

Which formation for the teaching staffs? For which competences?

Preliminary remark to frame the subject

- (1) We well understand that teachers in Catholic education do not unanimously profess the Christian faith. The teaching staffs in Catholic education have become, de facto, pluralist for what concerns conviction. This situation of pluralism is not a threat for Catholic education identity. It even can be a feature of its catholicity but on two conditions:
- All teachers must accept to take part in the school project as far as it is inspired by the Gospel values and also accept the Catholic school to be a place for proposing the Christian faith in a way that respects the pupils' intelligence and freedom.
 - There must be a significant number of teachers who explicitly live and express their Christian faith within the Catholic school.

The perspectives of Christian formation that I would like to propose not only concern the Christian teachers but the whole teaching staff of which I just underlined the pluralism. Because the question of the understanding of the Christian faith and the practices it inspires in school and society concern all those who are involved in Catholic schools. The proposals of formation I will make can thus be understood in two ways: either for Christian teachers who want to deepen, in theory and practice, their adhesion to the Christian faith, or for other teachers who want to acquire a better knowledge of what Christianity announces and proposes to live, so that they could better situate themselves in relation to the Christian faith, approach it and even appropriate it.

- (2) The perspectives of Christian formation that I am proposing here concern, in many aspects, all adult people, not only teachers in Catholic schools. So, there will also be in my proposal general perspectives going beyond the school world. Nevertheless, in my presentation, I will try to contextualise my proposal and emphasize why the competences to develop are particularly appropriate for teachers in Catholic education.
- (3) I will not speak about the means available for Christian formation of teachers. In 2012, in Esztergom, Etienne VERHACK made an inventory of these, in the various countries organising religious formation. So, I will not come back on this topic – of course essential – of the various actors and means in teacher Christian formation.

For a Christian formation of teachers adjusted to a communication culture

Thinking teacher Christian formation is not possible without taking into consideration the cultural context in which we are. We live today in a culture that pays particular attention to communication, not understood here in the restricted meaning of the media but in the sense that communication is constitutive of the human condition. « *Le désir, c'est l'appel à la communication interhumaine* » (Desire is the call to inter-human communication), writes Françoise DOLTO ¹. « *La communication est le fait humain total qui n'a jamais cessé de l'être* » (Communication is the total human fact, which has never ceased to be), writes Michel SERRES ². It has always been so, but today intercommunication reaches a theoretical awareness and communication practices that were unknown, thanks to the development of techniques. Michel SERRES also says that new technologies change our relationships, our neighbourhoods, our knowledge and our ways to acquire them.³

¹ Dolto, Françoise, *Au jeu du désir*, Seuil, 1981, p.273.

² Serres, Michel, *Hermès II*, Editions de Minuit, 1972, p.128.

³ Serres, Michel, *Le temps des crises*, Editions le Pommier, Paris, 2009, p.20

Almost all professional activities have become communication activities today. Sciences are mainly communication ones: psychology, sociology, philosophy, law and even the so-called exact sciences are knowledge analysing interrelations between people, groups and distinct entities. So, the phenomenon of intercommunication runs through the contemporary man's imagination. This is even more true today that we experience, because of new technologies, huge developments in the field of human communication practices. Whence the importance of a Christian formation of teachers designed for this communication culture in which they are, themselves, key players.

I propose to consider this Christian formation adapted to our time following three competences lines, closely linked together: the first line, theoretical, is a theological one. The two others are practical: a spiritual line concerning aptitudes and an action line concerning communicative practice. With these three lines we hope to give teachers tools for a good understanding of Christianity in both its content and the practices it inspires.

1. Line of the theological competence. For an understanding of the Christian faith as it reveals the mystery of human intercommunication which we are involved in.

On this first theoretical (theological) line, the objective is to promote, within teaching staffs, an understanding of the Christian faith that is coherent, relevant, and significant for the contemporary world. I propose to base – in a new way I will explain later – this construction of an understanding of faith on the *Credo* (the symbol of the Apostles or the symbol of Nicene-Constantinople-381) that Christians proclaim together in their Sunday assemblies,⁴ which can be read as the revelation of the mystery of communication we are involved in.

