

**European Committee for Catholic Education**  
**C E E C**

**Acts of the European Congress**

*“The mission to educate : testifying to a hidden treasure”*

**Rome, Domus Mariae**

**28-30 April 2001**

**English edition**

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## **Why this Congress ?**

The Congress organised by the CEEC in Augsburg in 1996 presented the Catholic school not only as a place for working and learning but also as a **centre of life**.

The main question of the present 2001 Congress is the following : how to signify the presence of Jesus in the school, in a context in which a lot of people risk to become “spiritual illiterate” and to loose the need of God.

The Catholic school must continually reflect on the service it gives to young people and society, in reference with the intuition of the founders of the school, the mission of the Catholic school and the person of Jesus-Christ, while *“looking for coherence between opening to the others, pedagogy, content of the courses, quality of relations, faith proposition and faith education”* (LA MOTTE, translation from French). The Catholic school must reflect on the inculturation of faith in human life.

### **Aim of the Congress**

To reflect on the pastoral dimension of Christian education in order **to discover the treasures which Christian education wishes to testify to**.

- First of all, the treasure represented by each **pupil**. Pupils have a lot of potentialities that just have to be discovered and recognised. Probably not in all domains of their personal life and schooling... but there is at least one hidden treasure, however small it may be, that can be revealed: intelligence, generosity, physical aptitudes, creativity, curiosity, availability for faith, etc. The school also shows us that there are different kinds of youth cultures.
- The treasure represented by the **contemporary time and culture**. The modernity of a secularised and plural society has some values that can be seen in a positive way: place given to the individual person, contribution of sciences and technology, critical eye, safeguard of the creation, human rights, democracy, pluricultural and plurireligious relations, etc. When trying to find this treasure, we will discover some forgeries, drifts or ambiguities to be indicated or even to be denounced... but the Congress will have a positive eye.
- The treasure represented by the **Gospel**, not only as a whole of evangelical values but as the person of Jesus Christ, human face of God. Through His Easter, Christ opens an unhoped-for and full of sense way for man in his relation with himself, with the other and with the world. But what can make the Gospel better perceived as a treasure, as a way of life ?

To educate or to teach today, in the light of the Gospel, means to testify to these three hidden treasures, to reveal them to each other and to give them the opportunity to enrich themselves mutually.

### **Structure of the Congress**

- First day : the common task of humanisation. An analysis of transmitted and youth cultures in Western Europe.
- Second day : the specific approach of the Catholic school. A believing reading of youth culture and life.
- Third day : the place of believing educators as mediators between culture and faith.

A lecture introduces each of these three days. The work in workshops develops these keynote speeches through the four following themes : culture conveyed through subjects; culture conveyed through arts; youth culture conveyed through their meetings, their symbols; violence in schools.

Etienne VERHACK  
Secretary General of the CEEC

## **PROGRAMME**

### **Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2001**

- 09h00 Official opening session of the Congress
- Allocution of the President of the CEEC, Canon BEAUDUIN
  - Allocation of H.E. Cardinal GROCHOLEWSKI, Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education
  - Allocution of Mgr Cesare NOSIGLIA, Vice-Regent of Rome, President of the OIEC General Board
  - Message from Father Andrés DELGADO-HERNANDEZ, Secretary General of the OIEC
- 10h00 First lecture by Prof. Dr. Jacques JANSSEN, University of Nijmegen, Netherlands  
*“The religiosity of today’s youth in the sociocultural context of Western Europe”*
- 10h45 Practical information on the workshops, by the CEEC Secretary General, Etienne VERHACK
- 11h15 Departure by bus to the Vatican for a Papal Audience
- 13h00 Lunch
- 15h30 First session of workshops
- 16h30 Coffee break
- 17h00 Continuation of workshops
- 18h30 Mass
- 19h30 Dinner

### **Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2001**

- 09h00 Report on the first Congress day, by Father GUERELLO SJ, General Reporter of the Congress
- 09h30 Second lecture by Father Paul VALADIER SJ, Philosopher and Theologian, Paris, France  
*“A believing reading of youth culture and life in the framework of a Catholic school”*
- 10h30 Coffee break
- 11h00 Second session of workshops
- 13h00 Lunch
- 15h30 Plenary session : panel
- 17h30 Mass
- 19h30 Dinner

### **Monday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2001**

- 09h00 Report on the second Congress day, by Father GUERELLO SJ, General Reporter
- 09h30 Third lecture by Father F. PFLÜGER SJ, Dresden, Germany  
*“The role of the teacher as a believing mediator between culture and faith. The role of parents and pupils”*
- 10h30 Coffee break
- 11h00 Last session of workshops
- 13h00 Lunch
- 15h00 Plenary session : third report of Father GUERELLO SJ, General Reporter
- 16h00 Coffee break
- 16h45 Closing session of the Congress
- General conclusion by Father GUERELLO SJ, General Reporter
  - Conclusion by Canon BEAUDUIN, President of the CEEC
- 18h00 Mass
- 19h30 Dinner

## Papal Audience – Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2001

### Address to Participants and Organisers, CEEC Congress His Holiness the Pope John Paul II

Eminence,  
Dear Friends,

#### ***Welcome and Introduction***

I would like to welcome you on the occasion of the International Congress of Catholic Schools in Europe, organised by the *European Committee for Catholic Education*. Uniting with you in ardent prayer, I hope that your meeting will initiate a new awareness of the specific role and mission of the Catholic school in the European history and culture. Leaning on the richness of your teaching experience, you are invited to boldly seek appropriate responses to the challenges posed by the new ways of thinking and behaving by the young people of today, so that the Catholic school may be an integral place of education, with a clear educational project founded in Christ. The theme of your Congress “*The mission to educate: testifying to a hidden treasure*” places at the centre of the Catholic school’s educational project the fundamental requirement of any Christian teacher: not only to transmit the truth through word, but to be an explicit witness to it in its very existence.

Whilst providing an academic education of quality, the Catholic school offers a Christian vision of man and the world, which offers young people the opportunity of a rich dialogue between faith and reason. Likewise, it is its duty to pass on values to be assimilated and truths to be discovered, “in the awareness that all human values find their fulfilment and consequently their unity in Christ.” (Congregation for Catholic Education, *circular letter*, 28 December 1997, par. 9).

#### ***The present day context and response***

Cultural upheavals, globalisation and world-wide exchanges, the relativisation of moral values and the worrying disintegration of family life, create considerable concern among many young people which has an impact on their way of life, of their learning and of their vision of their future. Such a scenario invites European Catholic schools to form an integral educational programme which will allow young people not only to acquire a human, moral and spiritual maturity but also to play an effective part in the transformation of society, out of a concern for working towards the coming of the Kingdom of God. They will then be in a position to spread, within European cultures and societies, as well as in developing countries where the Catholic school can provide support, the hidden treasure of the Gospel, to construct a civilisation of love, fraternity, solidarity and peace.

#### ***The Educating Community***

To take up the various challenges facing them, educational communities must prioritise the training of teachers, both religious or lay, so that they acquire an even more acute awareness of their mission as teachers, combining professional competence with a free choice to be a living testament, in a coherent fashion to the spiritual and moral values inspired by the evangelical message of “*liberty and charity*” (*Gravissimum Educationis*, par. 8).

Aware not only of the nobleness but also of the difficulties, of teaching and educating today, I would encourage all staff engaged in the mission of the Catholic education system, to nourish the hopes of young people, with the ambition of “offering simultaneously the acquisition of as broad and deep a knowledge as possible, the demanding and continuing education of true human liberty, and the formation of the children and adolescents entrusted to them, towards the highest possible ideal there is: Jesus Christ and his evangelical message” (*Address to the Council of the World Union of Catholic Teachers*, 1983).

The experience acquired by the educational communities of Catholic schools in Europe, in a “creative fidelity” to the charism established and passed on by the founders of the religious families involved in the world of education, is irreplaceable. It allows an unceasing refinement of the link between educational and religious institutions and their relevance to the integral development of the young people who benefit from it. How can we not also insist on the close collaborations that must unite school and family, in particular in these times when the fabric of the family is fragile? Whatever the academic structure, parents remain primarily responsible for the education of their children. It is up to the educational communities to encourage collaboration, so that parents become aware once again of their own educational role and are helped in their primary task, but also so that the educational and pastoral project of the Catholic school is adapted to families’ legitimate aspirations.

### ***The Challenge of the multicultural Society***

Finally, Catholic schools must take up another challenge, which concerns constructive dialogue in the multicultural society of our time. “Education has a specific role in the construction of a more united, more peaceful world. It can contribute to the affirmation of an integral humanism, open to the ethical and religious dimension, which gives all the importance necessary to knowledge of and respect for the cultures and spiritual values of different civilisations” (*Message for World Peace Day*, 8 December 2000, n.20).

Thus, the effort displayed in welcoming into the heart of Catholic schools young people from other religious traditions must be pursued, without this lessening the particular character and Catholic nature of the institutions. In allowing the acquisition of skills in the common educational environment, this welcome develops the social link, encourages a mutual appreciation in a harmonious atmosphere and allows a common vision of a future together. This concrete means of overcoming the fear of others without doubt constitutes a decisive step towards peace within our society.

### ***Dynamic Communities of Faith and Evangelisation***

Catholic schools in Europe are also called upon to be dynamic communities of faith and evangelisation, working in close association with the pastoral mission of the diocese. By being a channel of communication between the Church and the community of man, and in promoting man’s integrity, they remind God’s people of the crux of His mission: to allow everyone to give meaning to their life by bringing out the *hidden treasure* that belongs to him, and so invite humanity to enter the project of God made manifest in Jesus Christ.

### ***Conclusion and Blessing***

Entrusting the richness of your Congress to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, I invite you to let yourselves be instructed by Christ, receiving from Him, who is “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (*John* 14, 6) the strength and the taste to accomplish your exhilarating and delicate mission.

On you all, organisers and participants of this Congress, as well as your families, on all the personnel engaged in Catholic education and the young people in their care, I most willingly bestow my Apostolic Blessing.

Vatican, 28.04.2001



**OPENING of the CONGRESS**

**Saturday 28th April 2001**

**Plenary session**

**Allocutions**

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**Opening allocution by Canon Armand BEAUDUIN  
President of the CEEC**

Eminence,  
Excellence,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Friends,

You are coming from all the horizons of Central, Eastern and Western Europe, from the European Union, from those who are waiting for being part of it, sensitive to its promises and from the Eurosceptics, who prefer to wait and see. Whatever horizon you may come from, you bring with you the challenges facing education in general and Christian education in particular, the hopes linked to your work to educate and make the youngsters grow and the expression of the treasure that has to be discovered and stressed through the work of educating. We never cease to meet the expectations of young people, looking for a life full of sense, which is worth living, open to the others and to God. The work of an educator as the one of the person being educated requires also working upon oneself.

The CEEC Congress meets every four years and invites all of us, who are actors in different ways, as parents, as teachers, as students, as organisers or animators of schools, to compare our differences, to fertilise our joint project with the richness of our exchanges, in order that it may be “*circumdata varietate*” just like the Church itself, all over the universe. When we meet, beyond our frontiers, we give to our vocation as educators the added value of the European dimension and the added value of the Christian wisdom. So, we come out of our loneliness and we exchange good practices in order to go back to our respective countries following a new path.

We didn't come in the jubilee year; we preferred to leave room to the numerous pilgrims that have gathered here, especially for the World Youth Days, signs of new times, white stone in the long story of men, met by Christ. It's not too late to come to the tombs of the apostles, “*ad limina apostolorum*” and to the Church of Rome, that presides over in charity, keeping alive the testimony of Peter and Paul. Those who as educators accept, at the risk of their own life, the condition of servants of children and very young children, expecting their full development, already find in this baptism a token of a new life in the Spirit of Pentecost. They find there living sources, like those which the word of God make spring from the heart of everyone. And these sources are nourishing the hope, so necessary to youth education and so endangered in this disenchanting world that gives way to violence.

In our multicultural and multireligious society we have a common task with all those who make the school, either in Catholic or in State education, where Christians and other people may also find their place. The challenges of the ones are also the challenges of the others. Disciplines, pedagogical know-how, moral development, culture of what is true, good and beautiful, have their autonomy. As Christians, we don't have special recipes nor formulas that could save us the bother of the research, avoid the uncertainties of human condition and the difficulty of being teacher or student. The Spirit blows where he wants to and we don't know where he comes from and where he is going. We are simply situated in another spiritual environment, we have our own history, our own memory, stories that are familiar to us and that educate us, in the way that God educates His people, through the prophets, in the hope of salvation. An educator gives still more from what he is than from what he knows and, in that sense, the future adults who are in our schools need – like Paul VI said – as much witnesses as teachers; they need teachers who are firstly witnesses.

We have the conviction with the great spiritual masters, who also are founders of schools, that when man approaches God, he humanises himself and when he does so, God recognises His work in him. It should be an impoverishment for all if, for lack of a true freedom of education, the school should be considered as following a unique thinking.

“*Education, the treasure within*”, says the UNESCO Report, which we paraphrase in the title of our Congress. We are the witnesses of this. We have seen young people develop in the framework of the school, we have seen them acquire a greater understanding of themselves, of the others and of God, having so more freedom for action, as they gather and appropriate the processes of humankind in search of its accomplishment and of a better world.

There are three treasures in our school. The treasure concealed in the secret of each one of us, even veiled by the wounds of life. The treasure present in works of culture, knowledge, arts, sciences and techniques. The treasure of faith, which must still be revealed when will be proclaimed what we have heard in the secret, when the ferment will make the dough rise, when we will see in the light what we have perceived in the darkness. The Spirit himself will be our master and will lead us towards the whole truth.

Fortified by our experience, let us bet that these three treasures may actually fertilise one another.

Culture, codified in physical and virtual libraries, can be taught as a baggage, it cannot be transferred if the person learning (i.e. the pupil, the student) doesn't take it in order to make it his own. This is a living tradition and the ideal is surely not to reproduce the same by the same. We may want youth to be at our image. We firstly must open the way in order that young people may carry further what the previous generations didn't carry far enough.

Faith – the history of the Church shows it – spreads and attains more richness through contact with cultures, when it goes from the Jews to the gentles, when it meets Greco-Roman philosophies and, today, the wisdom of Asian and African cultures. Faith will still be discovered in another way when it meet the culture of modernity. We must not be afraid. Reciprocally, faith acts as a ferment in the cultures; it changes the habits, the ways of seeing and feeling; it's a critical institution which prevents us from taking as the last word what is only provisional.

The teacher will have to make communication circulate amongst these three circles of these three treasures, without letting this movement fail.

The present Congress and the different speeches that will be given aim to lead us into this movement. It will not happen without you. Good work !



**Welcome speech by His Eminence Zenon Cardinal GROCHOLEWSKI  
Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education**

Excellence,  
Mister President of the European Committee,  
Dear Friends, Brothers and Sisters,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's a real pleasure for me to express the greetings of the Congregation for Catholic Education and my own personal greetings to all the participants in the International Conference organised by the European Committee for Catholic Education (CEEC). I wish to each of you a fruitful work in these days and I hope it will be a great opportunity for you to exchange your experiences. I particularly thank the President of the CEEC, Canon BEAUDUIN, as well as Father PERRONE, National President of the FIDAE, and all the people responsible of the CEEC. I also thank the organisers of this Conference because, through their invitation, they give me the opportunity to restate the particular concern of the Holy See for education and the appreciation for the work, often concealed and tiring, of all those who dedicate themselves to education of young people and who promote the Christian principles in the difficult education world of today.

The Conference that begins this morning comes into the context of a thirty years long commitment of the European Committee for Catholic Education. Your organisation, within the larger family of the International Catholic Education Office (OIEC), commits itself in promoting and supporting Catholic education and schools in the European continent. But it also organises various initiatives concerning teacher training: i.e. the necessary initial training and the in-service training, at professional, human and spiritual levels, of those who are called to work in Church schools. All of this deserves great appreciation and gratitude.

*"The mission to educate : testifying to a hidden treasure"* is the theme of this Congress and, in a spontaneous way, it reminds us of the parable of Jesus, which is full of spiritual dynamism and which speaks about the treasure and the precious pearl (Mt. 13,44-46). This is an actually topical issue in the context of a Europe which is rapidly moving towards its economical and political integration. In such a framework education is urged to play a more incisive and active role. European institutions, first of all the European Union and the Council of Europe but also the national governments, aim at investing more resources in the education sector and the schools, even with a vision of education which favours the instruction aspects rather than the educational ones. This makes us understand that the challenge for the building of a new Europe is based on education and training of young people, in order to enable them to enter into the context of globalisation and new technologies.

But Europe also seems revealing signs of cultural tiredness, of loss of orientation, of abandon in the ethical and moral fields, of social tensions generated by new forms of poverty, by marginalisation, by the difficulties to manage communities that are more and more multiethnic and by a profound spiritual weakening.

In this context, Christian educators and Catholic schools are asked to make a greater effort and a commitment more orientated towards a deeper knowledge of the sociocultural environment in which they are called to work, and particularly a deeper knowledge of the expectations and requirements of the new generations. But they are also (and maybe above all) asked to be capable to read as Christians the culture of our times, working in order to flood it with the culture of the Gospel. Such a commitment cannot really exist without a total, personal commitment of the educator, who is not only a teacher for his pupils, but also a witness.

The evangelical image of the hidden treasure applies well to the educational mission and the European context. The mission of the educator is essentially to help the pupil to discover the hidden treasure. A part of this way to discovery is common to all educators and all schools: opening the treasure of the cultural heritage. It is indeed the task of the school to form totally the pupils, through a systematic and critical assimilation of culture, in the form of elaboration, comparison and insertion of perennial values into the present context <sup>1</sup>. Such a path implies a choice non only of cultural values, but also of life values.

This however is not yet sufficient for a Christian educator and for a Catholic school. What characterises a Catholic school is the educational action of those who work in it and the reference to the Christian conception of reality and life. The real hidden treasure, for which it is worthwhile selling everything one has, is the kingdom of God, brought and initiated by Christ. To access the kingdom of God it is necessary to believe in Jesus and to commit oneself for his Gospel. Jesus Christ and his Gospel are the foundation, that cannot be ignored, of the educational project of a Catholic school <sup>2</sup>, which every educator is called to make manifest. This reason makes the Catholic school necessary in Europe, more than ever before. It is necessary for the Church, because the Catholic school participates in the Church evangelical mission at the service of man; it is necessary for the civil community, because it contributes to discover the richness of the Christian roots of the continent and to form men and women for making them capable to be, with generosity, at the service of the common good.

The treasure that each educator keeps himself cannot remain concealed. It has to be revealed, it has to be lived and brought out into the world so that it may become a leaven capable to ferment culture and society. The task of Christian educators and Catholic schools is certainly not easy. It requires from the educator considerable skills, at the level of the mind and the heart <sup>3</sup> and especially a personal and profound synthesis between faith and culture, between faith and life, that can arise only from a very meek attitude towards the action of the Spirit, from an intense life of prayer and communion with God, in order to become life witness. If our Catholic schools are not able to reawaken Christian life, this is probably due to the fact that we are not sufficiently witnesses and that our spiritual life and our union with God don't appear sufficiently.

I would like to conclude by expressing the hope that Catholic educators feel more and more invested with this task and, turning the eyes towards Jesus who is the true source of love, I hope that they will love young people, because as the Holy Father says: *"Only those who love can educate, only those who love can say the truth that is Love"* <sup>4</sup>.



