH JUSTICE. 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

PC 78 PEACEMAKERS IN THEIR OWN ENVIRONMENT. 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 co-operation.” 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.”

PC 79 THROUGH THE EDUCATION TO VALUES. 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

PC 80 EDUCATING FOR ACTIVE AND RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS. 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

- PC 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 charisma: “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.”
- PC 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 charismas. 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 vocation. 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. Starting afresh from Christ means contemplating his face, pausing at length with him in prayer to then be able to show him to others. (...) 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. 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 fulfilment 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.
- PC 83** AND LIVING IN A STATE OF PERMANENT FORMATION. 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. 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.
- PC 84** THANKSGIVING FOR THE IMPORTANT AND NOBLE TASK. 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."

Educating Together in a Catholic School

8 September 2007

Educating Together in a Catholic School

(8 September 2007)

EE 3 The Catholic school, mission of the Church

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 vocation, it appears “as a place of integral education of the human person through a clear educational project of which Christ is the foundation”. (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 4)

EE 4 Educators in a Catholic school

- People who are deeply motivated, “because they witness to a living encounter with Christ”.
- 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

EE 5 Educational community

“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. 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.” (The Catholic School, 32)

EE 6 Educators have to live their educational commitment as “a personal vocation in the Church and not simply as the exercise of a profession”. (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, 37)

EE 15 Educators 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; to exercise their mission by living, in faith, a secular vocation in the communitarian structure of the school.

EE 16-17 Spirituality of communion

What makes this testimony really effective is the promotion, especially within the educational community of the Catholic school, of a spirituality of communion. Pope John Paul II defined this spirituality of communion as “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”. (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 43) This spirituality of communion is also an ability to make room for all the gifts of the Spirit. It must be transformed into an attitude of clear evangelical fraternity among the persons.

Formation of the educators

EE 21-25 Professional formation of educators

- The educator's vocation demands a ready and constant ability for renewal and adaptation.
- It is not sufficient simply to care about professional updating in the strict sense.
- 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.
- 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".

EE 26-33 Theological and spiritual formation of educators

- "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." (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, 60)
- 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" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 4). 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.
- Prayer, reflection, sense of fraternity, generous dedication.

EE 34-35 Formation in the spirit of communion for educating

Educators are called on to build relationships; this involves:

- Being open,
- welcoming,
- disposed to a deep exchange of ideas,
- convivial and living a fraternal life.

Educate for communion

EE 37 The educational community of the Catholic school "expresses (...) the fruitfulness at educational and pedagogical levels that this contributes to the life of the school (...)."

EE 38 "This fruitfulness is expressed, above all, in the witness offered by the educational community." (...). "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" [Benedict XVI, Address to Rome's Ecclesial Diocesan Convention on the Family and Christian Community (6th June 2005): AAS 97 (2005), 815]. "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. *1 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." In educational communities, therefore, the style of life has great influence, (...) to develop, in the school "an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel." (*Gravissimum educationis*, 8)

EE 39 By giving witness of communion, the Catholic educational community is able to educate for communion. 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. 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”. (The Catholic School, 56)

Educational community and vocational pastoral activity

EE 40 The shared mission experienced by an educational community of lay and consecrated persons, with an active vocational conscience, makes the Catholic school a pedagogical place that favours vocational pastoral activity. (...) 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 vocation only to the extent that he has a personal experience of Christ” (Benedict XVI, Address to Seminarians, 19th August 2005).

EE 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 vocation (...).

EE 42 Therefore, the formational experience of the Catholic school (...) 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” (The Catholic School, 12).

EE 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” (The Catholic School, 31).

EE 44-46 **Anthropological and theological foundations**

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. (...) In the same way, (...) 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 vocation 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.

EE 47-48 **Builders of open communion**

Sharing the same educational mission with a diversity of persons, vocations and states of 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. (...)

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 (...).

**Circular Letter on
Religious Education in Schools**

5 May 2009

Circular letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education in Schools

(5 May 2009)

1. The role of schools in the Catholic formation of new generations

- LCER 1** Education today is a complex, vast and urgent task. This complexity today risks making us lose what is essential, that is, the formation of the human person in its totality, particularly as regards the religious and spiritual dimension.
- LCER 2** Although the work of educating is accomplished by different agents, it is parents who are primarily responsible for education.
- LCER 3** This responsibility is exercised also in the right to choose the school that guarantees an education in accordance with one's own religious and moral principles.

2. Nature and identity of the Catholic school: the right to a Catholic education for families and pupils. Subsidiarity and educational collaboration

- LCER 5** The Catholic school is an expression of the ecclesial community and its catholicity is guaranteed by the competent authorities (particularly the diocesan Ordinary).
- LCER 6** The Catholic school is truly an ecclesial subject because of its teaching activity, in which faith, culture, and life unite in harmony.

It is open to all who want to share its educational goal inspired by Christian principles.

“In these educational centres – which are open to all who share and respect their educational goals – the atmosphere must be permeated by the evangelical spirit of freedom and charity, which fosters the harmonious development of each one's personality. In this setting, human culture as a whole is harmonised with the message of salvation, so that the pupils gradually acquire a knowledge of the world, life and humanity that is be enlightened by the Gospel.”
(*Gravissimum educationis*, 8)

- LCER 7** It ensures Catholic parents' freedom of choice and it is an expression of school pluralism.
- LCER 8** The principle of subsidiarity regulates collaboration between the family and the various institutions deputised to educate.

3. Religious education in schools

(a) *Nature and aims*

- LCER 10-11** Religious education in schools is an aspect of the right to education. Religious freedom is the foundation and the guarantee of the presence of religious education in the scholastic public sphere.

LCER 12 Marginalising religious education or limiting it to a presentation of the different religions in a comparative and “neutral” way can create confusion or generate religious relativism or indifferentism.

(b) *Religious education in Catholic schools*

LCER 15 Religious education in Catholic schools identifies the educational goals (specificity) of such schools.

“The special character of the Catholic school, the underlying reason for it, the reason why Catholic parents should prefer it, is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the education of the pupils.” (John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi tradendae*, 16 October 1979, n° 69)

LCER 16 In Catholic schools, the religious freedom of non-Catholic pupils and their parents must be respected.

This clearly does not affect the right/duty of the Church “in [its] public teaching and witness to [its] faith, whether by the spoken or by the written word”, taking into account that “in spreading religious faith and in introducing religious practices everyone ought at all times to refrain from any manner of action which might seem to carry a hint of coercion or of a kind of persuasion that would be dishonourable or unworthy”. (*Dignitatis Humanae*, 7 December 1965, n° 4)

(c) *Catholic religious education from the point of view of culture, and its relationship with catechesis*

LCER 17 Religious education in schools is different from, and complementary to, parish catechesis.

Catechesis aims at fostering personal adherence to Christ and the development of Christian life in its different aspects, whereas religious education in schools gives the pupils knowledge about Christianity’s identity and Christian life.

Religious education enriches the Church and humanity with “true laboratories of both culture and humanity”. (Address to the Catholic religion teachers, 25 April 2009)

LCER 18 Finally, religious instruction in schools remains a scholastic discipline “with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines” (General Directory for Catechesis, 1997).