In this formation in the understanding of faith, the question would be to consider the triple structuration of the *Credo*: firstly, the Trinitarian structure “I believe in God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”. The second structure of the *Credo* is narrative. It tells a story; the story of salvation from the creation to its end, the resurrection of the flesh and the eternal life with, in the core of this story, the Paschal Mystery, the death and resurrection of Jesus. Finally, the third structure of the *Credo* is enunciative. Voices are heard. First, the voice of the “I” who confesses the *Credo*: “I believe”. There is the voice of humankind: “For us men and for our salvation”. And there is also the voice of the Church: “I believe in the Holy Catholic Church”.

These three structures can be interpreted in terms of communication. They successively concern communication **in** God (the mystery of the Trinity), communication **of** God (the history of Salvation) and communication **according to** God (human and Christian life in the Spirit of God). So, the Christian faith appears as the revelation of a God

- Who is, in Himself, communication (mystery of Trinity)
- Who communicates Himself (history of Salvation)
- Who gives to live in communication (human and Christian life in the Spirit of God).

This structuration of the theological understanding of the Christian faith in a communication vocabulary is simple, but also very strong to integrate in a coherent way and on a solid basis (the *Credo*), the various elements of the Christian faith and life. That is the reason why this structuration seems to me particularly relevant for the teaching staffs of Catholic schools.

To go beyond generalities, I would like to develop shortly the understanding of faith, here proposed, in the communication logics of the *Credo*. The following three points could be part of a systematic formation offered to all teachers.

⁴ Benedict XVI, in his Apostolic Letter *Porta fidei*, for the indiction of the Year of Faith, underlines the value of studying the *Credo*. He namely quotes St. Augustine who said to the new baptised: “You have received it and recited it, but in your minds and hearts you must keep it ever present, you must repeat it in your beds, recall it in the public squares and not forget it during meals: even when your body is asleep, you must watch over it with your hearts” (§9).

1.1. Communication in God (the mystery of Trinity)

The word “Trinity” is not present in the Scriptures. But the testimony of the Gospel clearly shows its reality. Jesus appears in close relationship with God, who he calls Father. And between Him and the Father, there is this mysterious power of the Holy Spirit, which inhabits Jesus, which links him to his Father and which he transmits to us. That is why, just after Easter, the Christians gathered together, prayed, celebrated and baptised “on the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”.

This triple nomination has asked a series of questions during the first centuries of the Church. Is it three Gods, three modalities of God, three divine instances of unequal divinity? The tradition of the Councils has rejected the solution of tritheism, that of modalism and that of subordinationism to affirm that the Christian faith is the faith in one God, in three distinct persons equal in divinity. This solution was the most difficult to think but also the most fruitful. Because God appears here as a loving unity of reciprocal communication. God is love, God is movement of “giving, receiving, giving back”. The Father is the one who gives and creates, the Son is the one who receives and gives back; and we might say that the Holy Spirit is the link, the movement that both unites and separates them, in a continuous reciprocal donation and hospitality. As Jean DANIELOU says, the core of the real is mutual communication: « *Le fond du réel est l'amour au sens de la communauté des personnes (...) Que ce qui est absolument premier ce soient des personnes et la réciproque adhésion et communication entre ces personnes, que cette communion des personnes soit le fond même, l'archétype de toute réalité, ce à quoi par conséquent tout doit se configurer, est fond même de la révélation chrétienne* »⁵ (the core of the real is love in the sense of community of people (...)) That what is absolutely primary are people and the reciprocal adhesion and communication between them, that this communion of people is the very core, the archetype of any reality, what therefore everything must configure, is the essence of Christian revelation). In this loving God, all forms of love are present: parental, maternal or paternal love, filial love or friendship, conjugal love, too. So, St. Augustine could say that in God “there is the beloved, the lover and the love”. This trinity love is not fusional: on the contrary, while unifying it also differentiates and personalises. In this sense, the more I approach God, the more I become myself. The mystery of Trinity appears as a model of communication that can concretely inspire our life. It is a communication model that makes unity while differentiating and personalising. Unity is not correct if it leads to uniformity. Differences are not good if they lead to domination over each other. Conversely, when we try – both at the interpersonal and the collective level – to make unity between us, without neither unity nor differences leading to domination, then we are in the Spirit of Trinity.