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<sup>1</sup> S. CONGREGAZIONE PER L'EDUCAZIONE CATTOLICA, La scuola cattolica, 19 March 1977 , nn.26-27, in Enchiridion Vaticanum, Vol. VI

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, nn.33-34

<sup>3</sup> CONC. VAT. II, Gravissimum educationis, n.5

<sup>4</sup> In L'Osservatore Romano, 14 November 1995, p.5

**Welcome address by His Excellence Mgr Cesare NOSIGLIA  
Vice-Regent of Rome and President of the OIEC General Board**

Eminence,  
Dear Friends,

It's a pleasure for me to express greetings and welcome also on behalf of the Episcopal Commission for Catholic Education, the School and University and on behalf of the National Council of Italian Catholic Schools. I also wish to greet you especially on the part of the OIEC Board, which recently met in South Africa.

The theme of this meeting concerns one of the most urgent and complex issues as regards education of the new generations, which are immersed in a large and rapid cultural process, that has a deep impact on the mentality, life style and behaviour of people in the whole society.

The school which represents the most advanced frontier of society cannot remain extraneous to such a change: and that is why everywhere in the world and not only in Europe, we see that sweeping reforms are on the way, which don't merely aim to modify some, even important, aspects of the educational process but which tackle the very substance, the whole of the school institution.

The Catholic school is called to face up, at the present time, with a considerable commitment, first of all at the level of quality as regards the education that it provides, and consequently at the level of the teacher training and updating, which is crucial for any efficient and lasting school renewal.

A careful reading of youth culture is indispensable so as not to construct theoretically or deliberately our pedagogical hypothesis and educational strategies without taking into account the real and genuine requirements, expectations and needs of the new generations. It is certainly crucial to be listening to young people. It is however also decisive to point out very clearly to young people the objectives and goals, which will enable them to grow up in freedom and to acquire the critical ability to surpass reality and its dominant messages, to keep an internal autonomy and a permanent opening for searching more, at the level of truth and educational solidarity between adults and young people.

The basic problem today is not only to pass on integrally and faithfully the heritage of knowledge, values and traditions that we received in the past, but to elaborate a new life and behaviour synthesis which takes into account the richness of the past, welcomes modernity with an open attitude, evaluates with a critical mind the messages and projects, seeking for the truth, the beautiful and the useful not only for oneself but for the whole humankind.

The openness to the universality of knowledge, which cannot be separated from the necessary specialisation, remains a crucial objective in a multicultural, interreligious and globalised world. For the Catholic school the problem is even more exciting because it's a matter of helping a process of new inculturation of faith in the current context of today, offering pathways and openings to knowledge and culture, but also to meaning and lived hope, as regards the future of man, the new humanism which many persons feel a strong need for today. Is it still possible today to communicate faith and Christian culture in the present modern context, without coming out of it or rejecting *a priori* the conquests of it, even if they appear to be problematic and complex, precisely as regards the Christian thought and *praxis* of the past ?

Is Christianity today, with its project and humanism, capable of steering cultural and scientific processes ? How can we *be in the world without being of the world* and, consequently, what free and responsible personality shall we educate and form in our schools ?

These are the questions that concern first of all our teachers and the parents, and their educational relation, their competencies and qualifications, their vocation and ministry status. But these questions also concern the pupils, making them the actors of a development in which they are the active subjects and not only the recipients of an educational process. Thus appears a new physiognomy of the educational community, which can confront the cultural and not only the pastoral environment, and which has consequently to find in this cultural area its own way to act, a new culture for man, a new quality of life, springing from the encounter between faith and culture.

I am certain that these very interesting themes – interesting not only for the school – will largely be tackled in your work and I hope that, with the help of valuable and expert teachers, you will be able to develop your experience, giving a decisive contribution to the elaboration of new training ways, as regards the various subjects interacting in the Catholic school.

I conclude by referring to a thought expressed, in relation with the theme of this Congress, in the “*Carta d’Impegni Programmatici*” drafted by the National Council of Italian Catholic Schools, at the National Assembly held in 1999. In this manifesto presenting the identity and educational approach of the Catholic school, we can read :

“The cultural project of a Catholic school is based on the convergent and original contribution of two areas: the professional area, fed by the humanistic, scientific and technologic cultural tradition, and the area based on experience and knowledge. The latter has to do with the values (convictions, choices, witnesses) that steer the choice of life and the meaning that it takes on in the educational community: teachers (as bearers of life choices), parents, pupils, social, economic and cultural forces as well as the Church community. The educational project should be characterised by a constant interaction between scientific knowledge and life places, in which all the cultural components, which the school community refers to for qualifying its own educational identity, are involved as bearers of values, beliefs and traditions. In the Catholic school it’s necessary to underline how the co-ordination between faith and culture, with a view to the integral education of the pupil, enters into each aspect of the curriculum and how to promote, in the intellect and in the consciousness of the pupil, the ability to make creative syntheses and to stimulate a further search for meaning. Life is not only a system to be understood, but also a mystery to discover and to live in its profound human, spiritual and social meaning”.

So, this is the specificity of Catholic schools in our Western world. Our task consists in providing knowledge for life, where next to the necessary knowledge and operational skills, we also find ideal references to values that emerge from the personal and social experience; and here the religious and moral dimension of the individual as well as his roots in the values of the great humanistic and Christian tradition of our continent, remain decisive.

I thank you and I hope that through the work that you will be carrying out during these days, you will also make an experience of fraternity, dialogue and mutual exchange, helped by the Roman atmosphere; and I mean not only the atmospheric climate which is very nice here, in Rome, but also the human and spiritual atmosphere of this city which can provide unforgettable moments of beauty and strong spiritual and religious traditions. All this, I am sure, will make the hearts rejoice and will remain a unique memory for each one of you.

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**Message of Father Andrés DELGADO HERNANDEZ sdb**  
**Secretary General of the OIEC**

Eminence, Mr the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education,  
Canon Armand BEAUDUIN, President of the CEEC,  
Dear Participants,

Before reading my message, I would like to express the greetings of the International Catholic Education Office (OIEC), which brings together Catholic schools all over the world and in which the CEEC represents the Region Europe.

Inspired by the general theme of the present Congress, I will focus my message on the educator, placing him in the framework defined by the three lectures : the educational mission of the believing teacher, in the sociocultural context of Europe, seen from the angle of the Catholic school.

For the Christian educator, this implies three challenges :

- 1) to discover himself as a person within the plural society, sharing with other men and women the mission to educate the human being.
- 2) To think his work in terms of quality and pertinence, as an original answer to the expectations of a society conditioned by the post-modernity in a globalisation context.
- 3) To faithfully answer the service to which he is assigned, according to his identity of teacher and prophet.

In practice, the challenge is to define and to live the “*Magister bonus*” in a permanent way, if we want the life of Jesus Christ to be reflected in us and in our daily life, beyond our theoretical discourses.

It is therefore important to approach all that concerns the human being in a Christian perspective: the teacher, like any man or woman, has his own history and his own faith which influence his vision on reality and his projects.

Furthermore, by confronting consciously or unconsciously our history to life, we express the reasons that condition our life or the unreasons that rob our existence of its originality. In order to give the educational action a sense, the “*Magister bonus*” has to merge his history with history, i.e. the history of the passion of God for life of men and women. So, don't be surprise if I say with force and conviction that the “*Magister bonus*” is at once an “anthropology”, a “method” and a model. By anthropology I mean a way of seeing man, his dynamism and the process in which his maturity is developing. It is also a method because this vision of the “*Magister bonus*” opts for the educational resources of an institution and organises them in a model of educational relation, by means of a strategy that integrates time, agents, processes and tools. Finally, the teacher is a model in permanent conversion, with a very well defined identity, but his expression is liable to adapt to the plural reality.

Therefore, for us, Christians, an educator must strongly be attached to his identity. The Catholic educator is someone who tries to live Christ, in his Gospel, incarnated in the world, which he serves by communicating the originality of the Gospel. Conversion to Christ, living the Church and evangelising mission are the three key elements which found the Catholic identity of the educator.

Please allow me, at this moment of my reflection on the “*Magister bonus*”, to complete his profile by saying that for being a “*Magister bonus*” he also has to be a Good Master, a good teacher. That's the reason why the master must be constantly prepared to be able to face (always with discernment and through a quality work) the new things coming from the globalisation, the educational reforms and the daily educational activity, in the cultural plurality of the continent.

In the context of this Congress, the Master is seen as the one who conceives and manages a more human, new culture. That shall be possible only if our teachers realise that they are already involved in globalisation and that they have the opportunity to draw benefits from this, leaving aside what is negative.

A good manner to contribute to the construction of a new culture is to struggle against the “uniformisation” of culture. As a matter of fact, the world is interesting as it is because it is made up of different worlds. This cultural diversity is a heritage of humanity which we have to save. In order to do this, we need to emphasise the cultural differences and not the social differences.

Stating the cultural identity doesn't mean to shut it up in a bottle and to put it in the showcase of a museum. Cultural identity is in perpetual movement. The human being himself, cultural being *par excellence*, as a creator of culture and as a product of it, is constantly put to the test by reality. Therefore, we can say that men and women are not only the reflection of what they are but also the reflection of what they do to change themselves and things in general.

In this context the challenge for the “Good Master” consists to provide himself with the best possible means in order to recover and revive the historical memory and to rediscover the joy that springs from the truth, of the past and of today, even if this truth is painful. So, we need to reveal the truth and let the daylight enlighten the concealed reality, which is sometimes deformed and thus misleading, but also rich in unknown or rarely proclaimed truth.

In the last five years the OIEC has been developing a “double integrated profile” of the Christian teacher, based on five priorities. The integrated profile plays on both images of the “*Magister bonus*” and the “Good Master”. As far as the “Good Master” is concerned, we see in him a champion of efficiency and quality with a somewhat neo-liberal connotation. Whereas the image that we have of the “*Magister bonus*” is someone who has a great heart and who highlights the added value of the specific service of Catholic schools.

The auto-portrait of the “integrated” Christian Master can be drawn as follows:

- 1) I am a master of knowledge and I have the tools and means to succeed, ... but the priority of my life is the victory of ethics on knowledge.
- 2) I analyse phenomena and temporal realities, evaluating their usefulness, ... but I want to evaluate their value by myself, by observing them through the prism of the human person, who is beyond all the things.
- 3) I have overcome the stage of the accumulation of goods, which is not financially viable, and I spend my time in investing my capital, ... but when I wonder if my value can be assessed on the base of what I have, I discover the priority of “the being” on “the having”.
- 4) I could live day and night, completely at the mercy of my desires, ... but I am more attached to the sense of human activity and the sense of life.
- 5) For all these reasons, I propose to use, with love and passion, all my knowledge and skills at the service of education, in order to form the man and the woman of hope.

Signed: the “*Magister bonus*” who would like to be a “Good Master”.

I thank you for your attention.



## Lectures

### Saturday 28th April 2001 : Prof. Dr. Jacques JANSSEN (NL)

Jacques JANSSEN was born in 1944. He graduated 'cum laude' as a sociologist at the Catholic University of *Nijmegen* and was appointed at the psychological department of the same university in 1974, lastly as professor in the Psychology of Culture and Religion. He achieved his doctorate on a historical and psychological study of the student movement of the nineteen-sixties, titled "*De vergruisde universiteit*" (The pulverised university). He published several articles and books on youth culture, religion and especially the religion of youth (image of God, praying-practices). In 1999 appeared an annotated translation of *Dante Alighieri's Hell*. He sings in the Gregorian choir *Karolus Magnus* that edited several CD's, lastly a double CD titled "*La Divina Commedia Gregoriana*".

### Sunday 29th April 2001 : Father Paul VALADIER SJ (F)

Father Paul VALADIER was born in 1933. Jesuit priest, he is Bachelor in Philosophy (Sorbonne, Paris) and has a degree in higher education on HEGEL (Lyon). He achieved a Master's Degree in Theology at the Jesuit University Department of Lyon-Fourvière in 1966. Professor of moral and politic Philosophy at the "*Centre Sèvres*" (Jesuit Department of Philosophy in Paris) since 1970, he became the Dean of this Department in 1974. In 1990 he was appointed professor at the Catholic University of Lyon. When he was teaching in Lyon, he finished a Doctorate in Theology (1993). Study and research have never stopped. So, when he became Dean at the "*Centre Sèvres*" he achieved a State Doctorate at *Paris X Nanterre* with a thesis developed under the leadership of Paul RICOEUR: "*Nietzsche and the critic of Christianity*" (1974). Senior Lecturer at the Institute of politic Studies of Paris (1979-1989), he was also during the same period Chief Editor of a high quality publication : "*Etudes*".

### Monday 30th April 2001 : Father Frido PFLÜGER SJ (D)

Father PFLÜGER was born in 1947. He is Jesuit since 1966. Studies in Philosophy (Bac. at *Berchmanskolleg* in Munich, Theology (Mag. at University of Innsbruck). Ordination in 1976. Afterwards studies in Mathematics and Physics (University of *Tübingen* - 1. State examination) and Teacher's Training and 2. State Examination in Stuttgart. 1981-88 Teacher for mathematics and physics in the Jesuit school *Kolleg St. Blasien* (Black Forest); 1988-92 deputy headmaster. After the political change in Eastern Germany he went to Dresden in 1992 to work with the CLC youth groups and to teach maths and physics in the just founded *St. Benno-Gymnasium* of the diocese of *Dresden/Meissen*. Since 1994 he is the headmaster of the school.

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**The religiosity of today's youth in the sociocultural context of Western Europe**

by Prof. Dr. Jacques JANSSEN, Catholic University of Nijmegen

“Our time is one of religious decline. The once enduring vitality of the religious is in decay. The masses have become either superstitious or gullible, or even indifferent to religion. Society's elites are agnostic or sceptical, and its political leaders are hypocrites. Youth is in open conflict with established society and with the authorities of the past. They experiment with eastern religions and techniques of meditation. The greater part of mankind is affected by the decay of the times<sup>1</sup>” [end of quote]. There is no doubt that Europe's religious landscape is in turmoil and will change dramatically in the coming decades. The differences between young and old are great, and clearly indicate the decline in the importance of traditional, institutional religion. Today even the core believers amongst the young have ideas and practices that differ fundamentally from those of the older generation and that are greatly at odds with official prescriptions<sup>2</sup>.

However, the pessimistic description of culture and the state of religion that I opened with actually comes from the *Annals* of the famous Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus. When he wrote these words, late in the first century AD, he was referring to the state of the ancient Hellenistic world at that time, almost 2000 years ago. Religion has been in one crisis or another in whichever era you choose to study, while young people all over the world experiment with ideas and practices that deviate from those prescribed by the official churches. Religious socialisation is a risky enterprise. The young very often choose to go their own way. Very often this takes them in directions that their predecessors may regret or even deplore. Another couple of quotes, now from a famous poem: “Rarely does human worth rise through the branches”; and: “from sweet seed may come forth bitter” [end of quote]. Parents and teachers know this from daily experience. Despite their best efforts, the young don't follow in their footsteps. These quotations are also from long ago and you may recognise the author when I phrase them in the original Italian: “*Rade volte risurge per li rami - L'umana probitate*”, the poet sighed and desperately he wondered: “*Come uscir può di dolce seme amaro*”. It is the ‘*poeta christianissimus*’, as Boccaccio honourably called him, Dante Alighieri, on his way from hell to paradise, 701 years ago<sup>3</sup>.

It is a source of hope and comfort to know that we are not the first generation to find ourselves in trouble. However, our responsibilities and problems don't simply disappear when we relate them to the responsibilities and problems of other people in other times. Every era faces its own crisis. The crisis of today is a crisis of belongingness. In Europe, the numbers of church members and churchgoers, as well as several others indicators of institutional religiosity, are in steady decline. ‘What instruments we have agree’ that religion as an institution is fading. Since the 1970s, the Netherlands, the country I live in, has taken the lead in this process<sup>4</sup>. In the *European Values Study*<sup>5</sup> of 1990, 53% of Dutch youths were reported to be non-church-members. At that time, this was indeed the highest percentage in Western Europe. Churches are losing contact with the younger generation. In the years to come, the results of this mutual estrangement will become more and more visible in participation and opinion indexes. In each of the various countries of Europe, this process has taken a specific turn due to their different national histories. In countries such as Italy and Ireland, the church can still count on a solid majority. But even in these countries, decline is setting in. As we will see, the outlook for religion in the Netherlands is actually more favourable in some respects than in many other countries, despite it being the country with the lowest rate of church membership.

The pessimistic forecasts of contemporary sociologists and historians need to be taken seriously. Let us first try to understand what they mean. They view the decline of the church as the latest phase in an ongoing process of secularisation. The church is no longer the leading institution in Europe. It has very little influence left, whether it be in science, politics, social affairs, daily life, or in issues of life and death. People are educated and free; they can make their own decisions. They can no longer be manipulated by fears and threats about a hereafter. They live their own lives for their own sakes, in the here and now. The philosophers of Enlightenment and disenchantment, such as Arthur Schopenhauer and Max Weber, seem to have been proved right in the end<sup>6</sup>.

But there is more to life than can be grasped by a sociological theory on secularisation. Firstly: at the very time when people are turning their backs on churches, there has been no growth in humanistic, agnostic or atheistic institutions. These institutions are in crisis too. Democratic socialism, which in the sixties was an inspiring political movement for many young people, has lost its galvanizing force. The several parties find it difficult to get across the difference that they make, especially when they are in government. The end of ideology, announced by Daniel Bell in the nineteen-fifties <sup>7</sup>, seems irrevocable. Politics is nowadays a pragmatic way of balancing different interests. Scepticism functions, as it did in Tacitus' times, as an attitudinal alternative to idealism. Secondly: at the very time when people are turning their backs on churches, re-enchantment is setting in. A New Age has been proclaimed, and a rapidly and steadily growing number of people are becoming interested in a cornucopia of religious products. Hymns, holy oils, books and meditative techniques from all over the world are being bought and sold in abundance, to enrich and spiritualise the homes we live in <sup>8</sup>. Is this Enlightenment? What Enlightenment? In the Netherlands, the secularised country par excellence, all kinds of religions are prospering. The country is home to the leading experimental garden of religiosity in Europe. It would take a book to describe its religious flora <sup>9</sup>.

How should we understand this paradoxical situation? I think that the main cultural process that has brought about this state of affairs can be summed up as the fragmentation of self and culture. For many centuries, cultures remained geographically bound. But today, you can find people from all over the world living side-by-side in any European town. In the old days, people's selves were adapted to the one-dimensional world in which they lived. Today the self is no longer taken for granted <sup>10</sup>. It has become a problem that people have to solve themselves. There are no longer any ready-made solutions. People live their lives as multiple selves moving through flexible cultural environments. The self has become a complex combination of bits and pieces from several cultures; culture is scattered in several selves <sup>11</sup>. Flexibility has become a requirement in all domains of life <sup>12</sup>.

People no longer have a job for life. In fact, young people don't actually like the idea of a job for life. Temping agencies are booming, and the young are eager to join them. People want flexibility in their personal relationships too. The age at which young people have their first sexual experience is falling, whereas the average age at which people sanctify their relationships in matrimony is steadily increasing. In fact many are opting for new kinds of provisional contracts to formalise their relationships. Meanwhile more and more marriages are ending in divorce, mostly followed by remarriage <sup>13</sup>. In politics, people change their allegiances from party to party, while only a very few - and a steadily decreasing number for that matter - actually want to become party members. The young prefer to support single-issue pressure groups, such as *Amnesty International* and *Greenpeace*. Even youth culture is no longer a clear-cut phenomenon. Many youngsters prefer to surf on the edges of conflicting youth cultures and not to submerge themselves in any particular one of them. They want to be themselves, not just part of a subculture. In the seventies, if you had asked a male punk "What is being a punk all about? How did you become one?", he would have told you at great length how he became a punk, about what being a punk meant to him and what punk culture was all about. Recently I posed the same question to a punk, adorned with chains and a genuine Mohawk haircut. His answer was: "No, I'm not a punk, I'm Pete!". Then he told me that he had put together his own outfit, and that only afterwards he did realise that it did happen to resemble the clothes worn by those people popularly known as 'punks'. Even where fashion and youth culture seem to mould the outfits and opinions of the young inch-by-inch, they still perceive themselves as self-made and want to present themselves as such, with a personal name rather than a generic one <sup>14</sup>.