For teachers, whose job is essentially a communication job, is it not important that they have a clear awareness of the considerable challenge that the Christian Trinity confession represents for life? God is in Himself a loving communication of distinct and equal persons. « *La Trinité, il faut leur en parler. C'est totalement génial. La plus belle trouvaille de la condition humaine ! C'est d'une modernité absolue qui n'a pas pris une ride* » (Trinity, we must tell them. It is absolutely brilliant. The most beautiful discovery of human condition! This is an absolute modernity which has not aged at all). These words, amazing for modern ears, were said by psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Philippe van MEERBEECK⁶ at a conference on teenagers.

Now the second structure: the narrative structure.

1.2. The communication of God (the history of Salvation “grace after grace”)

The Trinitarian God, who is in himself communication, also communicates. The story of salvation is the story of the communication of God, of the life He reserves for us in abundance. To explain the history of salvation, we can start for the remarkable words in St. John’s Gospel: “Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given” (Jn, 1,16). “Grace after grace”, “gift after gift”; this expression suggests a process that continuously restarts and amplifies.

⁵ Jean Daniélou, *La trinité et le mystère de l'existence*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1968, p.53.

⁶ See Philippe Van Meerbeeck, *Dieu est-il inconscient. L'adolescent et la question de Dieu*, De Boeck, Brussels, 2012.

- There is first of all the grace of our creation: an unfinished creation, left to our freedom and our responsibility, a creation that the creative power of God accompanies to make it, with us, a story of salvation. The history of Salvation is continuous creation.
- There is then the grace of the first alliance which reveals to us, in a time when empires are created and when the powerful monopolise divine power, that God is in fact on the side of the oppressed, the slaves and the small to be for them a power of liberation, and an unfailing force of hope.
- There is also the grace of the coming of Jesus Christ, our brother in humanity who loved with extreme love, who was unjustly crucified, did not yield to the violence inflicted on him, but answered with an even greater love. “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rm 5,20). But God resurrected him showing us that he was with Him, that he was His messenger. So, if we want to know who is God, we must look at this man. If we want to know how God loves, we must look at him: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14,9). Thus, Christ reveals the grace given to us of an unconditional and limitless love. Nothing can extinguish the love of God for us, not even our sin. Christian life therefore consists in adjusting ourselves to this grace given to us, in order to live it from now in the recognition given to God, in fraternal love and in the service, in all its forms, to humanity.
- And we are not yet at the end of the grace given to us today, because it opens us to a wonderful hope. The gift of God is yet to come. In the Revelation, we read: “Behold, I make all things new”. So, we are not at the end of the creative act; it is still before us. As Paul says, “all creation is groaning in labour pains” and what comes is incommensurable in comparison with what we already received (Rm 8, 22-23).

1.3. Communication according to God (Christian life in the Church and in the world, human life in the spirit of the Beatitudes)

God, who is in Himself communication, also communicates Himself and gives us to be, to live in communication. This third aspect underlines what I called the “enunciative structure” of the *Credo*. It testifies to the arrival of a way of being, of recognising oneself in communication, in alliance. We recognise in it the birth of autonomous subjects, who come to language and speak in the first person with the power of their singularity and freedom. “I believe”. But this “I believe” only maintains if it is held in the particular community which is the Church, a community in which one believes, lives and celebrates. “Profession of faith is an act both personal and communitarian”.⁷ And this belonging to the Church, as a faith, hope and love community, does not lead to separation and identitarian closure, but rather to solidarity with all humankind, regardless of any belonging. “For us men and for our salvation” says the *Credo*. This “us” represents the human community. Thus, the words of the *Credo* combine, in one piece, the birth of personal subjects, the total adhesion to a particular community – the Church – and the full solidarity with all humankind, beyond all differences of race, culture or religion.