People invent or re-invent institutions or behavioural patterns to gain some basic stability in an unstable world. 'Subcultural style-surfing' has become a way of life. It seems a contradiction in terms to talk of "stabilising instability", but that's exactly what people do. Earlier on I mentioned temping agencies: a very intelligent institutional invention. Young people prefer not to tie themselves to a fixed job. They want to be free. But they need to work to be able to live up to the standards of their subculture. The temping agency has the answer: it stabilises their need for instability. In politics, the young prefer to support single-issue pressure groups rather than political parties. In the field of religion, a consumerist attitude prevails: the young tend to make up their own religions. They take elements from various religions, constructing a personal necklace from all kinds of beads, both indigenous and exotic, held together by the thin thread of their biography <sup>15</sup>.

The young prefer to experience and experiment, *in religiosis* as with everything else. The idea of reincarnation is a typical example of post-modern religious re-invention. Traditionally within our Christian culture, there has been widespread belief in the resurrection of the flesh. Today more and more people, even Christians, believe in reincarnation. Why? Why is this belief so popular? Technically, I would say that both beliefs are equally complicated and equally hard to prove scientifically. So there is no rational explanation for this change in attitude. But there is a cultural and emotional explanation. The resurrection is connected with the Last Judgement, which will be handed down, once and for all, for each individual. It is a one-take affair, completely inflexible. By definition, reincarnation offers flexibility. It offers you another chance, eventually over and over again. That's why it suits the spiritual identity of modern man. Faced with modernity and post-modernity, the Church falters. The children of the dark are more inventive and more alert: the temping agency and the internet offer new ways to bring people together. Pastoral care cannot simply reject them. New institutional inventions such as 'rent-a-priest' and 'hire-a-minister' are too easily ridiculed and dismissed. Pastoral care will soon have to become increasingly attuned to the needs of the individual. I do see the potential pitfalls in this, but we should also recognise the possibilities and the necessities.

Whatever its merits, there is a tendency in several cultural domains, especially amongst the young, to construct provisional, revocable, temporary, and individual patterns of home-spun ideas. Social scientists use words like 'bricolage', 'patchwork', 'zap culture' and 'meander culture' to characterise today's culture. We could call modern man a 'Meanderthal', always looking for new combinations; twisting and turning, always claiming to be master of his own life. But is the fact that people are making up their own religions, creating unique combinations of elements from different traditions in their own minds, really such a new thing? I think not. The phenomenon of individualisation has already been documented long ago, ever since the beginnings of the Renaissance<sup>16</sup>. But hidden in similarity there is always a difference. Individualism is no longer the privilege of a well-educated and well-to-do minority, as it was before. In our time it has become everybody's responsibility to be an individual. This presents an opportunity for many, but a burden for others, who just pretend to be individuals or even collapse under the cultural burden of the age.

This is the culture we are part of, whether we like it or not. I'm not saying that we have to accept it uncritically. It is full of paradoxes. Think of the many look-alikes you see in the street, all claiming originality. How original can we and should we be? Is modern youth culture nothing more than a complete and utter sham, albeit a fashionable one? Perhaps. But let whoever casts the first stone, show caution. We cannot choose the times we live in, yet these times affect us all. And those of us who still live in the old, stable and predictable world have to be wary of the future, to look out for their children and grandchildren. The times they are a-changing.

The main question is whether Christianity is still credible, still a sensible option in these modern, or rather post-modern, times.

The facts show that Christianity remains an option for young people and that many of them are interested in religious issues. If you want to see this in practice, I suggest you visit Taizé, in the French department of Burgundy, situated in between Cluny and Cîteaux, where the roots of Western monastic life can be found. The Taizé monastery was founded by frère Roger Schutz in 1940 as an ecumenical brotherhood. Since the sixties, young people from all over Europe have been drawn there. Thousands of them gather there each year to meet, to sing and to pray<sup>17</sup>. Since 1977, in a number of major European cities annual ecumenical meetings have been organised in December: last year for example, 80,000 young people gathered in Barcelona. When I visited Taizé, I was struck by the excitement and spontaneity of so many young people. It was like the exciting, sparkling atmosphere in the schoolyard when the school term finishes and the holidays begin. The services are held in a temporary church building, a huge extending hall. Young people don't feel at home in traditional permanent, concrete buildings. Frère Schutz understands them very well and consciously rejected the idea of building a big new church. The tent-like construction of Taizé coordinates the uncoordinated religious feelings of today's youth: a multicoloured mass gathered around the small community of monks, wrapped in white habits. At the end of the season the monks stay, while the young people go off in all directions, sharing a memory. No one knows how important it will prove to be, and nobody knows how long they will share it. As far as I know, no research has been done into this phenomenon.

My guess would be that the Taizé brethren would not support the idea of carrying out such research anyway. They share what they have with anyone who wants to share it. They do so unconditionally, without demands, and without expecting anything in return. They carefully organise a seemingly unorganised meeting place, providing the conditions for an unconditional encounter, using what Frère Schlutz has called “*la dynamique du provisoire*” (the dynamics of the provisional).

Young people like to be part of a crowd: at pop concerts, in Taizé. Just think of the two million young people who visited Rome last year. The pope, “a superstar in his eighties” as a liberal Dutch newspaper described him<sup>18</sup>, had to fly to be able to see the whole crowd. Young people like these kinds of gatherings, that is gatherings that leave them to be themselves. Gatherings where they can be invisible, hidden in a huge crowd. So the young are indeed attracted by religious symbols, but they keep their distance, hiding in crowds and hiding within themselves. The religiosity of many of them survives in the catacombs of the self, not daring to come out.

Let me illustrate this by referring to research my colleagues and I carried out into the prayer practices of modern youths. From previous, European research we know that when the interviewer introduces the word ‘God’, this has an intimidating effect on youngsters. When asked straight out whether they often pray to God, only 11% of Dutch youths said yes, while 42% of Dutch people over 60 did so. But when asked whether they have moments of prayer or contemplation, 61% of youths answered affirmatively. And this time there was no substantial difference between this figure and the figure for the elderly (68%). The same pattern is evident in every country in Europe<sup>19</sup>. However, in our research, we asked young people an open-ended question on how they actually pray. 44% of those questioned said their prayers have a direction without any prompting and 68% of them said their prayers were directed towards ‘God’<sup>20</sup>. So, asking a question does not always produce the answer, whereas not asking the question sometimes does. The advice famously given by Polonius to his servant Reynaldo in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* certainly applies here: “by indirections find directions out”<sup>21</sup>. This is a very important piece of advice for modern educators. I will elaborate on this later.

Let me return to the prayer practices of Dutch youths. Prayer turned out to be a widespread and important individualised ritual for the young. While only 39% of Dutch youths said that they were members of a church, 82% said that they prayed, at least sometimes. In the European studies I mentioned earlier, Dutch youths came at the bottom of a table of 16 countries with regard to church membership<sup>22</sup>. However they came in third place in terms of prayer, below only Ireland and Italy. So even in countries where institutional religion is in decline, many young people say that they pray. The prototypical prayer said by youths goes as follows: faced with negative problems affecting others, they ask or hope for something, or they meditate. They direct their prayers to God, looking for emotional relief. They do this at night, lying in bed, with their eyes closed and hands clasped<sup>23</sup>. Several aspects of this praying practice can be found in traditional praying: most people pray when in trouble, most people pray to God and most ask for relief and for the strength to face life<sup>24</sup>. However, both time and place are exceptional: young people preferably pray at night, in bed. Today’s busy and hectic lifestyles leave no time for silence and meditation. In bed, people are finally on their own, and find an opportunity to reflect upon the day, alone and in silence. The paramount reality of everyday life is interrupted. In between active thought and deep sleep, brain activity declines to a mode of passive receptivity, which prepares one to ‘turn inwards’ and meditate upon the contradictions of daily life<sup>25</sup>. Our findings on prayer can also be interpreted as showing an individualised, do-it-yourself form of confession<sup>26</sup>. People use prayer to cope with feelings of guilt, grief, disappointment and deficiency. New resolutions and plans can be made. So prayer has an important psychological function in the construction of identity. As St. Augustine said, it is not meant to instruct God but to construct oneself: “*ut mens construatur, non ut Deus instruatur*”<sup>27</sup>. We have to change ourselves, not God. In psychological terms, prayer can be described as a mechanism for making up an inventory of daily events, to give meaning to them and learn to accept the inevitable or to change what can be changed.

When we asked the young who this God was that they had mentioned, they used all sorts of words and metaphors<sup>28</sup>. It seems that they constructed their own definitions on the spot. A Belgian panel study found no correlation between the definitions of God that young people gave at the age of 12, and those they gave at the age of 15<sup>29</sup>.

It seems that, like our respondents, they lack a common stock of words and metaphors. In a Dutch study, youngsters were unable to give answers to a well-known questionnaire on the image of God because they thought the items were no longer suitable to describe God<sup>30</sup>. Traditional images of God have lost their credibility. Instead young people prefer a vague and abstract, self-made, representation of God. They devoutly practice the mission set out in *An American prayer* by rock star Jim Morrison: “Let’s reinvent the Gods”.

For St. Augustine, the construction of identity was of course the construction of a religious identity. I’m not suggesting that all of the young have this intention. Their prayer can be criticised from a religious point of view. But as personal meditation, straight from the heart, seeking contact, it is a sincere beginning and we should not ignore it. Oliviero Toscani, designer of the Bennetton ad campaigns, recently edited a small prayer book that was published in a number of different languages. His job involves capturing the spirit of the times<sup>31</sup>. The book contains the prayers of young people from all over the world. These prayers are sincere, coming straight from the heart. But the God to whom the young pray is mysterious, rather absent and seldom viewed as a father. As the Dutch writer Frans Kellendonk expressed it, God fills an emptiness they experience<sup>32</sup>. But they have trouble finding the words to describe their feelings. The French journal *Esprit* described the religious situation of our times as ‘les temps des religions sans Dieu’, the age of religions without God<sup>33</sup>. The formulation is negative and in plural. Perhaps it largely explains why Buddhism is gaining such popularity in western society. However, in a book on Christian mysticism, Bruno Borchert stressed the religious dimension to today’s atheism: “It does not arise out of scepticism and indifference but out of a loss of faith in old images and an inability to find new ones. This lack of contact with God can prove to be a good breeding ground for a fresh form of mysticism”<sup>34</sup> [end of quote].

The French sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger recently characterised modern believers as pilgrims. Their worship is voluntary, autonomous, temporary, individual, mobile and occasional. Traditional believers on the other hand worship out of a sense of duty, at fixed times and places, in groups and regularly<sup>35</sup>. The American psychologist Daniel Batson described the modern believer as a seeker, a ‘quest-believer’, while he characterised the traditional believer as an ‘intrinsic believer’<sup>36</sup>. In his remarkable essay *Credo di credere*, ‘I believe that I believe’, the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo interprets the Christian message as a transcription of a weak ontology<sup>37</sup>. In fact he recovered the faith he had as a youth once this faith had been purified by secularisation and was no longer based on strict convictions.

In summary, we can say that the young include more believers than ‘belongers’, more quest-believers than intrinsic believers, that they tend to subscribe to a weak ontology, hesitantly moving to an uncertain point X, a metaphor which Vattimo borrows from Nietzsche. The young are eager to believe but evidently reluctant to belong. They want to search, but are they ready to find and engage themselves? Well, there is the rub. Batson, arguing from a psychological point of view, sees the quest-believer as being more tolerant, more open-minded and more social-minded. “Quest is best” is his famous conclusion. Psychologically, the older intrinsic ‘belongers’ seem to be at a disadvantage to the young. But sociologically the situation is reversed. In Batson’s words: “While at an individual level, intrinsic religiosity is not related to induced tolerance and increased sensitivity to the needs of others, religious institutions, primarily backed by intrinsic believers, really are concerned about the downtrodden in society and helping in several ways”<sup>38</sup> [end of quote]. Young believers are reluctant to belong and their participation in societal and volunteer activities is low and inconsistent. Their contribution to the social capital of society is low. If this is just an effect of age, then we may expect a change in the long run. Once they grow older, they will start to participate. However, if this is a generational effect, and there are indications that it is, then the problem will get worse in the future<sup>39</sup>.

Let me summarise, then conclude and thereby open the discussion.

Firstly: I cannot speak for all of you. There are huge differences in Europe, even within Western Europe. There are many differences between young people, even within any one particular country. Some of these differences may narrow in the coming years, others may grow. Nevertheless, I hope that my interpretation of the situation will be useful, even for those of you who live in very different circumstances or who have another, perhaps conflicting interpretation of the situation. Several times in this lecture, I attempted to put my interpretation into perspective, by referring to history.

Secondly: as I have explained at length, the young are interested in religion. There really is a precious treasure within. But their religiosity is fragile and vulnerable. It certainly lacks the determination and militancy that the catholic church has exuded throughout the centuries, and occasionally still does. Peter Schmidt, a Flemish exegete, concludes a book on the image of Christ by stating that Christ has been as powerless for two centuries as he was during his life and on the cross. His image has been fragmented into bits and pieces, all over the world; he has become the icon of God's absence. Christ is no longer the possession of one single church or denomination. He unites people in their longing for meaning, their longing for God. Schmidt concludes that, even living in an emancipated world, it really is possible to believe, if one's belief is based upon Christ's original powerlessness<sup>40</sup>. Schmidt's vision bears out Vattimo's philosophy of weak ontology. Both works eloquently summarise what we can learn from today's young people. They don't like power, history, institutions, or grand narratives. They have no vested interest, just biography and themselves, just weak personal narratives. We can learn from their unselfish, critical attitude towards the church as an institution. Church history shows several examples of very debatable policy; and the church is also making history today<sup>41</sup>. I'm not sure that next generations will be positive about the church politics of our days. So I really understand the young when they hesitate to join the club.

However, my third and concluding remark is: how can we help the young to connect their deep and genuine feelings with social and religious reality? How do we relate biography to history? I'm not here to provide the right answers, just to pose the right questions and to suggest some answers. And here they are. First of all: there is an enormous lack of religious knowledge amongst the young. Ask your own students what Easter is about or who St. Paul is. Ask and prepare for a shock. One of my colleagues did so, and subsequently desperately advised God to let it rain for forty days and nights and then start all over again. As far as I know, God rejected the idea. It is our responsibility to instruct and inform the young. Schools and universities have a huge task ahead of them. Secondly: knowledge is necessary, but is not enough in itself. It is very important for young people to develop personal relationships with teachers. One teacher can be sufficient. To my regret, hardly any research has been done on this subject. But we all know from our own experiences how important some of our old teachers were for our own biographies. Thirdly: it is our task to captivate the young, not to capture them. Don't try to imitate them. Be yourself and maintain a distance. Youth is, as Marcel Pagnol strikingly said, "un temps des secrets", a time of secrecy<sup>42</sup>. Anton van Duinkerken, once a famous Catholic and writer in the Netherlands, referred in his memoirs to an experience he once had at school. For several days, the class had been analysing an intricate love poem by a Dutch poet. Then one of the pupils asked the teacher whether the girl the poem was written for could actually have understood such a complex piece of work. Well, said the teacher, the poet was hoping that one day she would come and ask him about it<sup>43</sup>. That, in a nutshell, is our role: to create interest and wait. Don't push it: little plants grow by themselves. Just irrigate and wait. In education, so said the German writer Lichtenberg, nothing is more important than "*das Ungefähr*"<sup>44</sup>. That is, it has to be done incidentally, not expressly; approximately, on a wing and a prayer. By providing the opportunity, as the brothers at Taizé do, using "*la dynamique du provisoire*", finding out "directions by indirections". And then, one day, the young will come and ask you. But it is indeed difficult for us to leave the young in peace. We desperately want to understand them. Fourthly and finally: the Belgian cardinal Godfried Danneels recently spoke of the return of an old longing in people<sup>45</sup>. The longing for beauty. "The introduction to the numerous models of beauty in churches, museums, music, literature and theatre is a path to God that is seldom followed" [end of quote]. I can speak from experience. Driven by a personal need, drying up in today's rational, agnostic university system, I remembered an old school teacher from more than twenty years ago who had introduced me to Dante Alighieri's *Divina Commedia*. For four years I sacrificed almost all of my free time in order to translate the first part *Hell*<sup>46</sup>. It was a hell of a job, but more than worthwhile. I found a companion for life and rediscovered my Christian roots. Now many people share my enthusiasm and when I lecture on Dante and his *Divine Comedy*, I notice many young people in the audience. I pretend not to see them and just do my thing, leading them from hell through purgatory to paradise. Paradise is far away and for the time being I'm in no hurry to get there. But as Van Duinkerken said<sup>47</sup>, Rome is "the place on earth that looks most like the everlasting magnificence of the seven heavens". So: instruct your students, trust your pupils and encourage them to visit Rome to help them to find amongst the treasures of Rome the treasure within.

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## NOTES

- 1 Quoted in: Borchert, B. (1994) *Mysticism: its history and challenge*. York Beach, Maine: Weiser.
- 2 See for instance: for England: Furnham, U. & Gunter, B. (1989). *The anatomy of adolescence. Young people's social attitudes in Britain*. London: Routledge. For Germany: Barz, H. (1992). *Religion ohne Institution? Jugend und Religion*. Opladen: Leske + Budrich. For France: Cousin, P., Boutinet, J.-P. & M. Morfin (1985) *Aspirations religieuses des jeunes lycéens*. Paris: L'Harmattan; Lambert, Y. & G. Michelat (eds.) (1992). *Crépuscule des religions chez les jeunes? Jeunes et religions en France*. Paris: L'Harmattan. For Belgium: Hutsebaut, D. (1995) *Een zekere onzekerheid : jongeren en geloof*. Leuven/Amersfoort: Acco. For the Netherlands: see note 4. For Europe: Campiche, R. (ed.) (1997) *Cultures des jeunes et religions en Europe*. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf. This book is based on the results of the *European Values Studies*. Sixteen countries participated: Ireland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, West-Germany, Great Britain, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Austria, Switzerland and Iceland.
- 3 *Purgatory* VII,121-122; *Paradise* VIII, 93.
- 4 Religion in the Netherlands: Becker, J. and Vink, R. (1994) *Secularisatie in Nederland 1966-1991*. Rijswijk: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau. Dekker, G., Hart, J. de & J. Peters (1997). *God in Nederland. 1966-1996*. Amsterdam: Anthos. Felling, A., Peters, J. & O. Schreuder (1991). *Dutch religion. The religious consciousness of the Netherlands after the cultural revolution*. Nijmegen: ITS. Janssen, J. (1998). The Netherlands as an experimental garden of religiosity. Remnants and renewals. *Social Compass*, 45 (1), 101-113. The religion of Dutch youth: Bernts, A.P.J. (1995) *Meer stem voor jongeren : een onderzoek naar jongerenkoren, religiositeit en kerk*. Nijmegen: ITS. Hart, J. de (1994). *Jongeren na de middelbare school. Levensbeschouwelijke opvattingen, waardeoriëntaties en sekseverschillen*. Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok. Linden, F. J. van der (1989). *Groot worden in een klein land. Feiten en cijfers uit het onderzoek naar de leefwereld van jongeren tussen 12 en 21 jaar*. Nijmegen: ITS. Ven, J.A. van der & B. Biemans (1994) *Religie in fragmenten: een onderzoek onder studenten*. Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag; Janssen, J., & Prins, M. (2000). 'Let's reinvent the Gods. The religion of Dutch youth'. *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 109, 31-48.
- 5 Age group of 18 up to 29; Campiche (note 2), p. 52.
- 6 Wilson, A. (1999) God's funeral. The decline of faith in Western Civilization.
- 7 Bell, D. (1960) The end of ideology: on the exhaustion of political ideas in the fifties. New York: The Free Press.
- 8 Stenger, H. (1989) Der 'okkulte' Alltag. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 18 (2): 119-135. Hart, J. de & Janssen J. (1992) "New Age als paracultuur" *Voorwerk* 1: 14-24. Baerveldt, C. (1996) New Age-religiositeit als individueel constructieproces. In: *De kool en de geit in de Nieuwe Tijd: wetenschappelijke reflecties op New Age*. Moerland, M. (red.). Utrecht: Van Arkel. For an in-depth study of New Age philosophy see: Hanegraaff, W. (1996) *New Age religion and western culture: esotericism in the mirror of secular*. Leiden: Brill.
- 9 Becker, J.W., Hart, J. de & J. Mens (1997). *Secularisatie en alternatieve zingeving in Nederland*. Rijswijk: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.
- 10 Baumeister, Royy (1987) How the Self Became a Problem: A Psychological Review of Historical Research. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, Vol. 52, 163. When I typed the words 'problem' and 'self' to obtain the reference for Baumeister's article, a list 393 articles appeared.
- 11 Hermans, H. & Kempen, H. (1993) *The dialogical self: meaning as movement*. San Diego, Calif., [etc.]: Academic Press; Hermans, H. & Kempen, H. Moving Cultures: The Perilous Problems of Cultural Dichotomies in a Globalizing Society. *The American psychologist*, Vol. 53 (Issue 10), 1998, 1111-1120.
- 12 Sennett, R. (2000) *De flexibele mens. Psychogram van de moderne samenleving*. Amsterdam: uitgeverij Biblos.
- 13 Sanders, J. (1999) *De kunst van het beminnen: relativorming en scheiding*. Nijmegen: Nijmegen University Press.
- 14 On youth culture: Janssen, J. (1994) *Jeugdcultuur: een actuele geschiedenis*. Utrecht: De Tijdstroom.
- 15 Fuchs, W. (1983). Jugendliche Statuspassage oder individuierte Jugendbiographie? *Soziale Welt*, 341-347.
- 16 For instance: Jean de la Bruyère (1881) [1688]. *Les caractères et les mœurs de ce siècle*. Paris: Garnier Frères. Des esprits forts, no. 25: «cette même religion que les hommes défendent avec chaleur et avec zèle contre ceux qui en ont une toute contraire, ils l'altèrent eux-mêmes dans leur esprit par des sentiments particuliers: ils y ajoutent et ils en retranchent mille choses souvent essentielles. Selon ce qui leur convient, et ils demeurent fermes et inébranlables dans cette forme qu'ils lui ont donnée. Ainsi, à parler populairement, on peut dire d'une seule nation qu'elle vit sous un même culte, et qu'elle n'a qu'une seule religion; mais à parler exactement, il est vrai qu'elle en a plusieurs, et que chacun presque y a la sienne» [This same religion that men defend so zealously against those who have one that is entirely contrary to it, can become contaminated in their own minds with private sentiments. They may

- add and subtract thousands of often essential things at will and still remain firm and unwavering in their adherence to this form they have given it. In everyday language one could therefore say of one nation that it lives in one and the same cult and has but one and the same religion; more precisely, however it would be true to say that it has several and that nearly everyone has his own].
- 17 Hervieu-Léger, D. (1999) *Le pèlerin et le converti. La religion en mouvement*. Paris: Flammarion.
- 18 *NRC Handelsblad*, august, 21, 2000.
- 19 Campiche (note 2), p. 52. For instance, 23% of Italian youths say that they pray regularly to God, while 75% of the elderly say that they do so. Once again, the number of youths who admit to having moments of prayer and contemplation is much higher; it is 71%, while the figure for the elderly is 92
- 20 Janssen, J., Hart, J. de, & Den Draak, C. (1990a). A content analysis of the praying practices of Dutch youth. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 29, 99-107. Janssen, J., Hart, J. de, & Den Draak, C. (1990b). Praying as an individualized ritual. In: Heimbrock, H-G. & H. B. Boudewijnse (eds.) *Current studies on rituals. Perspectives for the psychology of religion*. Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodipi.
- 21 Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act II, scene I.
- 22 Campiche (note 2), p. 52.
- 23 Janssen, J., Prins, M.H., Baerveldt, J.C. & Lans, J.M. van der, (in press). *The structure and variety of prayer. An empirical study of Dutch youth*. (N=687): faced with negative problems (346) to do with others (207), people ask/hope (201) or meditate (197), directing their prayer to God (207), looking for emotional relief (286), at night (223), lying in bed (215), with their eyes closed (119) and hands clasped (104).
- 24 Heiler, Fr. (1920) *Das Gebet: eine religionsgeschichtliche und religionspsychologische Untersuchung*. München: Reinhardt, 1920; Brown, L. (1994) *The human side of prayer: the psychology of prayer*. Birmingham, Ala.: Religious Education Press. .
- 25 See note 19.
- 26 Campiche (note 2), p. 141).
- 27 St. Augustine. *Epistola CXL*, caput XXIX, 69.
- 28 Janssen, J., Hart, de J. & and M. Gerardts (1994). Images of God in Adolescence. *The International Journal For the Psychology of Religion*, 4, 105-121.
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- 30 Mischke, K. & M. Wittenberg (1990). *Godsbeelden. Een analyse op een steekproef van Nederlandse studenten met gebruikmaking van de Semantic Differential Parental Scale (SDPS) van Tamayo & Vergote*. Intern rapport. Nijmegen: Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, Vakgroep Cultuur- en Godsdienstpsychologie.
- 31 *Bidden door jongeren uit de hele wereld*. Met foto's van Oliviero Toscani – Fabrica. Kampen: Kok. English version: Prayer, The Columbia Press.
- 32 Kellendonk, F. (1983) Beeld en gelijkenis. In: *Over God*. Amsterdam: Tabula.
- 33 *L'Esprit* 1997, 6.
- 34 Borchert (note 1), p. .
- 35 Hervieu-Léger (note 17), p. 109.
- 36 Batson, C. D., Schoenrade, P., Ventis, L. *Religion and the individual: a social-psychological perspective*. New York [etc.] : Oxford University Press.
- 37 Vattimo, G. (1996) *Credere di credere*. Milan: Garzanti.
- 38 C. Batson *et al.* (note 37), p. 364. See also
- 39 Scheepers, P. & Janssen J. (Submitted 2001) Ontwikkelingen in het sociaal kapitaal van Nederland 1970-1998.
- 40 Schmidt, P. (2000) *In de handen van mensen. 2000 jaar Christus in kunst en cultuur*. Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, p. 254.
- 41 See for an extremely critical but sincere analysis: Wills, G. (2000) *Papal sin. Structures of deceit*. New York/London: Doubleday.
- 42 Pagnol, M. (1960) *Le temps des secrets. Souvenirs d'enfance*. Monte-Carlo: Éditions Pastorelly.
- 43 Anton van Duinkerken. (1964) *Brabantse herinneringen*. Utrecht/Antwerpen: Het Spectrum.
- 44 Lichtenberg, G. (1963) *Gedankenbücher*. Frankfurt: Fischer Bücherei.
- 45 Danneels, G. (2000) *Is een oude honger terug?: schoonheid als bron van spiritualiteit*. Nijmegen: Titus Brandsma Instituut; Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers
- 46 Dante Alighieri.(1999) *Mijn komedie. Deel I: Hel*. Introduction, annotation and translation by Jacques Janssen. Nijmegen: SUN.
- 47 Anton van Duinkerken (1948) *Begrip van Rome*. Bussum: Paul Brand.

**Believing reading of youth culture and life in Catholic schools**

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If, in accordance with the laudable title of this Conference, the mission of educating consists of revealing a hidden treasure, it is no doubt appropriate to begin by asking ourselves about this treasure. What is the treasure? Where is the treasure in question? Who is the custodian of this secret place? Who has access to it therefore? How is it accessed? Should such a treasure be divulged, broadcast to all and sundry, handed out to everyone, or is it not better to keep it hidden, revealing it only to a few, or a deserving elite, who are able to appreciate the quality of its gift? These essential questions have a bearing on all of the issues involving the teaching profession and they often raise very difficult problems for the professionals who, to remain ever faithful to the title, are nowadays confronted with this mission.

Let us therefore emphasise the question: where is the treasure? Is it hidden in the knowledge itself, treasures of wisdom, know-how, knowledge of all kinds whose wealth has to be divulged and inculcated on new generations? In this case, the treasure is on the side of the teachers or educational systems which, by capitalising or controlling it, are responsible for dispensing it with talent, wisely and appropriately, and thus delivering it so that it is passed on to other generations? But isn't the treasure also, or rather even, on the side of the new generations? Whilst speaking too hastily of the hidden treasure of tradition and lessons, are we not blocking the virtual and real wealth of new generations, thus considered rather like an inert *Condillac* statue which has to be entirely impregnated with external sensations because it is in itself hollow, empty, with no solidity of its own, made up of external information? Are not the new generations the precious treasure that we have to understand how to respect and exhume, rather than imposing acquired knowledge that is perhaps somewhat faded or outmoded? On which side should this treasure thus be situated? It may be felt that according to the answer we give, we shall diverge on paradoxical, or at least greatly contrasting conceptions of the act of teaching, the reciprocal situation of the teacher and the pupil, and thus the sense of the school itself. And of course, the same applies equally if not more so to a Catholic school, if we consider things from an angle of openness to the Christian faith.

In order to maintain a clear view in these debates, it seems right to me that we should remember what the very act of teaching involves, i.e. in reality, the act of cultivation. What is this self-cultivation then and why has humanity found itself in some way requested to undertake this incessant work on itself? Then in a second stage, it is appropriate to identify the specific difficulties of our age encountered during the task of educating, no doubt amplified in the case of Catholic schools. Finally, as there are no miracle solutions, and I have even less access to them than others..., we shall seek to propose several lines of approach for this task, which is as urgent as it is difficult.

**Humanisation and culture(s)**

By previously beginning to consider the ambivalent position of the hidden treasure (is it on the side of the transmitter or else rather on the side of the person who has to be educated, thus arousing his own inner wealth?), we have already put our finger on the essential point. The human being only accesses his own humanity, or can only be humanised in a system of social relations, within which he has to learn to situate himself, to flourish and take responsibility for himself. Without encountering such a series of relations, the human being would doubtless be a man, hominoid, certainly unlike any other animal species, but he would certainly not be humanised. He would belong to the human species, but he would not have access to his own humanity. It should also be added that he would be so little that he would not in fact be viable. Anthropologists have taught us that left to his own devices, the young man is not naturally viable, and that in the true sense of the term he would not subsist without the encounter with what is known as the symbolic system, an encounter through his parents and various social relations.

Rendered hominoid by the fact of belonging to an identifiable species with certain specific, visible, scientifically analysable features, he would not be humanised, for there is no humanisation without working on oneself, and there is no work on oneself without this work being generated, proposed and imposed by the human community in which the little man has been called upon to enter.

Already, the appropriation of his own body passes through the encounter with the rule or rules without which the child would not be capable of controlling their physical functions, not to mention psychic impulses. In other words, the human being can not be left to his own tendencies, his spontaneous natural behaviour, to the simple interaction of innate mechanisms to subsist, unlike animals, which are far more fortunate, dare I say, as they do not have to take on this long work on itself which is called education, which begins with the cultivation of oneself as a body. But also through the cultivation of oneself as a spirit, and the two are intimately linked, as the control of the body passes through the encounter with language; for this little man contains within him the physiological mechanisms to speak, he does not have a particular language embedded in his neurones (Arabic, Chinese, French or English) which spontaneously appears one day without effort. He has to receive it from his environment, and appropriate it through a work on himself which we know to be very long, complex, filled with failure and thus laborious.

We can say therefore that paradoxically, it is by natural deficiency, by distress or lack of innate plenitude that the human being is obliged to cultivate himself, and thus undertake his education. Let us thus dismiss here any form of Rousseauism, or spontaneism, or naturalism, which would lead us to believe that culture, and therefore education, thus the encounter with the universe of the rule (forbidden, language and various knowledge) is a damaging offence inflicted on a virgin, pure naturalness, thus a scandalous oppression. Does it also have to be added that it is not the rule as such that is humanising, as a condition for the appropriation of oneself as a spiritual body, but the rule as it is promoted or proposed in human relations. The rule as God has never been seen by anyone. But we have seen faces, those of parents, brothers and sisters, who have encouraged the child to be clean, to speak an intelligible language, to keep their promises, not to lie, etc. Even better is the desire that animates them when they proposed these rules which has been given a chance to inspire in the child the desire to enter into the interaction of social relations where he was expected and to find his own, unique place there. Too weak to exist by himself or from his own resources, the human being only has access to himself (if he ever gains such access) through those around him. Not only "*je est un autre*" (I is another), as the poet said, but others in fact open me to my "I", to my own singularity, which have enabled me to discover that, in the system of social relations, I have a unique role to play.

We have here an initial answer to the question asked at the beginning. Where is the hidden treasure? But it is in fact on both sides of the act of cultivation. Left to himself, the child bears no fruit of humanity, could not extract the wealth that is to be found within him, in contrast to a fierce naturalism leads us to believe; he will become sickly and in short will waste away. To build himself, he thus needs to encounter the symbolic universe represented by his parents, and society beyond them. But the parental contribution only has a meaning, will only release the child's potential, and thus be non-alienating, if it is driven by the desire to draw out the child's personality, to open him up to himself, and thus to create conditions through which development will be possible. The same goes for human cultivation and any other cultivation: it's not good enough to be a good, capable, gardener who takes care of his plants, there has to be fertile earth in which to sow, maintain and thus grow; but left to its own devices the earth, even the best, richest and best exposed earth, will only bring forth thorns and thickets. The one needs the other, and we find here the illustration of a fundamental principle, at the heart of all human and Christian experience: that of never the one without the other, which breaks all temptation of individualism or separating dualism. The treasure can not be brought to life without the gardener, but the gardener would work in vain if the earth were not in some way suited to his care. His work is doubtless conditioned by the earth, but the earth depends no less on the one without whom it would remain sterile and precisely uncultivated.

Such an act of self cultivation or being cultivated forms a part of humanisation as a whole, and thus it should be stated that without such a mission of cultivation recognised in some way by humanity as its fundamental task, there would quite simply be no such thing as man. The undertaking of such a mission assumes and enormous enterprise, mobilising human energies throughout the ages.

For this mission results in the treasure of cultures, taken here to mean not the action of cultivating, but as the entire series of results of this work, slowly accumulated and available to new generations. These cultures cover the rules of life, law, ways of cultivating the land, hunting, building ones habitat, and of course technology and the sciences, knowledge and know-how, not to mention and wisdom through which the human being finds the necessary means to situate himself in the world.

These cultures give rise to extraordinary diversity, as men invent a thousand and one means to cultivate themselves and to harness nature, thereby enabling it to be inhabited. They form mechanisms of considerable wealth, confronting a new generation, which thus has to attempt to assimilate them; they also form symbolic wealth that former generations are called upon to transmit for the species to survive. And every educational mission forms part of this difficult and important transmission, such would the breaking of the tradition be serious (I would even go as far as to call it "a crime against humanity"). For through what is received, which range from techniques to religious wisdom, man learns to situate himself in the world, to orientate himself, and thereby find a meaning for his existence, his relations with those around him, with his ancestors and with All things (which religion calls "God"). Without this, at least partial, appropriation of culture how could the human individual manage to subsist, but also assume his destiny in a sensible and thus human manner?

Two thoughts can supplement this reflection here, one on the specific appropriation of culture by new generations, the other concerning the place of religion in the educational mission.

The transmission of culture is not a one-way process, as if the adult generation handed down the treasure to the new generation that it previously received. Always and everywhere, there is a work of appropriation, taking up tradition and transforming it. The transmission is not passive, a sort of sliding of a content into a container, without loss or modification. It is living by definition, as a generation welcomes what is transmitted to it in its own method and manner. The Scholastic stated: *quidquid accipitur, ad modum recipientis recipitur* (that which is received is always received in the method or by the means of the one who receives). The one who receives thus recreates and transforms what he receives, quite simply because he accepts it in a certain way, through his sensitivity, previous comprehension and his own situation in the world. This is because he reacts to the act of transmission from the previous generation, which is not identical either to that which it had received, but a re-appropriation through the educator of what he understood, integrated and internalised, and is consequently marked by his personal features. It is also because he finds himself faced with completely new problems or because he considers the received traditions from a new angle, and thus with a specific mentality. In other words, this interaction is the condition for the vitality of a culture and, but I shall come back to this, it is even more true in a modern culture in which knowledge and know-how are being modified at breathtaking speed.

We should not be surprised therefore that the young generation has its own way of appropriating what is transmitted to it, develops its own culture, thus disconcerting the elders by its way of making the heritage its own. It is not necessarily a question of treachery or contempt for the past, but it could well be that we are rightly dealing here with the unavoidable manner in which we make the past our own and mark it. The young people thus appropriate the treasure by transforming it and stamping their mark on it. In this sense, it is a good sign that there is a youth culture, translated in fashions of languages, clothes, ways of relating to one another, thinking and acting, as it is evidence that has produced and continues to produce something new. We should add to this that in the modern world, commercial exploitation of this youth culture also exists, which accentuates the differences more than it helps to assimilate them. But current excesses should not conceal an anthropologically unavoidable phenomenon. A culture is only transmitted by metamorphosing, and a new generation also stamps its mark on what has been transmitted to it, to the point that the elders may have the impression of having done something other than what they thought they were doing...

I spoke previously of religion. This is an essential point for all educational missions, and clearly for a Catholic school. For the previous analysis suggests that the encounter with the religious universe is not first and foremost a free choice or left to chance. It takes place through the work of humanisation itself, on two levels.

First of all, self-cultivation brought about by the encounter with the universe of what is forbidden and rules lead the child into a social pact, in the alliance sealed between human beings around the shared message; the child is removed from its chaos of impulses and called on by his parents to make an act of alliance, thereby taking his place in the sensible universe in which he can say "I". Through this fundamental encounter with self-cultivation, the child is already faced with a social pact which has something to do with a religious type of alliance, as it involves situating oneself in all things, thus re-bonding (*re-ligion*).

Then the entry into the universe of cultures brings the child into contact with the symbolic wealth of a given society, and there again, the child is led to discover the treasures of wisdom accumulated by moral and notably religious traditions, but above all with history, literature and the development of sciences, to also understand their development (not only as definitively acquired information), and of course the diversity of religions and human wisdom.

A Catholic school should be attentive to these two levels of encounters with religion: the fundamental level of entering into an alliance which coincides with humanisation and also the specific appropriation of religious heritages; these can only appear fertile, bearers of meaning and life, rich with the powers of orientation in the world if, not being limited simply to religious knowledge, they can be bound to self-cultivation, thus appearing not as things that have to be learned like other information, but that which forms the social bond of humanity, which unites it and gives it its ultimate sense.