In this point concerning the theological competence to promote to teaching staffs, I proposed to build the understanding of the Christian faith in a communication culture on the basis of the triple structure (trinitarian, narrative, enunciative) of the *Credo*. This understanding can be expressed in a simple phrase with three terms: God, who is in Himself communication (the mystery of Trinity), also communicates Himself (history of Salvation) and gives to communicate (human and Christian life in the spirit of God). The challenge of such perspective is to argue, in a communication culture which is anti-dogmatic, that the essential assertions of the Christian faith (its dogmas) do not close communication but reveal the mystery of it and open to incredible perspectives.

Having an understanding of faith adjusted to today’s culture is an asset for teachers, for their teaching, for practising their profession, but also for themselves, to grow up in faith or to better know it and, possibly approach it. As Benedict XVI said: “*There exists a profound unity between the act by which we believe and the content to which we give our assent*”⁸; and this leads us to the second line of competence: the Christian spiritual competence, which is called by assent to the content of faith.

⁷ Benedict XVI, *Porta fidei*, op. cit., §10.

⁸ Benedict XVI, op. cit., §10.

2. Line of the spiritual competence. For a way of life, a way of being in communication, in alliance with God and with the other, in the light of faith, and to testify to it.

On this second formation line, the question is to develop an understanding of faith in what it invites to live and desire when one appropriates it. The existential appropriation of the content of faith leads, indeed, to adopt a way of being, a lifestyle, a way of living in relation with God and with others, in the light of faith. This appropriation has also a missionary dimension in the sense that it invites to testify, particularly today in a time of mutation between a dying world and an arising world, between a dying Christianity and a Christianity aspiring to arise.

I will detail this spiritual competence through five fundamental attitudes:

2.1. "Seeing God in all things".

This is an Ignatian expression, you know it. It is a great challenge in a world that, precisely, has difficulty to recognise God. In the present cultural situation, in which God is neither evident to intelligence nor necessary to life, the question for Christians is not to call for conversion but to sharpen their own eye to train recognising Him in it. But where can we see God? The understanding of faith, as we described it in the first point of this speech, opens to this vision of God in all things.

- "Seeing God in all things" is above all recognising Him, for "in Him we live and move and have our being" as said St Paul to the Athenians (Ac 17,28). Indeed, no one is his own father and we always experience life as given by an Other.
- "Seeing God in all things" is recognising Him in the practice of the Beatitudes. Where human beings are "poor in spirit, hunger and thirst for righteousness, merciful, (...) for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". The Spirit is present because God Himself is so. The Beatitudes, indeed, reveal not only where God is but also who God is.
- "Seeing God in all things" is also seeing Him even in evil because, in fact, "he descended to the dead" as says the *Credo*, to save us. Seeing God in evil is seeing Him acting in what He saves us from: "deliver us from evil" says *Our Father* prayer.
- "Seeing God in all things" is also seeing Him in his self-effacement, his discretion. For many of our contemporaries, God is neither evident to intelligence nor necessary to life. What we have to discover is that this self-effacement reveals something from God Himself. Did the Christian tradition not teach us to recognize God in his kenosis, his self-effacement? Do we not have to recognise the generosity of God and the greatness of man in the fact, precisely, that God did not make Him evident to the understanding or necessary to life? It is in his discretion and weakness that we can discern his trace. Michel SERRES writes about man and God Himself: « *L'humanité est humaine quand elle invente la faiblesse, quand elle investit une part de sa puissance à l'adoucissement de sa propre puissance. (...) Et Dieu s'est abstenu. Il se cache et se laisse envahir. Son absence dans l'espace et dans l'histoire signifie sa retenue. La vie, nous la devons à la retenue de Dieu, créés que nous sommes dans les marges de Sa réserve*⁹ » (Humanity is human when it invents weakness, when it invests a part of its power in the softening of its own power (...). And God abstained. He hides and lets himself invaded. His absence in space and history means his unobtrusiveness. We owe life to the discretion of God, as we are created in the margins of his reserve).
- "Seeing God in all things" is a contemplative act about which Paul VI, in his closing speech of the Council, said: "is the highest, the fullest act of the spirit, the act which even today can and must be at the apex of all human activity".¹⁰ This contemplation of the gift of God liberates man from activism and at the same time makes him free for action, namely for love.