In any case, if we ask ourselves how religious anchorage can help a Catholic school in its mission, here we have an initial response. The task of self-humanisation consists of bringing the child into a social space, opening them to symbolic dimensions which take the form of an alliance; it thus involves making him discover that such an entry is desirable, good and fruitful in which the child can develop his potentials. Now this pact of alliance has something of a religious nature; it gives the feeling that it is right and good to build up one's humanity, or that everyone's vocation is in fact to be the creator of themselves (a task in which the Christian will recognise that he is fulfilling the Creator's will for man); it takes priority over everything and places a desire before us, the desire that the child reaches his full potential in a community of men. Such a pact is of course ultimately of a religious nature. It can be perfectly expressed with the proposal of Christian faith, as this emphasises the divine proposal of an Alliance, opening onto the desire of God the father for us to be sons and daughters sharing the pact of justice, charity and sanctity thanks to which our humanisation develops into deification, in which our humanity is called to sanctity, thus fully creating the image of God in us, in Christ's likeness. The reference to Jesus Christ in this respect does not offer a sort of optional extra; it is an integral part of the act of educating, proposed to liberties which may, or not, ratify the Alliance proposed to them as wisdom of life and sanctity.

### **Difficulties associated with the current time**

The previous reflections are situated in the field of fundamental anthropology and theology; they aimed to situate the educational mission in this highly demanding task of self-cultivation, without which the human being quit simply would not achieve his own humanity and would not open himself to the prospect of his deification in Christ. They thus confer a profound importance on the act of educating. They are nevertheless insufficient, if we do not add at the same time that the mission of educating does not take place beyond time and space, and because it is always situated historically, it is also subject to the tests of each age. And it should be recognised that the current time hardly facilitates the aforementioned essential task. I am going to highlight a few difficulties, as the transmission of the hidden treasure needs to be lucid for itself and thus confront these challenges.

### **School and the rest**

As we have seen, self-cultivation takes place as soon as we enter humanity, as soon as the encounter takes place with the pact social through the encounter with the symbolic universe through language and the world of rules. It does not wait for school therefore, and here we find that many things are already involved: current family relations are often affected by serious breakdowns, which are not favourable to say the least, for a child's true humanisation; hence all sorts of traumatism arise, for which the child has to bear the heavy burden.

This is indeed a major challenge, as the school's mission is greatly strained by these influences, and it can not or no longer ignore them. Furthermore, the fact remains that in our western societies, school begins very early and as a general rule, the educational mission has gradually become an institution with its own rules and practices; a traditional society certainly goes through learning stages, but these remain close to the family circle; this is no longer the case nowadays when the school institution has experienced inflation justified by the mass of knowledge to be transmitted, albeit problematic insofar as the institution risks becoming an end in itself.

The actual length of modern instruction risks making the school appear to many children less of an instrument of humanisation and more of a long, unbearable tunnel, before entering "real life". This point can not be ignored, as this difficulty threatens to distort the educational mission by making it appear an unbearable constraint, or even alienation from which one has to be rescued. How should this challenge be faced? Here is undoubtedly an interesting subject for discussion...

### Cultural explosions

The aforementioned anthropological considerations could be summarised by the idea that self-cultivation normally results in a certain self-control, the acquired ability to exist happily in one's body and mind, in social relations and in the world taken in all its dimensions. It thus assumes a relative unification of oneself in the awareness of one's personal identity. It is equally true of personal cultivation and cultivation in terms of the ordered organisation of knowledge and wisdom. NIETZSCHE in the second *Considération Intempestive* in 1873, characterised an authentic, human culture through "the unity of artistic style throughout the demonstrations of the life of a people". Now we have to admit that the modern universe is quite the reverse, marked by explosions, the absence of unity and even the striving for multicoloured patterns, the almost incessant renewal of knowledge and know-how, the multiplication of belongings and thus placing the family, national and religious ties into perspective. Globalisation is not a myth, but a reality which confronts the child from its earliest infancy, if only through the encounter with the many, contrasting or even opposing cultural universes, in terms of the fundamental values that they represent. Such universes are not a thousand miles from here or across the oceans, but present on the computer screen, thanks to Internet, in games and films, in songs and pictures that invade the child's very bedroom, and thus their intimacy. If culture means the search for a certain self-unification, should it not also be said therefore that this globalisation is fatal for the act of educating, thus anti-cultural in its essence, hurling the child into an exploded universe, totally unbalanced, and what is more, constantly agitated and disrupted, worried by it instead of being helped in his self control? Aren't schools therefore overwhelmed, powerless to control this tide which flows past them and over which it has scarcely any hold?

Mr. JANSSEN yesterday described the consequences of this situation on the religiousness of young generations. This religiousness is not absent, and we should be convinced about it despite appearances to the contrary or even a certain offhand attitude towards the religious universe; but it is shot through with contradictions, in search of snatches of traditions found here and there in vague esotericism as well as elements of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. It makes it difficult to identify a given tradition, thus the commitment to a practical wisdom in a system of defined beliefs. It makes the young person into a perpetual pilgrim, if we want to use a favourable image, or a butterfly, constantly carried by the latest breeze of fashion, to be more severe. It distances itself from any content, thereby preventing the action of self-cultivation which assumes the entry without hesitation into the proposed universe, and not the perpetual fleeing away from it or the constant self-reservation. But what is said there about religion is equally true for emotional relations marked by restless wandering or difficulties in making a stable, strong personal commitment. In such a context, attachment is marked by a negative sign, just as much as the idea of a choice of a profession for life or a partisan political adhesion for ever. From a moral viewpoint, such a situation can only bring about relativism. How can one conceive the existence of absolute values, ultimate references for which one can risk one's life and thus die, for however much they are worth, nothing is worth absolutely everything? Even the idea of an absolute gift or total devotion to a cause, however high it is, thus takes on the appearance of fanaticism and blind intolerance?

We thus understand the worrying diagnosis of many of our contemporaries. There again, they were preceded by a NIETZSCHE who even at the end of the 19th century, denounced the decadence of modernity, identified with the impossibility of giving shape to its chaos and to the exaltation of the element over the whole. He saw it as a real sickness of modern man who, incapable achieving unity within himself, sought unities imposed from the outside to give himself a unity that he had lost or was inaccessible by his own power (which he calls the determinations of beliefs, but which could be the impositions of fashion, or whatever is politically or socially correct). He also speaks of barbarity, a term used by several contemporary philosophers to describe the crisis of our educational systems, and more widely the crisis of modern culture.

Barbarity, not savagery, as savagery has not encountered culture, it is in principle free of any received heritage and released from any bequeathal of heritage; barbarity on the other hand brings about a removal from civilisation or culture, a regression or fall from a state of humanisation that has already been achieved. It is a sort of inner collapse or withdrawal of the individual into their ghetto, from where they believe they can draw their autonomy, whereas they are lapse into inconsistency or submission to their impulses, often manipulated from the outside.

### **Urgency of the mission**

Should we subscribe fully to these gloomy diagnoses? Is barbarity not only at our gates but already in us or in the new generations? We most certainly have to avoid the apocalyptic alarm bells which, covered with so-called unprecedented analyses owing to the profoundness of their insights, reproduce theories that almost every age has had about itself or the coming age... These are also barren analyses, as if the decomposition of humanity is so advanced, what can be done, except tremble and wait for the imminent collapse (but always postponed!). Let's say that it is convenient to hear the prophets of doom who, in their excess even, invite a lucidity that they are perhaps lacking. As MACHIAVELLI said, the wise man always aims further or higher than the target. In this sense, the excess of the diagnosis has to make it possible to aim correctly. Thus aware of the perils but bound to follow the pack, what can be said or done to specify the mission of a Catholic school in this context? Here are a few suggestions offered for discussion and criticism, without pretension of being exhaustive or correct.

If the threat of barbarity is demonstrated by the explosion or absence of a unifying pole, it is above all important to be able to form a hierarchy, to put things in their place, not to confuse and in particular, not to bring everything to the same level (to put things into perspective). Some things or knowledge matter more than others. But in order to be able to form a hierarchy, you still have to have references or a pole from which to order and open a horizon. If a school can rely on a religious tradition such as Christianity in this respect, it is not a handicap or shameful reference that it would be better to keep hushed up, but the condition to be able to situate oneself correctly and to situate everything. It is true that Christian faith does not offer ready-made solutions, it does not immediately say what lesson and how to do it. But it forms a reference of wisdom and a resource for discernment that creates a hierarchy of values, and first and foremost emphasises that if knowledge matters, what matters more is the humanisation of the child, his personal development, his aptitude to enter into relation with those around him, thus the meaning of his life outside which no unity will be possible. To state this reference should thus make it possible not to be a victim of the dizziness created in the whirlwinds of contrived modernity. Thus also such a reference necessarily leads to the knowledge of what is being refused, to be able to say no to excessive solicitations from a market society in which the human person tends to be confused with their roles, their effectiveness and economic and social use. Opposition to new forms of social conformity also helps the young person to not become a carbon copy, but to foster within him healthy possibilities to resist what is "socially correct". Do our schools know what they are refusing, the strategies that they are forbidding, or are they increasing the number of young people in the market who are in every way compliant with social or economic expectations? This is perhaps quite a good criterion, certainly difficult to handle, to know whether our schools really undertake their mission to educate...

As we live in societies where competition is widespread, because knowledge never ceases to quickly evolve, because no situation seems to be definitively acquired, because the battle thus seems to be permanent, we have to admit that our societies are tough, merciless, terribly demanding at the same time as being emotionally draining for individuals, not giving them the resources for their structuring.

It is possible to speak of "depressive societies" in this respect, as they can engender fear, especially amongst the weaker members, more precisely an anxiety of not being good enough. Is it a coincidence that psychological depressions and suicides are increasing rapidly amongst young people? In this respect, it seems to me to be the task of a Catholic school to fight against this anxiogenic depression, and thus encourage the child rather than overwhelming them. Here again, the evangelic reference is essential. And if a certain Christian tradition insisted not without exaggeration on sin and guilt, today we undoubtedly have to take a more positive reading of Christ's message: isn't the essential message in the instruction given to the paralytic, "get up and walk"? Far from being overwhelming, belittling or making us feel guilty, the words of the Gospel are positive, elevating, fulfilling and encouraging.

We have to relay and put across institutionally through an attitude which is itself helps the child fulfil his potential through the teaching methods used, the emotional and human atmosphere of the school, the style of relations between teachers and pupils, between the school and the families or surrounding society. Here again, I am not unaware of the practical difficulties, but isn't the hidden treasure of Christianity in this positive message in which man is called upon not to die, but to live, not to despair or destruction, but to hope for a world which is taking form from this very moment?

How can anyone doubt that this is a crucial subject? In other words and to cite NIETZSCHE once again, we could also characterise the current world by the presence of nihilism. That is to say, the domination of "what's the use"? What's the use of a commitment, absolute values, sense as opposed to none sense? Now this general relativism destroys determination; it makes people incapable of creating themselves, not only because nothing is worth having really, but because fundamentally, determination can only be formed by focusing on values which it crystallises. Without knowing which values to organise, determination fades away: inconsistency of sexual and social identities, loss of references and the arousal of anxiety, all characteristic of nihilism. "Determination is lacking" said NIETZSCHE, or desire is absent, defeated, lost, lifeless. In this respect, nothing is more urgent in the nihilist context than to help people forge their determination or desire to create themselves. We once again return to the task of humanisation as analysed above: is not education a desire (that of educators) seeking to inspire another desire (that of the pupil) so that they join the human community? Here once again, the Christian faith provides us with crucial references: doesn't it place us in front of the desire of a God the Father who through his speech and law of forgiveness, seeks to encourage his creatures' desire to be worthy of his own desire to make them equal through his Son, partners in his divine community of life and love? Christianity is not primarily a corset of moral obligations, nor a set of doctrines to be assimilated. It is wisdom of life, the proposal of an alliance, which can be manifested quite practically if the child discovers that through his teachers, thus through the school, it is a transcendent Desire, the very Desire of God the Father who calls on us to build ourselves in his humanity.

Should I add another task to the others that are already difficult to take on? The school institution, as I said above, is tending to become increasingly cumbersome and invasive, and the length of one's life spent at school is excessively long. Is there not a risk here of too great a dependence and passivity amongst young people? Added to this is the current society's promotion of individualism, and at the same time disengagement, or the sole concern for personal success ready to crush others in an unmerciful competitiveness. Is one of the educator's tasks not therefore to help the young person to assume their responsibilities and stick to their commitments? If one of the current dangers is to be found in flightiness, the permanent pilgrimage borne out of a gyrovague attitude, the school has to help their desire to become responsible immediately. can the school be the first place where the child becomes responsible and discovers that he is not alone, that solidarities exist, but also that he can influence the course of events, albeit minimally but really nevertheless. Isn't preparing them for this kind of responsibility also preparing the manager of the future, as a citizen as well as a professional? Now, isn't the Catholic school risking the relentless pursuit of the liberal law of competitiveness, by preparing, no doubt very well, the future actors in economic life? But is this enough? Is this even the objective? Are we not forgetting the essential factor, that is to say the preparation of responsible men and women, and not only effective components of the massive social and economic machine? Here again, Christian faith can offer a powerful motivation, or oblige necessary examinations of one's conscience: it makes us discover that we have to bear each other's burdens, that we are therefore mutually responsible for one another, that our vocation is indeed to construct, to build the body of Christ, that we all have a part as a member, perhaps weak, but nevertheless real and essential.

Ultimately, Christian faith can help everyone to discover their vocation and unique place in the body of humanity which is the Body of Christ. Here, young people can discover that a treasure is hidden in the assuming of such responsibilities. It is the treasure of their own unsuspected possibilities whilst their talents are hidden away, the treasure of the discovery of the good to be done, the initiatives to be taken, the good effects of working with others, the treasure of becoming aware of one's own creative power, thus also one's freedom which is responsibility and commitment and not anarchistic or individualistic demands.

### Conclusion

These reflections are clearly partial; they are aimed at reminding us both of the challenges facing the educational mission that you understand better than I no doubt, but also and above all to anchor this mission in the work of self-humanisation and (in Christian terms) deification. In this sense self-cultivation is the primary task of all human beings; each society strives to make such a task possible, and schools are one of the major places for this in our societies, all the more exposed as it suffers all the shocks of current social evolutions. It is important to understand that such a task of humanisation brings together self-cultivation and openness to the religious world, and this is why a school that refers explicitly to a Catholic tradition possesses a treasure that helps it to better measure the scope and issues involved in its mission. Once again, the Catholic reference does not provide immediate solutions; it does more, by providing the horizon from which to understand the educational mission; it provides the spiritual and intellectual elements for each person, where they are, in the particular institution which is their own, makes use of the discernment and vigilance required to achieve such a mission and to find the practical paths, which have to be constantly re-examined.

This can also be restated: the hidden treasure that he has to exhume is both very old and always new, very much like the Gospels. Always old, as the school has to transmit existing knowledge and know-how, always new because it is not enough to passively repeat what is well-known, but new ways and methods have to be found to make it desirable and accessible. It is always new also and perhaps especially because the school is confronted with new generations which have to prepare themselves for their own tasks by making them discover the treasure that they also bear. In this sense, the school is founded on an act of faith and hope: transmission is possible, or even necessary; transmission means enabling young people to invent and create a world which is different from the one they entered; transmission is also entering into the pact of the alliance between generations and thus answering the Creator's desire, without always knowing it, that life should progress and flourish in each and every one of us. Transmission is also the hope that this other world, borne by the new generations, will be better, more human, more welcoming to life in the Spirit, a world reaching out in expectation of the new World inaugurated by Christ which, through our own tasks, we are each preparing.

In the absence of Father VALADIER owing to illness,  
his text was red by Mr. Jacques VANDENSCHRICK,  
*Chargé de mission* for the SeGEC  
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**The role of the teacher as a believing mediator between culture and faith  
The role of parents and pupils**

by Father Frido PFLÜGER SJ, *Saint-Benno Gymnasium, Dresden*

Let me begin this complex subject by relating an anecdote that was recorded by Martin BUBER: “Rabbi Aaron once visited the town where little Mordechai lived, who later grew up to be Rabbi of Lechowitz. The boy’s father brought Mordechai to Rabbi Aaron, complaining the youth had no perseverance for learning. ‘Leave him with me for a while,’ said Rabbi Aaron. “Alone with young Mordechai, the Rabbi held the child to his bosom. He held him close to his heart, without saying a word until the boy’s father came back. ‘I appealed to his conscience,’ said Rabbi Aaron. ‘From now on, he will not be lacking in perseverance.’ “Whenever Rabbi of Lechowitz, the little boy named Mordechai, told this story, he always added: ‘On that day, I learned how to convert people.’”

I have chosen this story in order to define from the very beginning the core of our task in Catholic schools. Schools are structured environments and they have a job to do that is specified by an outside entity, namely by the State. It is possible for us to dedicate ourselves intensively to this job, but that is not enough for making a Catholic school. It may well produce a school with good curricula, a school with a Catholic profile. But a school becomes a Catholic school through teachers who know how to convert people.

First of all, I would like to tell you how I see a Catholic school and the special role of the teachers in such a school. In the second part of my lecture, I will briefly introduce the *St. Benno* Academy in Dresden, a secondary school in an atheistic environment. Finally, in the third part, I will present several elements and methods that we use to work with our teachers on our main task, which is to develop the personality of our students. If we want to succeed in passing on religion and faith within our cultural context, we must make a long-term, process-oriented effort to work with our students on the development of their personality. The role of the teachers in this task will become very clear.

A few words about myself: I have been a Jesuit since 1966 and a priest since 1976. In 1971, my Provincial sent me to prepare the *Magisterium* at our Jesuit college; this was not my wish but I obediently complied. My experience there was so positive that after studying theology, I wanted to study physics and mathematics and I later taught at *St. Blasien*. I arrived in Dresden in 1992, a totally new world for me, which was made possible by the fall of communism. We have been managing a Catholic school in this atheistic city since 1991 - a city where people are so obviously devoid of religion that it seems senseless to speak about the humankind’s yearning for a deeper dimension in life. And many of us in Western Europe are convinced that this will soon be the case everywhere. Therefore, we must make the goals and objectives of our Catholic schools perfectly clear.

### **I. Education is the responsibility of the Church**

The Church is not a group of people detached from the world, whose thinking revolves only around the hereafter. Rather, it is our mission to share with others our faith and the salvation we have experienced, and to use our point of view to help shape the world in which we live. An essential part of this effort is the area of education and upbringing, which must be approached from a Christian perspective.

Of course, it goes without saying that in the educational system, Christian schools have the same mandate as all other schools. In imparting the knowledge needed to live in today’s complex, modern society, Christian schools cannot and must not be inferior to other schools. To put it briefly: there is no such thing as Catholic arithmetic; when teaching mathematics, we must adhere to the high standards expected of modern mathematics courses.

A Catholic school therefore is not an institution set apart from other schools, not an unusual or exotic institution as some you find in the field of private schooling; Catholic schools are normal schools that attempt to fulfil their tasks just as well other schools do. If that were all there was, there would be no reason for the Church to maintain schools of its own.

What makes a school a Catholic school ?

It is their basic orientation to the Gospel that distinguishes Christian schools from others. The Christian school has an internal centre. Because it is oriented toward the Gospel, a Catholic school can set itself apart by demonstrating to children and young people, both in the classroom and in extracurricular activities, our view of the world and humanity, our values and way of life. All this must find expression above all in the way students, teachers and parents live and interact with one another.

Expounding on this, it can be said that the Catholic school in keeping with its Christian perspective, must reflect a holistic educational ideal that promotes the ethical, creative, artistic and emotional aspects of humankind in addition to a solid and thorough intellectual education. Emphasis is placed on the development of a well-balanced personality. Each individual should see himself as a member of a community characterised by mutual respect, responsibility and readiness to help one another. The basis for this, seen from the Christian point of view, is the belief that God created each of us in his own image, and has endowed each of us with absolute dignity of which we cannot be deprived.

In the world in which we live today, we are increasingly confronted with isolated areas of knowledge, making it more and more difficult to cultivate a well-founded *Weltanschauung*; although freedom is generally regarded as something very valuable, more and more people get carried away in the currents of mass culture. True human values suffer under an increasingly materialistic way of life; the erosion of the family, decreasing willingness to accept responsibility, exploitation of situations for personal gain, immediate gratification, inconsiderateness of others, increasing violence, to name but a few issues. If these phenomena continue unabated, we will find it increasingly difficult to live together in a humane and dignified manner.

These subjects are not lost on young people. On the contrary, these developments are of central importance in their lives. They are compounded by the situation particular to young people of school age: the search for their own identity: who am I? what do I want? what will I make of my life? Will my life be the same as the lives of the adults who surround me? At this stage in their lives they are experiencing the uncertainty that accompanies first experiments with partnerships. They are beginning to claim their freedom and make their own decisions. And they are discovering what it means to fail, which often results in insecurity.

In this situation, I am convinced that Christian guidelines and a Christian orientation framework broad enough to encompass all these problems can be very helpful for young people by offering meaning and values that are not merely imposed from outside, but which take them and their concerns seriously.

I would like to expand somewhat on these subjects :

**1.** In operating a Christian school, we are doing nothing more than offering a service to young people. In so doing, we must be filled with a spirit that does not allow us to rest on our laurels, but instead drives us to deal with the young people in our charge in an affectionate, respectful and responsible manner, showing them how to live a life of fulfilment, compassion and humanity. And this is all the more important in the face of the dissolution of society we are observing today, and the increasingly complex situations they will face in the future. Anyone working with young people today finds himself confronted with the similarly pressing question: "What can I impart to them? How can I prepare them for a life that will be much more uncertain, complex and dangerous than my own?"

A Christian school must therefore be characterised by a holistic model of values and learning that upholds not only comprehensive intellectual training that addresses the question of truth and promotes criticism as an essential cultural element, but also creativity and emotionality – which are probably even more important components of a full life. Every individual should learn to see himself or herself as a valuable member of the human community, possessing an absolute dignity of which he or she cannot be deprived.

The recruitment of disciples cannot be the exclusive objective of a Christian school. However, it goes without saying that the foundation of a Christian school ties in with the belief that for every human being, as a Child of God, the religious dimension plays an essential role in life.

2. The ability to make personal decisions and shape one's own life requires self-confidence, self-control, and a willingness to accept responsibility and make sacrifices. An education directed toward this goal respects the young person's personality and positively supports initiative and responsible action. Creativity can only develop in an unconstrained, stimulating and benevolent atmosphere in which the student is allowed to make his or her own decisions early on. That means students at a Catholic school must be allowed to participate to a great extent in shaping the institution, i.e. they must be represented in decision-making bodies. Here too, the prerequisite is mutual respect and trust. This type of climate also encourages students to accept themselves, to recognise and affirm their own talents and limits.

3. Human abilities blossom in the community, and they have been given to us so that we might serve the community. Therefore all communal activities, whether in the classroom or in the areas of religion, sport or the arts, are important and should not be seen merely as additional ways of making the school more attractive.

4. In addition to providing good basic education and social training, a Catholic school is also concerned with the spiritual well-being of young people. They are offered the good news of the Gospel as the path to salvation and are expected to engage themselves in a serious analysis of its message. This path is made clear primarily through the basic attitudes described above. All teachers must demonstrate it persuasively in their everyday lives. Time for reflection is provided in religion classes, for example, in conversations, in group discussions, or in Mass services held at the school, which are an essential and important part of community life in our schools.

I would like to go into more detail using my own school, *St. Benno* Secondary School in Dresden, as an example.

## **II. *St. Benno* Secondary School**

### **1. History**

The origin of our school in the year 1709 is quite amusing from today's point of view. The electoral prince of Saxony, Frederick Augustus I (August the Strong), converted to Catholicism in 1697 so he could become king of Poland. Like a good Catholic king, he built a court church, which of course needed a boys choir. There was none to be found in Saxony, which was Protestant, so he sent the Jesuit P. Broggio on a recruiting mission to Bohemia. The school opened with nine Bohemian youths – the beginning of what is today *St. Benno* Secondary School. The Nazis closed the school in 1939. All school documents were destroyed when Dresden was firebombed on 13 February 1945. The *Kapellknabeninstitut der Sängerknaben* [choir boy school] at the Court Church of Dresden (Dresdener Hofkirche), however, has remained open without interruption to this day. In 1990, a group of parents and former students persuaded the diocese bishop Joachim Reinelt to re-establish the school. The effort was successful in 1991. The ensuing years have been exciting, and we have succeeded in building a school from scratch that already has earned a very good reputation in our city: an eight-year secondary school with 60 teachers from all over Germany: East, West, North and South (average age: 37) and 790 students.

### **2. Our school building**

We moved into a beautiful new building in August, 1996. Erected by the well-known architect Günther BEHNISCH, the school quickly became famous, as is demonstrated by its large number of visitors. It is one of Dresden's finest and most modern buildings. The architect once said to us, "The beauty of the building is meant to express my esteem for its inhabitants." And indeed, this is in keeping with one of the most important principles of Christianity, which must necessarily characterise our work: every human being, created by God in his image, possesses irrefutable dignity and beauty.

In this building, young people learn, through our dealings with them, that they are infinitely valuable, that they are people who bring life into this building openly and without fear, with sympathy and consideration for their fellow man, helpful and at the same time self-confident and upright. The openness, expanse, friendliness, sensitiveness, warmth and brightness of this building reflect our understanding of Christian education. Thus, in this atheistic city, the architecture of our building is a visible expression of our message.

### **3. A Catholic school in an atheistic environment**

Our goal, on the one hand, is to train young people to master the problems that will arise in the future, and on the other hand to help these young people develop their character and their personality in such a way that they leave our school as upright, incorruptible young adults who are active in the community. Their encounter with the Christian faith is intended to give them security in life, a healthy sense of self, and moral guidance. This is especially important in Germany's new states, where a special situation reigns with regard to religion.

The East German theologian Eberhard TIEFENSEE calls Eastern Germany a mission field with a stable irreligious milieu that is highly resistant to the efforts of missionaries (including those of sects). Professor Hanna-Barbara GERL-FALKOVITZ of Dresden tells of a survey on the meaning of Christmas, according to which half of the population of Eastern Germany believes the Christmas story can be found in GRIMM's fairy tales.

According to recent investigation <sup>(i)</sup> the population of former East Germany is 5% Catholic, 20 % Protestant and 2 % are members of other churches. 73 % are unaffiliated with any church. The pastoral theologian Prof. ZULEHNER, who conducted the investigation, says <sup>(ii)</sup>. "The fact that Germany's population live in a country with a largely atheistic culture has dramatic implications. It will cause them massive politico-cultural problems in the coming years." There are positive religious developments in some countries of Eastern Central Europe; according to ZULEHNER's study, Eastern Germany and the Czech Republic are not among them: "Unfortunately these two regions are the exception. Most of the people there expect interest in religion to continue to wane. That's the effect of the 'atheistic mass church'. Consequently, wherever and whenever I can, I advise the Catholic and Protestant churches not to become a 'small flock,' because the people's church also generates a cultural undertow that makes it much easier for the churches to do their job."

In nearly all the countries ZULEHNER investigated, a religious upswing is expected in the coming years. A decrease in religiosity is expected only in Eastern Germany (here more than elsewhere), Poland, Romania and the Czech Republic <sup>(iii)</sup>. ZULEHNER reports <sup>(iv)</sup> of an on-going study among parish priests in Vienna, where 75 % of parish priests say the situation of the Church will not improve within the next 10 years. ZULEHNER suspects that this attitude on the part of official co-workers won't produce the positive energy needed to affect an actual improvement. But where do we expect a change to come from? This seems to be the prevailing basic attitude in Western Europe. I hope very much that those of us who dedicate ourselves to Catholic schooling will be able to continue our work with a greater degree of optimism.

We must work against the undertow created by this atheistic mass church. We can only do so by working together where it counts and by making our presence known. It is also important that we give young people room to be Christians in an everyday, matter-of-fact way, without having to be on the defensive all the time. As a Christian school and as part of the Church, we are a very natural part of the young peoples' world, and through them have a connection to entire families.

One of our greatest opportunities lies in the fact that interest in and questions about faith, God and the Church are most frequently asked among young people, <sup>(v)</sup> and that in all the Eastern European countries investigated, 81 % of those under the age of 19 identified themselves as non-atheists <sup>(vi)</sup>. Of course, nowadays many people construct their own religion, and the Church's overall proposal is not so popular. And so it is that believers today have only a vague image of God; only 17 % of non-atheists (in Germany) turn to God with their problems. Even among those who attend church regularly, only one third still believe in a God who can be personally addressed <sup>(vii)</sup>.

And in spite of a high degree of openness on questions of faith, half of those asked believe the Church has no answers to the important questions and problems of life. On the other hand, surveys have shown that even those not affiliated with a church express a strong desire for religious rituals in connection with marriage, the birth of a child, or death of a loved one. It should be mentioned that in Saxony, approximately 70 % of all young people take part in the “*Jugendweihe*,” a secular inauguration ceremony that was previously strongly associated with the communist regime. Altogether, this represents a challenge and opportunity for our work in schools; and indeed, in a survey, 98.5 % of our parents indicated that they consider it important that their children receive a Christian education, and 85.8 %, that their children see Christian values exemplified. Even 44 % of non-denominational parents said they consider it important that Christian values be imparted to their children.

I’d like to quote now from a letter received from a non-denominational family: “I can still remember vividly the opening service ... . The solemn atmosphere, but also the warmth and cordiality with which we – and I do mean we ... – were welcomed into the school’s community. It was all very new for us, since we were among those parents who have never been affiliated with any religion. It was new and pleasant. ... We chose this school in order to give our son the opportunity to experience religion as more than a school subject (which would have been possible at any other school). We wanted him to experience Christianity and Christian traditions, and to see Christianity as it is lived by people of strong faith. For the first time, we were consciously able to learn and experience something “new” from our child.”

It is important to us to make our presence felt in this environment, as a Christian school and as part of the Church. We have not been confronted with anti-clerical attitudes, rather we have experienced an openness, a sense of wonder that this conservative Church maintains such a modern school, a school that is quite popular. And in some cases we have seen people searching for a new set of guidelines for life. Our school must remain open to people who know nothing about religion and the church. That’s why our bishop never ceases to emphasise that we should make sure we have enough room for students from non-denominational families, in order to give them the opportunity to get to know us.

### **III. Personality development as a pedagogical challenge for Catholic schools**

School should prepare you for life – that’s a standard saying. If this is true, a good school is one that not only imparts quantifiable knowledge but also keeps an eye on the development of its students.

#### **1. School and personality development**

There is an urgent need in our society for people of character. We must support young people in their journey toward strong personalities. “Holistic personality development” is one of the guiding principles of our school. Grounded upon a Christian view of man, we associate with this guidelines such values as freedom, self-confidence, social sense, appreciation for the individual, trust, independence, responsibility, integrity, creativity, honesty, healthy religiosity and the ability to deal with conflicts and maintain personal relationships, to name but a few aspects. This kind of personality development is an investment in the future.

Our school is not an island. On the contrary, we find ourselves square in the middle of society’s upheavals. School must enable children and young people to survive in a world that is constantly changing, and help them decide for themselves what life is worth living for. In today’s world, uniform opinions and patterns of behaviour are hardly viable; diverse views, positions and lifestyles exist side by side and on nearly equal footing. From this pluralistic range of values and meanings, the individual must choose those relevant to his or her own life and mix an individual cocktail of self-image, *Weltanschauung*, moral guidance, view of society. Young people today grow up in a newly defined space: globalisation, acceleration, flexibility, mobility, pluralism, individualisation are among the new cornerstones. The challenges are larger and more numerous, and many people see them as a greater burden; this process begins during the school years. A symptom I find particularly alarming is the increase in psychological illnesses among students, especially depression, and the increase in drug use.

In order to be prepared for life's challenges, the individual needs more than good exam results. Good grades do not necessarily reinforce a healthy self-image, just as they do not necessarily translate into professionalism or personal psychological strength. Only true personalities will be able to deal with the imponderable challenges of the 21st century. Only a healthy and well-founded personality protects one from being carried away by trends. Especially when society offers less and less guidance.

In order to master this task, we have created the position of Pedagogical Director, who functions as an additional Assistant School Director responsible for the co-ordination and development of pedagogical concepts and programmes.

## **2. Personality and moral guidance**

If we view personality development as the heart of our work, we must simultaneously address the subject of moral guidance. We are sometimes asked whether strengthening the personality leads to a form of egoism. And indeed, in our society, there exists a phenomenon of individuals exercising their strength at the expense of others. It is regrettable that this sort of egoistic behaviour is often mistaken for a strong personality. This confusion probably arises when specific, undoubtedly important qualities or abilities are isolated and are no longer seen within the context of moral standards.

Personality development seems to run a collision course with socially acceptable behaviour. We want to encourage young people not to simply conform with the majority, but to be able to oppose it where necessary. That is when value guidelines are especially needed. A healthy personality is compatible with society and capable of incorporating itself into the community as a part of the whole. That means being able to defer one's own needs and interests in favour of those of the larger group.

## **3. Methods of personality development at St. Benno Secondary School**

### **3.1. In the classroom**

The role of the teacher as a witness to and communicator of faith and culture is made tangible in the classroom. Teachers deal with their students on a daily basis, often over a period of many years. This characteristic distinguishes their job from all other forms of youth work: the students are with us for many hours, every day, for years. We don't have to look for them, chase after them, persuade them or recruit them; and we don't have to look for topics, because the curriculum is specified for us; and above all, our subject is not our relationship and ourselves. This relieves a lot of pressure, allowing us to work together on things over a long period of time. Much can happen, and there is time for growth. Affection and mutual regard, respect and responsibility, fairness and solidarity, understanding, constructive arguments and intellectual integrity – all this can be practised with the students over the course of many years. But it must first be visible in us, their teachers.

It goes without saying that our classes should be characterised by solid intellectual training and a high intellectual standards, because only well-educated young people will be able to handle the difficult problems that are in store for us – but that is only part of our pedagogical task. We shape our students through the way we work, the way we talk, the influence we exert, and our relationships with them. Too often, we are not aware of this, in spite of the fact that everything we do has wide-ranging consequences. Are we, through our teaching, enabling our students to become upstanding, honest adults? Are we training them to express their opinions freely and engage us in critical discussion, just as we do with them? Are we emphatic enough in allowing them to seek the truth and not be satisfied with standard constructs? Are we also addressing the issues that concern us, or are we avoiding them because in many cases we don't know much more than our students do?

Goals such as these directly influence day-to-day life at the school. Lessons cannot consist merely of divulging facts in a primitive-objective manner. Instruction becomes a give-and-take process among people who respect each other and take each other seriously. Teachers must be willing to take a stand, even if it means departing from their area of expertise, because students want to know their teachers' opinions on life's important issues. Good instruction requires teachers to deal with the ethical, philosophical and religious questions that arise from the subject matter. Of course, this important task is a tremendous challenge for any teacher, and one which requires on-going training and education. Rather than hiding behind their subject matter, teachers must view each young student as a person, and they must help and instruct them to the best of their abilities.

Of course, this is only possible if teacher and student have a personal relationship with one another. Especially when it comes to developing their intellectual abilities, young people are dependent upon their environment and what it has to offer. In this respect, an emotional relationship can be very important.

The task of classroom instruction is greatly augmented by the fact that, in view of world-wide problems such as poverty, injustice, subjugation and ignorance, all of us must be aware of the degrading conditions in which most people live, and it is essential for us to be willing to take action to help them. This is an area in which there is still much work to be done, and we have not yet approached it decisively enough. We have made a modest beginning: for a few years now, we have been supporting a school in the slums of Cali, Colombia, with the money raised in various school activities (concerts, theatre productions). We have also recently decided to introduce the Compassion project, which is already a well known programme in Germany. All tenth-year students will take part in this social work-study programme and will deal with related subjects in the classroom. This will make Compassion a higher-level instruction principle at our school.

### **3.2. Counselling**

We have instituted various counselling possibilities for students and parents. First of all, there is the position of Counselling Teacher, who is primarily concerned with questions of curriculum. She participates in all grade assessment meetings and thus is in a position to contribute her point of view to the discussion. The School Chaplain is available for religious and philosophical conversations with students and teachers, as are the two Drugs Counsellors. Class teachers have been asked to monitor the development of their classes and their students, to maintain contact with parents and take any steps that may become necessary. The Pedagogical Director also helps with any vital issues or educational problems concerning our young people and supervises the development process.

### **3.3. Pedagogical meetings, activities and events**

The pedagogical activities at our school – like any other school – include the biannual conferences where we examine and evaluate our students' performance, always taking into consideration the personal background of each individual student. We have worked out a set of examination and evaluation criteria intended to help us understand each student's circumstances at a glance and ensure the pedagogical character of the conference.

In our monthly teachers' conferences, we always take time to deal with organisational and pedagogical issues. Also, during each school year, there are two or three consecutive pedagogical days that are required for all teachers. We also make an effort to improve our pedagogical and social competence through internal training programmes on specific subjects for classroom teachers.

In the past few years, during the training days, all of our teachers have participated in various workshops on subjects such as classroom culture and our school's communications structures, interaction on specific subjects, the planning of our "morning meetings" and morning devotionals, ethical training, introduction of independent academic work at our school, using new media in the classroom, experiential education, restructuring of timetables in the upper years and the Compassion project (social learning through practical experience and classroom instruction).

In many of these diverse training programmes, the focus is on promoting teachers' social skills. Along with mastery of the subject matter and didactical competence, social skills represent a primary professional qualification for teachers. Individual students and entire classes call our attention to this fact daily. This can be very unpleasant, but it is also a tremendous opportunity. Difficult classes in particular show us where we need to grow as teachers. The important thing is to improve our personal conversation skills and our dealings with difficult classes and students, as well as expanding our action radius in difficult situations.

### **3.4. Pedagogical committees and internal teacher-training programmes (“Schilf”)**

The need for early value-oriented personality development was made clear to us through an analysis of problems we were having with classes in the lower years. We noticed that many students attempted to gain attention and raise their own status by belittling or mistreating others. This induced us to initiate a committee on "Ethical Training for the Lower Years." All classroom teachers of the lower years took part in this group. Those unwilling to participate are not allowed to teach classes. This group meets every four to six weeks to discuss concrete ways of realising ethical training in the lower years. We consider it important not to disparage students, but to investigate their inner motives and the reasons behind their behaviour in order to provide appropriate responses. We came to the conclusion that the basic values of a classroom community are respect for the individual, trust, honesty and a sense of community.

While discussing ways to implement these values in the everyday life of the school, we realised we needed to learn a few things ourselves in order to conduct effectively, for example, quiet times, imaginative journeys, social games, communication exercises, Student Council (see below). This led to the establishment of internal teacher-training programmes (once or twice per school year, normally two days during school hours), in which we first try out the exercises on each other and then put them into practice.

A continuation of this effort takes place in the “Didactics in the Intermediate Years” committee, which is attended by all middle year class teachers. Here, we are concerned with the introduction of a workshop in class management, the development of the Student Council, and special training for teachers in the areas of counselling and discussion management, among other topics.

An important element in both committees is the opportunity to discuss current developments and problems in the classroom with colleagues. We learn to work together and help one another rather than struggling alone. This inspires us, restores our courage and frees us of the unreasonable expectation teachers all too often hold that we must be in control at all times and never have problems or difficulties if we are to be good teachers in our own eyes and in the eyes of our colleagues.

### **3.5. Forms of independent academic work**

At our school, we promote individual work and independent learning, and have begun to implement a type of “independent work” (Montessori). Based on Maria Montessori’s credo, “Help me learn to do it for myself!”, we allow students to select and accomplish tasks and assignments on their own. Several of our special-subject teachers allot a quota of hours students can use for independent work.