⁹ Michel Serres, *Le Tiers-Instruit*, François Bourin, 1991, p.183-185.

¹⁰ Paul VI, Closing Speech, Vatican II Council, 8 December 1965.

2.2. Living love first!

The contemplation of God, seeing him in all things, is contemplating the excessiveness of a love that “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1Cor 13,7), according to the terms of the Hymn to Love of St Paul. Therefore, the first invitation made to the Christians and Christian communities, in response to God’s love, is to love too. The first call to Christians is thus to “tune” their life with fraternal love and “diacony”, that is to say, at the service of humankind, without proselytism or Ecclesiocentrism. Christians are called to be, individually and in community, a “body of charity” that lets itself experience, see, touch, feel in the flesh of the world. In particular, in the school world, being a “corps of love” for Christians means to live and spread in the courses, the relationships, the institutional working, the spirit of the Beatitudes: a spirit of sharing, gentleness, justice and peace. Being a “body of charity” is also being inspired by the evangelical counsels: poverty, chastity, obedience, all Gospel values, which we must understand here not in the defined sense they have in religious life, but in the sense that they are offered to all Christians.

- Poverty does not mean misery. It is rather a fundamental attitude of sharing disposition for the common good. The poor in heart knows that he received love, that he has been constructed by the others’ love and that he is invited to give back. He knows that it would be inhuman to have as only hunger (purpose) that of possessing and consuming more. The poor in heart knows where are the true treasures of life.
- Chastity does not mean sexual abstinence, but gentleness, self-restraint, respect. Being chaste, to repeat the words of Michel SERRES already mentioned, is to invest a part of one’s power to limit one’s own power. In other words, it is giving the other his place while allowing his singularity. It is, finally, getting out of violence, in every field, emotional and sexual of course, but also refraining from any abuse of power.
- Obedience does not mean servility but listening capacity. ‘Obey’ comes from the Latin *oboedire* which means ‘listen’. Unlike the “self-made man” who is built from himself and for himself, the obedient has himself touched and moved by the calls he hears. The obedient becomes himself by vocation, by the calls he hears from outside.

The challenge of all this, in a school context, is that the school lets itself inspire by the spirit of the Beatitudes and the evangelical counsels in the contents of its teaching, in its pedagogy, in the lived relationships and also in the rules of institutional working.

2.3. Recognising the generosity of salvation of God offered to all through His own ways

This is the third attitude I consider important for teachers in Catholic schools. Let me quote Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: “It would be useful if every Christian and every evangelizer were to pray about the following thought: men can gain salvation also in other ways, by God’s mercy, even though we do not preach the Gospel to them” (§80). And this sentence extracted from the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, from the Second Vatican Council, also mentioned in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “For, since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery”.¹¹

What saves, in other words, is the grace of God and the practice of the Beatitudes or, at least, the desire to follow these recommendations. The Beatitudes are not only addressed to Christians but to all. Blessed are you all, of all races, languages, nations, cultures and religions, who are poor in spirit, merciful, meek, peace makers, thirsty, the Kingdom of Heaven is yours. So, we can recognise that the birth to life of God is at work everywhere in the world where the Beatitudes are lived. From this point of view, for salvation, we are useless servants. Christianity is not a compulsory stage. God, by the grace of Christ, can save without Christianity, without using the belonging to it. Like Peter, in Jerusalem, concerning the salvation offered to the Gentiles, we could say: “who are we to be able to hinder God?” (Ac 11,17).

But, then, why announcing the Good News? By charity.

¹¹ GS 22; see also LG 16; AG 7 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1992, §1260.