We consider it important to prepare the students methodically for this task and to create an atmosphere that is conducive to concentrated work. The result is independent quiet activity, an important characteristic of this approach.

### **3.6. School as a cultural event**

Outside the classroom, students may express and develop their talents and abilities in sports, theatre, music, language studies, art, crafts or media. In small groups, young people can be encouraged and stimulated in ways that would not be possible in the classroom. In addition, these voluntary activities strengthen the students’ relationships with one another and with their teachers; they become vital, uncomplicated, “person-to-person” relationships. The supervising teachers often have a considerable amount of additional work due to these activities. We are convinced it is worthwhile.

A special point of emphasis in the work-study groups is the area of music and the arts, which makes our school very attractive in Dresden, a city with a rich cultural heritage. In addition to the musical profile in years 8 to 10, seniors may elect to take advanced studies in music and art. We also have a wide selection of musical ensembles: junior orchestra, orchestra, junior big band, big band, musical theatre, jazz choir, vocal and instrumental groups. Theatre, dance and artistic design also have an important place in the life of our school. These efforts enrich our school by providing more cultural variety: theatre performances, concerts, art exhibitions, and recitals and presentations of all kinds and for all ages often take place and are an essential component of school life. We are convinced that by intensively promoting our students’ musical and artistic abilities we are also promoting their social skills and their ability to organise complex projects.

The students in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul visit the elderly at a local old people's home and spend the afternoon with them. In the "Seniors On-line" work-study group, students teach the elderly how to use the Internet.

In this context, I should mention our computer science department, where the Internet plays a very important role, and a state-sponsored media workshop for all of Dresden's schools that takes place in our building. This allows us to make good use of modern communications media in our own work-study groups and take advantage of all that the media workshop has to offer. Benno TV and Benno On Air report about school activities in regularly scheduled broadcasts, take up current topics and also help make use of media in the classroom.

In addition we have entered into co-operation with the computer science department at the University of Dresden with the goal of supporting gifted students. Upper year students are allowed to participate on a small scale in computer science, mathematics and logic classes, thus getting a head start at the university while still in secondary school. By doing this they are even able to obtain their first "certificates".

We support these developments so that our students can master these technologies. However, the challenges presented by the new media cannot be solved using technology alone. They require people with the ability to communicate, and with high moral standards. Therefore this area, too, must be seen in the context of our pedagogical outline.

At this point, I would like to mention our school partnerships, which are intended to prepare our students for a world that is growing smaller and in which we are all neighbours. Concrete experience with other cultures and mentalities helps tear down barriers, overcome fears and expand one's own horizons. Getting to know people, learning to appreciate things foreign, developing new friendships – this is how the world will grow closer together. We are gradually beginning to establish teacher exchange programmes. We maintain partnerships with the following schools: - Harishonim High School in Herzliya, Israel (Jewish-Israeli) - Comprehensive School Alef in Shfar-Am, Israel (Arab-Israeli) - Lycée Sainte-Marie in Beauchamps-Ligny, France, - Farnborough Hill in Hampshire, England - Amtsgymnasiet Odder, Denmark - Atlanta International School, USA – Catholic Secondary School for Girls in Cieszyn, Poland – and we have just established contact with an Indian school in Bangalore.

### **3.7. Educational processes**

The healthy and positive atmosphere in a classroom and the social interaction of students with one another afford each individual with a sense of security and form the basis for positive and humane development. Personal development will be stunted or disturbed unless the basic atmosphere is right.

#### ***3.7.1. Morning meeting***

Monday morning, first hour of the school day: we have observed that the start in the new school week is often difficult due to the "weekend leftovers". In order to remove this obstacle, class teachers in the upper years use the first hour of the new week for meditation or communicative discussions. This gives the students the opportunity to address topics important to them or to get something off their chest, making it easier to return to the tasks at hand.

We have found this "morning meeting" to be very helpful and are currently developing a similar framework appropriate to the middle years.

#### ***3.7.2. Student council***

In the lower years we have begun to implement a so-called "Student Council." The Student Council is a democratic group discussion conducted according to certain rules. Students and their class teacher deal with problems, conflicts or other topics important to the class.

The students sit in a circle in the classroom so they can see each other and all can speak face to face. In the Student Council, each student has the opportunity to make a suggestion, present a project, express a wish or discuss a problem having to do with the class.

Participation is voluntary. Those who do not wish to take part in the discussion move their chairs outside the circle and occupy themselves with a quiet activity.<sup>1</sup>

Conflicts with teachers cannot be clarified in the Student Council unless the teacher affected is invited to participate in the discussion. But students can gain practical experience in learning to discuss conflicts openly rather than complaining about another teacher to their classroom teacher. The Student Council offers the possibility for young people to grow into upstanding, mature and responsible democrats.

### **3.7.3. Orientation time**

It is our experience that in order to develop a healthy classroom atmosphere it is expressly necessary to give the students time: time in which they can consciously learn to confront and deal with one another rather than avoiding one another; time to observe the consequences of their actions; time to practice dealing with one in a spirit of respect despite their differences; time to come to terms with one another in everyday life; time in which they learn to stand up for their own interests without disparaging the interests of others. This requires conscientious confrontation and can only take place in an intensive process over a long period of time.

### **3.7.4. Religion and religious matters**

We offer courses (including advanced courses) in religion, not ethics. All of our students, even those from non-denominational families, must choose between Catholic and Protestant religion classes. This is discussed thoroughly during the student registration process, especially in the case of older students coming to us from other schools.

In addition to religion classes, we organise several afternoon and weekend activities for non-denominational students in the fifth and sixth years, where they learn more about the basic structure and practice of the Christian faith.

The religious elements of school life are: the daily morning devotion before the first lessons of the day in all classes and courses, the morning meeting for students in the fifth to seventh years and their classroom teachers during the first lesson every Monday, various church services for the entire student body that are held several times during each school year, a weekly Eucharist in the school chapel. Approximately 20 students in the upper years meet daily during their school break for Bible study and discussion.

Our school chaplain is a very important person at St. Benno. Through his presence, his open door, his attendance at grade assessment meetings, the religious impulses he offers at the outset of each teachers conference, he personifies the religious life of our school. Together with his colleagues, he coordinates and supervises our religious activities. He is available for conversations with parents, teachers and students.

Special religious events and retreats: 10th year students spend three days during Holy Week in cloisters, youth hostels and retreat centres around Dresden and its environs. They form small groups to discuss topics of importance to success in life; matters of personal identity and self-awareness as men and women, questions about how to conduct relationships with a partner, and religious topics are discussed and dealt with in an integral, holistic manner. Most view these retreats as an enrichment both for the individuals who participate and for the community as a whole. They take place outside the school and are prepared and supervised by teachers.

We offer so-called “A-level religious exercises” on a voluntary basis for students in the 12th (school-leaving) year. They are intended to assist students in their search for personal guidelines beyond their time at school, empowering them to find their own way in life.

Students in the 11th year may participate in a voluntary “come-and-see course.” During this six-week programme on “religious exercises in everyday life” the students deal in a very personal way with issues concerning life and faith. The programme closes with a week-long retreat in Assisi. This course is intended to help students discover opportunities to grow as human beings and to exercise their faith in everyday events and relationships. The primary objective is not to impart theological or religious knowledge, but to empower the students with the ability to integrate their faith into their everyday lives. Thus the students are invited to “come” to the “come-and-see course” and subsequently “see” what they have learned, i.e. to interpret the experience for themselves. They learn to look for guidance and deal with existential issues of life as they arise day to day, at school or at work, and to deepen their personal religious experience. Specifically, they learn to integrate issues of faith into their everyday lives.

Our students' positive experiences in this programme encouraged several of our teacher colleagues to travel to Assisi themselves during the autumn break last year. They enjoyed religious activities together and restored spirituality to their everyday lives. As a result, a teachers' prayer group was born.

We have observed that these retreats really do initiate processes of personality development that have long-lasting influence. They are invaluable when it comes to imparting moral guidance and knowledge of life, to empowering individuals to live upstanding, self-confident lives, and to revealing the deeper dimensions of life.

Because we can no longer assume that religious socialisation takes place in the family and in society as a whole, we need comprehensive approaches that enable our students to experience the Christian religion and to practice the Christian faith with all their senses. Religious education does not take place in the head, but in the heart.

Furthermore, with regard to religious upbringing, the same principles apply as with all other issues concerning raising children. A single experience does not lead one to re-examine his or her outlook on life or to adopt a new one. Acquiring and reinforcing a new outlook on life is an on-going effort. Only a process-oriented method can ensure that a (singular) experience translates into a long-term commitment; this is especially true in today's world, characterised as it is by a general lack of dedication and an unwillingness to form durable relationships.

### ***3.7.5. Workshop with non-denominational children***

Many parents who are not affiliated with any church make a conscious decision to send their children to our Christian secondary school. One of the reasons is certainly our core message of taking children and young people seriously and appreciating them as unique individuals. An essential element of this approach is to offer young people growing up in our pluralistic society, the kind of guidance that will enable them to improve their lives.

## **3.8. Parents**

Finally, I would like to make a few more comments about the parents of our students. They have not received much attention here, and that is unfortunate. On the other hand, we have not yet been able to cultivate this area of work, as we are only celebrating our tenth anniversary. Over the course of the school year, regularly scheduled "Parents' Forums" are held in co-operation with the Catholic Academy. These forums are evening lectures on subjects that affect both the school and the home, such as the problem of drug abuse, violence, the lifestyles and future prospects of today's young people, but of course also theological topics. We also have a "Parents' discussion group," the goal of which is to exchange ideas and discuss pedagogical matters of interest to the parents. This group is a valuable link between parents and school. Here, issues can be discussed that receive too little attention in the regular parents' evenings pertaining to the respective classes.

At this point I would like to mention another problem, although I'm not sure whether it is only typical for Eastern Germany. Because of the high rate of unemployment in our region, many parents find too little time for their children. This situation produces a guilty conscience which they try to compensate with material things or by overindulging their children, defending them regardless of the situation in which they may find themselves. As a result, they are not good partners in our personality development effort. Some parents find themselves unable to cope with being asked to take part in a discussion of values and morals. This becomes very clear when the subject is drug abuse, a growing problem that parents seem helpless to address. The question of the role parents can and should play in the school's development is also a topic that requires our urgent attention. Simply emphasising the parents' prerogative is of little use or advantage in view of the many problems in today's families and the many problem families in today's world.

#### **4. Conclusion**

To conclude, I have introduced some of the steps we have taken along our way. We will continue along this way, and it will show us the steps we need to take to continue. In addressing the question of what constitutes a good Catholic school, one that attempts to address the requirements of today's world, we have learned – and this becomes ever clearer – that our path requires courage. We can no longer simply assume that communication and co-operation or shared responsibility and independence exist in the classroom, or that they will simply develop. We can also no longer assume that children will simply grow up to be well-founded personalities on their own, or even in their families. If we care about the future and the lives of our children, we must not be indifferent to their development or lack thereof. As a Christian school, we carry a special responsibility in this regard.

We are preparing children for a life that none of us can really foresee or imagine. That is a tremendous challenge. We need ideals to which we can strive and aspire. We need a vision, because day-to-day school life has a strong tendency to level things out, which ultimately leads to dissatisfaction and discontent. We hold to the grand idea of a Catholic school as a community of people who know we are loved and redeemed by God, and who therefore try to get along with and help one another in spite of the fact that we sometimes have very different views of and experiences in life. We can't "create" a school with a wave of a magic wand; it is a difficult job. But we can be confident, because in spite of any uncertainty we may experience, the foundation on which we stand becomes clearer through our efforts. This foundation is none other than the loving God who created us in love, who offers His unconditional affirmation, and who has endowed each of us with absolute dignity of which we cannot be deprived.

R.P. PFLÜGER SJ

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i M. Tomka and P. Zulehner, Religion in den Reformländern Ost(Mittel)Europas, 1999, p.27

ii "Day of the Lord", July 18, 1999

iii Tomka, pp. 52 ff

iv during a speech at St. Benno Secondary School on May 18, 2000

v Tomka, p. 230

vi Tomka, p. 208

vii EMNID survey in: Das Sonntagsblatt (The Sunday Paper), No.25, June 18, 1997



## **WORKSHOPS**

The workshops examined the four following topics, trying to make a link with the general theme of the Congress “*testifying to a hidden treasure*” and the four lectures given in the plenary sessions.

### **WORKSHOP 1**

*Culture conveyed through subjects : literature, mathematics, sciences,.. What does it mean to testify in a class of science, of mathematics,... ?*

### **WORKSHOP 2**

*Culture conveyed through arts, movement, mime and dance, image, video. The link with universal symbols. How to use the symbols of young people to transfer the message of the Gospel ?*

### **WORKSHOP 3**

*The culture of young people conveyed through their meetings, their celebrations, their music, their clothes. Community aspect of the celebrations, rituals, symbols of young people.*

### **WORKSHOP 4**

*Violence at school, hooliganism.*

In addition to these four workshops (working in different language groups: English, French or Italian), the participants in a **PRACTICAL WORKSHOP** expressed themselves through the realisation of a **work on metal**, under the leadership of experts coming from the ATELIER D’ART CHRÉTIEN, RENÉ POUILLARD, Brussels. This practical workshop wished to show the interest to make young people creative in faith, by giving the participants in the CEEC Congress the opportunity to make an experiment through the concrete realisation of a work. The workshop was open to everybody. There was no special knowledge or talent required. The method used (impression on metal) is simple and gives quickly some practical results. Other very simple methods were explained by a photographic exhibition during the Congress days. All these methods can be used in any country.

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## Reports of Father GUERELLO, General Reporter of the Congress

In his daily reports Father GUERELLO tried to integrate all the aspects of the Congress work, i.e. the three lectures given in the plenary sessions and a summary of the reports on the exchanges in the workshops.

### First Report – Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2001

Canon BEAUDUIN, President of the CEEC, explained the theme and finality of the Congress, pointing out the three treasures to be discovered: **children**, there is a treasure in each child, contemporary **culture**, which is not only a risk but also a chance, and the **Gospel**, i.e. the face of Jesus who is the witness of God and who will be revealed.

His Eminence Cardinal GROCHOLEWSKI stressed the fact that the Catholic school is indispensable for the Church in Europe. He remembered us that love must be the foundation of our education.

Mgr NOSIGLIA invited us to educate the educators in order to make them able to listen to young people in our schools for elaborating with them a cultural synthesis.

The first keynote speaker, Prof. JANSSEN, presented an analysis of the situation of young people in Europe today. I repeat here some aspects of his lecture:

- The crisis of institutions, and among these institutions we include the Church: young people move away from the Church. However they are increasingly interested in religious phenomena, situations and needs: that's their "experimental garden of religion".
- At the sociological point of view: we remark a fragmentation of the ego and of culture. Young people must discover themselves and the plural culture.
- Mobility and flexibility are very modern notions, which are the reflection of a lack of commitment of young people. What will then become of Christianity ?
- In fact young people really thirst to believe but they are reluctant to commit themselves. That not only characterises young people but we are all concerned: parents, teachers and educators. There is a quest for religion, but sometimes without God.
- Referring to the weakness of the youngsters' religiosity, Prof. JANSSEN presented the image of a "powerless" Christ.

This is the framework in which we will develop our reflection on the Catholic school; a Catholic school which is called to educate young people in this sociocultural context.

In general the groups recognised themselves in the difficulties presented by Prof. JANSSEN, but they insisted on the fact that one shouldn't generalise. The situation is not the same everywhere, there are great differences between some European countries, but there is also a common ground. Some groups expressed a regret for the fact that there was no direct connection with school life, but the conclusions presented by Prof. JANSSEN were accepted as a good starting point for our work: the first conclusion consists in coping with difficulties, the second conclusion is that there is a hidden treasure in each child; religiosity is weak, there is a flagrant lack of religious knowledge, but the need truly exists. Prof. JANSSEN gave us three guidelines for our work in order to help young people: first of all, we must give young people **religious knowledge**, then we must develop **good personal relations** between teachers and pupils and, finally, we must **keep a certain distance** in order to respect the dynamic of the individual, of each pupil. We must arouse interest and wait.

So, these were the suggestions that were put forward by Prof. JANSSEN and that were welcomed by the groups. The most frequent questions – in all the workshops – concerned the following points:

- The foundations of this education: we remark a lack of silence, of spirituality, of commitment.
- As far as violence is concerned: we must develop communication between school and family in order to prevent violence.
- Religious bases: living liturgies, i.e. liturgies in which we clearly explain what we are living. We must clearly see in what direction we will direct liturgy, using the symbols of young people.
- All this refers to teacher training, education of educators.

Here are some suggestions expressed in the different workshops:

### **Workshop 1 – Culture conveyed through subjects, disciplines**

- The Italian group reflected on the didactical method. How to discover transcendence from emotional interiority, and also the “truth” of sciences ? What is the theory of knowledge that should support the work done in schools and also the research work ?
- In the French working group, they experimented a way of educating to faith through poetry: presentation of an experiment developed for Catholic and Orthodox students in Romania.
- In the English group, an expert presented a programme of values integrated in knowledge. Some participants suggested to ask ASEREP (*Association de Recherche et d’Echanges Pédagogiques*) to elaborate a programme to see how to transmit values through the different subjects taught in schools.

### **Workshop 2 – Culture conveyed through the arts**

- The English group underlined the wholeness of the human person, the wholeness of the five senses that must be developed in the school activity. The whole individual should be involved; young people need gestures; they need to train their sight, hearing and body. They need religious gestures.
- The French group focused on solitude which is necessary for praying; a quest for interiority; living prayers; especially in Eastern European countries, the example of the teacher must show the way to discover interiority.

### **Workshop 3 – Culture conveyed by meetings, symbols of young people**

- The English group commented very effectively on the issue of Prof. JANSSEN’s lecture: young people want to believe but without belonging, without going to church. An expert invited the participants to make the experience of Taizé (the experience of silence). He underlined the importance of the chapel in the school (a place for silence). We must help young people to create their own liturgy, an open liturgy.
- The French group found a very nice expression : “*saisir au vol la qualité d’un mot*” (to jump at the quality of a word). That means that we ought to enhance the community dimension, living together in order to give young people opportunity for exchanges, but above all, we must be able to wait.
- The Italian group talked about the need for spirituality, with the difficulties inherent in it; the necessity to listen to young people, the necessity of dialoguing, guiding and witnessing. The group also spoke about the beauty (question brought up by Cardinal MARTINI of Milan): saving people by means of beauty; that is the beauty of the icon of transfiguration.

### **Workshop 4 – Violence in schools**

- The French group thinks that the lecture of Prof. JANSSEN didn’t sufficiently underscore responsibility and especially the fact to educate youth to responsibility. The group spoke about individualism that hinders social expression of religion. We must reconstruct a religious experience.
- The English group presented the “safe school” project: the value of a responsibility shared by school and parents.
- The Italian group underscored that violence is very different from a European country to another. In Italy the causes of violence are namely a protracted school attendance, a considerable presence of immigrants and a classical culture of teachers, which is very distinct from the culture of young people.

Two general remarks made in several groups :

- Teachers must be more prepared in order to be able the face the difficulties of the present generation.
- Teacher training, education of educators must be better organised.



## Second Report – Monday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2001 (morning)

Before giving a summary of the exchanges of yesterday, I wish to underline the continuity between the lecture of Father VALADIER and the one of Prof. JANSSEN: young people were presented yesterday from a sociological point of view; this morning they were examined from a psychological point of view. And Father PFLÜGER will then present to us an example of “education in action”.

In his text, Father VALADIER referred directly to Prof. JANSSEN who showed “the consequences of this situation on the religiosity of the young generations”.

Generally speaking, the participants reacted positively, but in very different ways, to the lecture of Father VALADIER. Some people found the discourse too pessimistic, others agreed totally, especially on the criteria proposed by Father VALADIER: “... to anchor this mission in the work of self-humanisation and (in Christian terms) deification”. Therefore we must give the pupils the opportunity to form a hierarchy (to put things to rights in the chaos of their impressions); to arouse desire (like the Father does for us); to work against the anxiety of competition; to create solidarity experiences (responsibility towards the others) against individualism.

Here are some important remarks made in the workshops:

### Workshop 1 – Culture conveyed through subjects, disciplines

- The Italian group questioned itself in order to find out how to interpret the culture which we are living in (Father VALADIER referred to NIETZSCHE). We need to give teachers means to interpret the situation that we are living in, to interpret it also with parents. In order to do so, we must prepare teachers and find the tools for making this interpretation possible.
- In the French group there was an important debate on humanisation: to humanise, we have to reveal our sources (the Gospel). This debate must be shared with parents and teachers. A Portuguese and a Flemish experiences were presented. They both aim at developing the education of educators in the respect of the biblical sources and roots of our culture.
- The English workshop spoke about communication: how to integrate communications “top-down and bottom-up” ? In order to grow it’s necessary to exchange: communications don’t go in one direction only. It’s not a one way process. The group also spoke about the value of young people’s language (their symbols). Teachers must know the way in which young people communicate, their language, methods, way of life, etc. Teachers must know this language not only for giving young people what they wish, but also to pass on to them what they need; that’s quite another matter. Here also educating of educators is very important.

### Workshop 2 – Culture conveyed through the arts

- The French group tackled the articulation of the social bond of the pupil for humanisation with the alliance for deification: we don’t want our students to be “carbon copies”. That means also that we must teach them how to resist to conformism, to be creator of oneself. Art must be used as a way to construct the self through creativity. We also must struggle against depression (this was particularly expressed by representatives of Eastern European countries): “get up and walk”, because Christianity is a call for life.
- The English group was not in agreement with Father VALADIER when he asked the question: “If culture means the search for a certain self-unification, should it not also be said therefore that this globalisation is fatal for the act of educating, thus anti-cultural in its essence, hurling the child into an exploded universe, totally unbalanced, and what is more, constantly agitated and disrupted, worried by it instead of being helped in his self control ?” The group finds the lecturer too pessimistic and thinks that globalisation gives the opportunity to feel responsible. Competition can be very stimulating. The workshop didn’t agree with another statement of Father VALADIER : “the world is characterised by nihilism”. The group prefers to speak about “individualism”. Finally the group also underlined the importance of the school for migrant people and for their emancipation.

- The Italian group on the contrary was entirely in agreement with Father VALADIER and his statements. A very thorough educational project was presented in the group. It made reference to the values of the persons, to relations, to training of educators and teachers, to responsibilities, to guidance of the individual.

### **Workshop 3 – Culture conveyed by meetings, symbols of young people**

- The French group appreciated not only the content but also the form of Father VALADIER's lecture which was presented in a very clear way. The group felt invited to take initiatives and gave some guidelines: boarding schools, which are real places for developing altruism, for enhancing group work, team work in classrooms and school partnerships in Europe. The group also imagined an education of educators based on five main areas:
  - (1) evaluation, assessment,
  - (2) to invent time for accompanying, for guiding young people in their problems,
  - (3) comprehension of the world, of society,
  - (4) development of mediation tools by the peers ("peer education"),
  - (5) to fill in the gap existing between teacher training and guidance of youngsters' situations : intelligibility of the world which opens to "pedagogical boldness".
- The English group first of all stressed the need for a theory of knowledge which should be common to all the teachers in Catholic schools. The group also made a remark about the liturgies experienced here, during the Conference: some expressed a disappointment saying that they actually "endured" the mass rather than participated in a celebration. As far as the lecture of Father VALADIER is concerned, the group underscores that we must be ready to change the tradition; to realise that we belong to something that goes well beyond us. We need to find a way to offer young people the opportunity to discover their own talent, their own values, in various fields of experience. We must listen to young people. They are not copies, each of them is unique. The group asks the following question: is the Church afraid to discover new forms of religiosity ? Should it not be encouraged ? The group also complained that the model of religion presented is patriarchal; there is no room for women (such as the present Congress).

### **Workshop 4 – Violence in schools**

- In the text of Father VALADIER, the French group picked out that "rules are humanising"; but what about separated families, how to indicate the rules and how to fill in the gap of the family ? With regard to the issue of violence, the group wondered about the skills needed for adults to face this challenge. We must prepare, at the professional level, an educational team in order that it acquires these skills ; and this must be done from the initial training.
- The English group found the lecture pessimistic. A presentation was made in the group : the security State and Church policies in England. Three kinds of violence were underlined : physical, emotional and professional. The contribution of Catholic people consists a clear understanding of the mission and the own culture. And at the pastoral level, victims must be helped, attackers must be followed and mediation must be organised for achieving reconciliation. A project for secondary schools presents a balance between challenge and aptitude. Children themselves are a treasure, in conflict resolution they are the best tools.
- The Italian group analysed the causes of violence. By young people : lack of self-confidence, lack of values; by teachers : lack of faith and professionalism. Causes often come from the media who show different forms of violence in sport, in debates, etc. and also from families in difficulties.



### **Third Report – Monday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2001 (afternoon)**

The exchanges in the groups this afternoon concerned more the reactions to the speech of Father PFLÜGER than the different topics of the workshops themselves.

The lecture delivered by Father PFLÜGER really struck all of us and led to a lot of questions. A first remark made in several groups is that the situations are very different from a European country to another : there are different values in education, in the teaching teams, in the projects. What choices are to be made : an elitist project or a school open to everyone ? As far as school polices are concerned, there is a danger to stress competition, elitism, etc.

A group (workshop 1 Italian) raised the problem of the religion class : is it possible to make this class obligatory for all the pupils of a school ? The answer of the group is yes, so long as the religion class has a cultural nature. That means that we must give young people a cultural knowledge in matters of religion and that we haven't to propose them a religious experience.

Two groups (workshops 1 English and 1 French) thought that the witness of Dresden didn't correspond to the experience of most of our Catholic schools in Europe which have a very deeply rooted tradition. The school of Dresden was rebuild only 10 years ago; and sometimes tradition is very heavy, especially for teachers who often don't want to do "more". Is the choice of this school in Dresden not elitist ? In the same connection, another group (workshop 3 French) asked itself how to help teachers to testify to the values of the Gospel, like those of Dresden do. Could we imagine a "corporate identity" for our Catholic schools in Europe ? Some representatives of congregations also ask the following question to teachers : can the charism of the founders be a possible way for lay people ? How can we help an atheistic teacher to teach and educate in a Catholic school ?

The Italian group (workshop 4) was fascinated by the excellent organisation of *St. Benno* College in Dresden. But this raises many questions in connection with Italian Catholic schools, namely questions of economic nature. The Italian workshop 3 proposed some possible pathways which could be applied in the Italian reality, from the experience of Dresden : positive aspect of an inter-personal relationship, need for freedom to give a personal response, exchange amongst Catholic schools in order to work to a quality school, etc.

The German participants in workshop 1 English said that the lack of religious knowledge can be remarked in young people but also in teachers. Some of them don't know the educational project very well and are more concerned by the curriculum. That poses questions. The projects developed in order to solve this problem should concern both the teachers and the pupils.

Several groups remarked that for developing such a project like in *St. Benno*, Dresden, one needs to motivate thoroughly the teachers and also to develop a very good cooperation with parents.

The English group that worked on violence (workshop 4) preferred to continue the debate on the topic of the workshop rather than examining the experience of *St. Benno*, Dresden. The group insisted on the fact that we must re-think the school system itself: competition, buildings often unattractive in which the pupils don't feel good, all this can be a cause of violence. We must prevent violence by helping the person to develop. The group referred to René GIRARD who said that when man is abandoned to himself violence breaks out.

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## **Final Report of the Congress**

During these Congress days, we have questioned ourselves on the inculturation of faith through the school. We had to discover, through a group reflection orientated towards three working lines, the hidden treasures in the life of our Catholic schools; a living reality all over Europe, which confronts itself with the difficulties of any education.

We have examined these treasures. A preliminary observation: are we talking about three treasures or just one treasure that reveals itself before our eyes and presents to our reflection the different aspects of a unique reality: **the child** ?

This **gift of God** that has been entrusted to us (first of all to parents and then to us who make the school), this child growing up **in a specific environment**, has been entrusted to us already marked by a culture: culture of his times. We already know **the direction in which he will grow up**, because we have believed in Jesus Christ and his message.

Our work will be to discover the child and his stock of experiences, his gifts and talents, the direction that he is to follow (Jesus Christ and his message) and the tools to be used to accompany him on his way to accomplish his humanity. So these are the pathways that were followed in the workshops, always repeating the importance to educate the educators. In fact a Catholic educator is not only someone who has a culture, not just a pedagogue at the etymological sense of the word. A Catholic teacher is also a witness of a vision of life, a bearer of an experience that commits him and he must speak and share this experience (*credidi propter quod locutus sum*).

We were all personally committed in this reflection. We explored the environment in which our children are growing up and in which they are immersed (that's the sociological point of view) and the way in which they grow, the network of relations which constitutes their human person : environment, system of symbols, communication (that's the psychological point of view). In this exploration we realised what we need to know better : it's not a discovery, it's rather a clarification. Each of us confronted his own experience in education with the experience of other educators, other colleges (Dresden, for instance) which have placed the person in the centre of their work.

What do we need to continue in our work, to carry on our task and to really zero in on the target ? The answers of the workshops can be – according to me – classified in three different directions, because teacher training in Catholic education should be a **professional, pedagogical and religious** training.

### ▪ **Professional training**

First of all one asks for a **theory of knowledge** in order to provide groundwork to our professional work, in order to understand the process developed in education for helping young people to “learn”.

Culture must be interpreted in the light of the Gospel: each disciplinary pathway, according to its epistemological status, must be confronted with the vision of reality that comes from the revelation. That means, for instance, to know the limits of science and the implications between science and ethics.

The choice of contents, of curricula, obliges us to identify the *semina verbi* that are hidden in our culture. Someone said that poetry is always open to the mystery, but we must involve young people in this quest. This poses the question of the choice of contents, methods, curricula (music, poetry, ...) that make the school in the strict sense of the word and we must find tools to achieve this aim.

- **Pedagogical training**

As far as pedagogical training is concerned, one stressed the lack of psychological competencies of teachers in various European countries. In order to solve the different problems facing us today in our familial or social environment, we must be informed on psychological sciences and methods.

For a personal guidance we must be able to communicate with children and parents. We must propose experiences of solidarity, models of commitment, for developing responsibility against individualism.

We must be able to kindle the desire to learn. Therefore we must go against the routine and show **creativity for inventing the school**.

All this requires on the part of teachers time, commitment and a real will to go beyond the class, i.e. to go and meet the children and their families.

- **Religious training**

We must stimulate in young people the desire to encounter transcendence through what they learn in schools. This means showing the way for discovering silence, interiority, an open humanisation, disposability for welcoming the mystery of revelation. A privileged pathway could be the discovery of the **beauty** : we have really to educate young people to beauty, so that they may contemplate beauty, for a complete humanisation. In fact the contemplative dimension in the life of young people is fundamental for constructing the ego, the self.

In order to realise this, we must also exchange about faith between teachers, in the construction of an educational community.

I would like to conclude with some of the words expressed by the Holy Father in his address at the audience, on the first day of this Congress, because I think that these words apply very well to our reflection :

“Catholic schools in Europe are also called upon to be dynamic communities of faith and evangelisation, working in close association with the pastoral mission of the diocese. By being a channel of communication between the Church and the community of man, and in promoting man’s integrity, they remind God’s people of the crux of His mission: to allow everyone to give meaning to their life by bringing out the hidden treasure that belongs to him, and so invite humanity to enter the project of God made manifest in Jesus Christ”.

I thank you for your attention and I thank you also for this invitation to reflect on the vocation of all my life.

R.F. GUERELLO SJ



## Conclusion of the Congress

by the President of the CEEC, Canon Armand BEAUDUIN

### Going back through another path

Father GUERELLO already gave some conclusions of our Congress. Study days need to be open, but at a certain point, they need to be closed. But that doesn't mean that the story doesn't go on, that doesn't mean that we reached the end of our work and that we have given an answer to all the questions.

I invited you, at the beginning of this session, to take this opportunity to really try to find a new path, a new way to go back. Just like the Three Wise Men who came from the East without going back following the same path after having recognised in the child of Bethlehem the presence of God. I imagine that you also shall return by another way, because your questions are no longer at the same point they were when you arrived. At least, that's what we may hope, if we really were receptive to the exchanges and to what the lecturers said.

Someone said to me, during this Congress, that the most important here was that we learned to ask questions. And even if we didn't really expect the answers, we learned to better formulate our questions. In fact, we are the ones who have the answers, collectively. And where we commit ourselves in the work of education; we are committed with others. We must find the answers all together and we mustn't keep the illusion that, somewhere, the answers will come without looking inside ourselves, we mustn't expect the answers to be heaven-sent. That's certainly not going to happen. I think that we need to dwell in the questions for a long time, to go into the questions deeply in order to see the answer emerge.

I retain the great diversity of our approaches as a difficulty but also as a richness of this meeting. It's a difficulty because we, sometimes, have the impression to be in a tour of Babel; and when the others are speaking, even with the same words as ours, it seems that they don't speak about the same things. But this diversity is also a richness because it helps us precisely to shift the points of view. Diversities come from our particular histories. We have seen that it is difficult for young people to combine their own personal history with the one of humanity. For us too it's very difficult "to make syntonic" our personal histories – but perhaps it would be an impoverishment to make a synthesis of all these histories – and it will also be difficult to express the richness of our works and our exchanges in a general report. But the fact to listen to the particular histories of the others makes us more intelligent before our own history. Because in the histories of the others we find some aspects of our own history, which is often a plural history. And this is good because our unity isn't the unity of monotony but the unity of a plural identity. As a matter of fact, we belong to our society, we belong to our Church, we are close to the world of young people and we ourselves have been educated in another generation... all this gives us plural identities. This mustn't prevent the unity of the ego, so necessary for both our work as educators and the hope of those who are in our schools.

I also retain another thing. We must continue to deepen our questions and to live in the tension between the work of transmitting culture and the work of appropriating culture. Culture cannot be passed on like a luggage; it's an alchemy, a infinitely more complex process. And this complexity makes that we never really have the good answer. This is to reassure you if you are still today in a state of uncertainty. It's good to remain in a quiet uncertainty or in an uncertain quiet. Another tension is the tension between, on the one hand, faith, i.e. the alliance which we are called to enter into, the otherness of God which bursts in our history so that there are some things in our history that might not have happened but that happened yet, like an event which makes that things are no longer the same... and, on the other hand, the autonomy, particular to disciplinary activities, pedagogical activities and moral education.

To overcome these tensions, there are no fixed answers nor recipes. It would be wonderful if we had ready-made solutions. But if someone could give you such solutions, he would deprive you of your freedom. And if you had recipes for your pupils you would deprive them of what precisely you have to kindle in them. We don't have ready-made answers, we don't have recipes, we don't have a cap to put on the bottle of our anxieties; but perhaps we have a wisdom; a wisdom that comes in the form of a steep and narrow path; a wisdom made of discernment and freshness. This last point struck me in the testimony of Dresden : when our past doesn't wear out us too much, it is possible for us to reinvent a new history with freshness. But we can be so worn out by our history that we are no longer capable of inventing a new history with freshness. And how to do with children if we are not capable of inventing with them a history with freshness. We have thus to take this narrow and steep path, which is neither an idolatry of the present nor an idolatry of the past; neither a desperation on the present nor a desperation on the past. We would need the wisdom of the scribe who had in his treasure old and new things.

A steep path is also to be taken between two understandings of faith, which is neither a totalitarian conception of what we can bring as Christians in the educational work, nor insignificance of faith in our activity and in our educational vocation. But we have to find the path of a faith that provokes and educates will and desire; a faith that allows us to say to the young people in our schools : "get up and walk", rather than seeing it as a closed system of religious and moral doctrines that would have, once and for all, the last word. There is no last word, there is only a word for the end.

I give you here my intimate conviction: in the Christian education work, which is ours in Catholic schools, we are at the very beginning of the Christianity history and the Spirit calls us today to invent this history so that the Spirit may be present in every human being. That is the adventure which we are involved in and we have still a long way to go. This way is both the one we make ourselves and the one we leave in the hands of the Other, because it's not the same who plants, who waters and who brings up. That's the long patience of the educator, inspired by the patience of God. So, I think that we can go back home confidently, with the work we have to do, knowing that we will always have to re-start our work again and again.

But we wouldn't never have achieved this result if you hadn't worked together and if someone hadn't worked for us. And we will not conclude this Congress without expressing our gratitude to all of them. I think to the people who have welcomed us in this beautiful country and who have prepared this session : the Commission of Education of the Italian Bishops' Conference, represented by Mgr NOSIGLIA, Mgr ZANI; Father PERRONE, President of the FIDAE, who gave us a precious help; the school heads and teachers, coming from different Italian Catholic schools, who animated some of the celebrations and other moments of this Congress.

We should not forget Myriam BADART, director at the CEEC and "kingpin" of this meeting, who has completed 25 years service, which is worth celebrating, and, of course, Etienne VERHACK, the Secretary General, who has prepared this Congress with care and method and who gathered, here, in Rome, the fruits of his work.

We also want to thank the three lecturers. Even if it is difficult for them to join us in our particular history, at least we were invited to join them in their history and in the way in which they were seeking an intelligence for what we have to do in Catholic education, starting from their own experience : firstly, in trying to better understand what happens in the world of young people, which was the topic developed by Prof. JANSSEN from the Netherlands. The Netherlands belong to Europe, of course, even if it's a part of Europe perhaps a little bit different from others, but it's a Europe in which we certainly recognise some of our own characteristics because we are both one and multiple. Then we heard the contribution of Father VALADIER, who was absent, but his text was read by Mr VANDENSCHRICK, who acted as his voice and also, in some way, as his interpreter. This lecture pointed out the humanistic and spiritual stakes of the educational work. And finally, Father PFLÜGER presented a situation, which is perhaps different from that of the old Western Europe from before the German reunification, but which painted "other possible ways" in our history. So, we thank the speakers for having documented and shifted our reflection.

And finally, I wish to thank Father GUERELLO, who accepted the difficult task to make a summary of the reports and to present a final conclusion. But the work of Father GUERELLO would not have been possible if you had not brought your own experience and your own reflections and exchanges in the workshops.

Thank you also to the interpreters and the technicians for their essential work.

All these persons made our work possible and gave us the opportunity to enrich ourselves through the exchange of experiences and even if we continue to thirst for something we didn't receive... that will precisely help us to go further. I thank you all and I imagine that what have been exchanged here, especially during the workshops, shall bear fruit.



## **THANKS**

The CEEC wishes to thank particularly the members of the international **preparation** group of this Congress.

Many thanks also to all those who have accepted to play a special role in the workshops : **animators** and **reporters**; without forgetting the **expert** people who introduced the topics of the different workshops by sharing their experience.

Thank you also to **Father Francesco GUERELLO** for the difficult work he has realised in summarising the daily work and exchanges of the groups.

Finally, the CEEC thanks especially **Father Antonio PERRONE**, National President of the FIDAE, for his precious collaboration, his help and his patience, both in the preparation and during the three days of this Congress. With Father PERRONE, the CEEC also thanks all the staff of FIDAE-Roma.



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