2.4. Making the announcement of the Good News be an act of love which is grafted to diacony like its graceful extension

Why even announcing the Good News if God can save regardless of the adhesion to the Christian faith? As Benedict XVI says in the Apostolic Letter *Porta fidei* promulgating the Year of Faith: “*Caritas Christi urget nos*’ (2 Cor 5:14): *it is the love of Christ that fills our hearts and impels us to evangelize*”.¹² And this act of love, which is the announcement, is grafted on fraternity, on the practice of diacony like its graceful extension. In other words, what we see, what we touch, what we feel, is love. What we hear is the announcement revealing the mystery of it. This revelation is not necessary for salvation – God can save without that – but it is radically precious and beneficial for what it gives to think, live and celebrate. Not necessary for salvation, the Christian faith is though precious and salutary for what it gives to think, to live and to desire, and for the joy it gives. “*What we have heard, what we have seen (...) concerns the Word of life; (...) what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing this so that our joy may be complete*” (1Jn1, 1-4). In short, the announcement of the Good News is an additional act of love; and it is for joy.

2.5. Combining rigour and gracious style

Let us now consider the quality of this announcement. There are at least two qualities: intellectual rigour and gracious style. In the first letter of Peter, we read: “*Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence*” (1P 3,15). This sentence combines two requirements concerning the announcement of faith: the rigour of its wording and the gentleness of its enunciation. Christian teachers, in particular, are called to speak about the Christian faith in a coherent, relevant, significant way to pupils in their own culture. The worst would be intellectual laziness, “stonewalling”, restrained languages which are known in advance. Honouring intelligence in the expression of faith is not only respecting faith itself but also respecting the other person in his intelligence and freedom. Giving reason for the Christian faith is appealing to reason, not by means of constraining arguments, because faith will never be at the end of an argument that obliges, but by speaking about faith in what is plausible, reasonable and desirable. In this regard, the challenge for teachers is to be able to speak about the Christian faith in a way that makes it felt as an invitation to think, to live and to desire. This is what I call the gracious style. How to characterise this gracious style? The rich semantic field of the word “grace” can help us. It includes the concepts of gratuity but also of gratefulness, as in “gratitude”. It also includes the dimension of pardon, as in the French verb “*gracier*”, etc.¹³ The gracious style of the faith proposition gathers all these dimensions of gratuity, gratitude, pardon, beauty, pleasure and gentleness. And this gracious style of the proposal of faith is itself an expression of God’s grace which is formulated in it. So, proposing faith is making it reasonable and plausible for the intelligence, in a way that arouses at the same time a feeling of beauty, pleasure, grace and goodness.

The various spiritual attitudes that I already mentioned, as far as they are present in the teaching staffs, would give our Catholic schools a lifestyle and a way of proposing faith, which would be profoundly evangelical while being adjusted to the contemporary world. Concrete communication within the school would be facilitated and would gain in quality.

We then approach our last line of competence.

¹² Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *Porta fidei*, §7, 2011.

¹³ Note from the translator: Fr. FOSSION still gives other examples, only valid for the French language: “*gracile*”, “*agréable*”, “*agrément*”.

3. Line of the communicative competence. The practice of communication in the Spirit and the light of the Gospel.

This is the third line of competence proposed to teachers. The line of the communicative competence can be the object of a specific learning with the support of the understanding of the faith and the spiritual attitudes abovementioned. We highlight here four specific communicative abilities.

3.1. The ability of universalism

This is the ability for teachers to communicate with anyone with kindness, with a favourable *a priori* and without prejudice. This ability is the aptitude to transgress frontiers and barriers, to communicate with anyone regardless of the social, ethnical, cultural or religious belonging. We know how, sometimes unconsciously, we filter our relationships, leaving us confined in our particular affiliations which take us away from meeting the other, different. This ability of universalism could be expressed in terms of hospitality according to the long Abrahamic tradition of welcoming strangers. The root “*host*” means “stranger”. When we meet a stranger, either we make him an enemy and it is hostility, or we make him a guest and it is hospitality. So, “hostility” and “hospitality” are two words etymologically related but semantically opposed. And hospitality, let us underline it, appeals reciprocity. The French word “*hôte*” is both the host (who welcomes) and the guest (who is welcomed). Welcoming someone is always letting oneself be welcomed by the other, approaching the other with confidence in one’s own welcome ability. This ability of hospitality, of openness, of universalism without boundaries or, one might say, of catholicity, is essential for a teacher as well in the content of his lessons as in his pedagogy and his relationships with pupils and colleagues.

3.2. The ability of critical questioning

The ability of critical questioning places language in a liberator line. In my opinion, there are two types of critical questioning.

- The first type concerns the questioning of situations in which human dignity is not respected or even trampled on, or when representations of God are perverse and hurt the greatness of God as well as human dignity. The Gospel shows us that Jesus could take a critical look at things and situations. Being a disciple of Jesus leads from this point of view, including inside the Church, to the criticism of idols, that is to say the criticism of everything that seduces and blinds by deforming our relation to reality, to ourselves, to the others and to God Himself.
- The second type of critical questioning concerns the relation to our convictions. Convictions are necessary: they are a victory on anomie, indecision, a mentality of “no matter what” or “let it happen”. In this sense, convictions are good, but we must also “keep an eye” on them, distance ourselves from them in order to constantly leave room for questioning, dialogue and thus journey. As Jean-Claude GUILLEBAUD writes in “*La force de conviction*”: it is important to be able to organise a dialogic relation with one’s own doubt.¹⁴ For a teacher, the challenge is to be able to maintain this dialogic relation with himself and to introduce pupils to this same ability of critical questioning, especially in the field of religious convictions.

3.3. The ability to testify, in diverse ways, to Christian specificity

Another concrete communicative competence, which we could expect from teachers in Catholic schools, is their ability to explain what is specific to the Christian faith. What is specific for us to Christianity, what is absolutely important for Christians, is to link the image of God to that of Jesus Christ who has loved to the extreme, without limitation, unconditionally.

¹⁴ Jean-Claude Guillebaud, *La force de conviction*, Seuil, Paris, 2005, p.252 – translation CEEC.

If we want to know who is God and how He loves, we must look at Jesus Christ. Son of man, he is also image of God, Son of God. And this love to the extreme, to the excessiveness, which he has shown us on behalf of God, opens unheard-of hopes that allow to desire far beyond death itself.

This announcement of Christian specificity can take various concrete forms: kerygmatic when it is to explain the essential of the faith in a short and kindly way; narrative and testimonial when we it is to share our experience; expositive when it is to develop the content of faith organically; dialogical when, in the debate we present a series of arguments; liturgical when liturgy itself announces what it celebrates; cultural when we make sure that the cultural field itself makes available to anyone the Christian heritage. Christian formation of teachers could see to train them in these various forms of announcement.

3.4. *The ability of dialogue and learning in the diversity of convictions*

Finally, we have a fourth concrete communicative competence in which teachers can train: the ability to enter into dialogue and to teach in a multiconvictional world. As Dennis GIRA shows in his book "*Le dialogue à la portée de tous... (ou presque)*" [Dialogue accessible to everyone... or almost]¹⁵, dialogue is an asceticism which has its rules and can be learned. The encounter with the other is always a difficulty; it supposes to let oneself affect by the other, to put oneself in a learning situation, without losing oneself and without denying oneself. The Catholic school can be a place for such learning. Its environment is multiconvictional and it is open, through its Catholic character, to the plurality of religious convictions and denominations. In this context, the Christian faith invites to promote within the school world a true "dialogal ethos". Indeed, it does not pretend to exhaust the mystery of God and human life. It does not give a total understanding of the world or of God. That is to say that, without falling into syncretism, teachers within the school are invited to enjoy the diversity of spiritual and religious traditions, to learn from them, to promote their alliance for a more human world, to encourage them to develop to their best, in the same way that they try, in communication with everybody, to improve their understanding of the Christian faith, to testify to it and live it.

I am ending with a wish. That the theological, spiritual and communicative competences of teachers in Catholic education contribute to its excellence for a better service to the human being in the name of the Gospel and the faith.

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¹⁵ Dennis Gira, *Le dialogue à la portée de tous... (ou presque)*, Bayard, Paris, 2012.