



THE SACRED CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

***LAY CATHOLICS IN SCHOOLS:
WITNESSES TO FAITH***

INTRODUCTION

1. Lay Catholics, both men and women, who devote their lives to teaching in primary and secondary schools, have become more and more vitally important in recent years.(1) Whether we look at schools in general, or Catholic schools in particular, the importance is deserved.

For it is the lay teachers, and indeed all lay persons, believers or not, who will substantially determine whether or not a school realizes its aims and accomplishes its objectives.(2) In the Second Vatican Council, and specifically in the Declaration on Christian Education, the Church recognized the role and the responsibility that this situation confers on all those lay Catholics who work in any type of elementary and secondary schools, whether as teachers, directors, administrators, or auxiliary staff. The Declaration invites us to expand on its contents and deepen them; in doing this, it is not our intention to ignore or minimize the significant accomplishments of Christians who belong to other Churches, or of non-Christians, in the field of education.

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

3. Theological development has been reinforced by the social, economic, and political developments of recent years. The cultural level has progressively risen; because this is closely tied to advances in science and technology, every profession requires a more extensive preparation. To this

must be added a more general awareness of the fact that every person has a right to an integral education, an education which responds to all of the needs of the human person. These two advances in human life have required, and in part have created, an extensive development of school systems everywhere in the world, together with an extraordinary increase in the number of people who are professionally trained in education. As a result, there is a corresponding growth in the number of Catholic laity who work in the field.

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

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

I. THE IDENTITY OF THE LAY CATHOLIC IN A SCHOOL

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

have a true picture of the laity as an active element, accomplishing an important task for the entire Church through their labour).

THE LAITY IN THE CHURCH

6. The lay Catholic working in a school is, along with every Christian, a member of the People of God. As such, united to Christ through Baptism, he or she shares in the basic dignity that is common to all members. For, " they share a common dignity from their rebirth in Christ. They have the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection. They possess in common one salvation, one hope, and one undivided charity ".(4) Although it is true that, in the Church, " by the will of Christ, some are made teachers, dispensers of mysteries and shepherds on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ ".(5)

Every Christian, and therefore also every lay person, has been made a sharer in " the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ ",(6) and their apostolate " is a participation in the saving mission of the Church itself ... All are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself ".(7)

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

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

culture, created goods may be perfected for the benefit of every last person ... and be more suitably distributed among them ".(12)

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

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

LAY CATHOLICS IN THE SCHOOLS

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

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

The School

12. While it is true that parents are the first and foremost educators of their children(14) and that the rights and duties that they have in this regard are "original and primary with respect to the educational role of others", (15) it is also true that among the means which will assist and complement the exercise of the educational rights and duties of the family, the school has a value and an importance that are fundamental. In virtue of its mission, then,

the school must be concerned with constant and careful attention to cultivating in students the intellectual, creative, and aesthetic faculties of the human person; to develop in them the ability to make correct use of their judgement, will, and affectivity; to promote in them a sense of values; to encourage just attitudes and prudent behaviour; to introduce them to the cultural patrimony handed down from previous generations; to prepare them for professional life, and to encourage the friendly interchange among students of diverse cultures and backgrounds that will lead to mutual understanding.(16) For all of these reasons, the school enters into the specific mission of the Church.

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

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

The Lay Catholic as an Educator

15. The Second Vatican Council gives specific attention to the vocation of an educator, a vocation which is as proper to the laity(20) as to those who

follow other states of life in the Church.

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

16. The teacher under discussion here is not simply a professional person who systematically transmits a body of knowledge in the context of a school; "teacher" is to be understood as "educator" - one who helps to form human persons. The task of a teacher goes well beyond transmission of knowledge, although that is not excluded. Therefore, if adequate professional preparation is required in order to transmit knowledge, then adequate professional preparation is even more necessary in order to fulfill the role of a genuine teacher. It is an indispensable human formation, and without it, it would be foolish to undertake any educational work.

One specific characteristic of the educational profession assumes its most profound significance in the Catholic educator: the communication of truth. For the Catholic educator, whatever is true is a participation in Him who is the Truth; the communication of truth, therefore, as a professional activity, is thus fundamentally transformed into a unique participation in the prophetic mission of Christ, carried on through one's teaching.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

21. The communication of culture in an educational context involves a methodology, whose principles and techniques are collected together into a consistent pedagogy. A variety of pedagogical theories exist; the choice of the Catholic educator, based on a Christian concept of the human person, should be the practice of a pedagogy which gives special emphasis to direct and personal contact with the students. If the teacher undertakes this contact with the conviction that students are already in possession of fundamentally positive values, the relationship will allow for an openness and a dialogue which will facilitate an understanding of the witness to faith that is revealed through the behaviour of the teacher.

22. Everything that the Catholic educator does in a school takes place within the structure of an educational community, made up of the contacts and the collaboration among all of the various groups - students, parents, teachers, directors, non-teaching staff - that together are responsible for

making the school an instrument for integral formation. Although it is not exhaustive, this concept of the scholarly institution as an educational community, together with a more widespread awareness of this concept, is one of the most enriching developments for the contemporary school. The Catholic educator exercises his or her profession as a member of one of the constitutive elements of this community. The professional structure itself offers an excellent opportunity to live - and bring to life in the students the communitarian dimension of the human person. Every human being is called to live in a community, as a social being, and as a member of the People of God.

Therefore, the educational community of a school is itself a " school ". It teaches one how to be a member of the wider social communities; and when the educational community is at the same time a Christian community - and this is what the educational community of a Catholic school must always be striving toward - then it offers a great opportunity for the teachers to provide the students with a living example of what it means to be a member of that great community which is the Church.

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

24. To summarize: The Lay Catholic educator is a person who exercises a specific mission within the Church by living, in faith, a secular vocation in the communitarian structure of the school: with the best possible professional qualifications, with an apostolic intention inspired by faith, for the integral formation of the human person, in a communication of culture, in an exercise of that pedagogy which will give emphasis to direct and personal contact with students, giving spiritual inspiration to the educational community of which he or she is a member, as well as to all the different persons related to the educational community. To this lay person, as a member of this community, the family and the Church entrust the school's educational endeavour. Lay teachers must be profoundly convinced

that they share in the sanctifying, and therefore educational mission of the Church; they cannot regard themselves as cut off from the ecclesial complex.

II. HOW TO LIVE ONE'S PERSONAL IDENTITY

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

COMMON ELEMENTS OF AN IDENTITY THAT IS BEING LIVED

Realism combined with hope

26. The identity of the lay Catholic educator is, of necessity, an ideal; innumerable obstacles stand in the way of its accomplishment. Some are the result of one's own personal situation; others are due to deficiencies in the school and in society; all of them have their strongest effect on children and young people. Identity crisis, loss of trust in social structures, the resulting insecurity and loss of any personal convictions, the contagion of a progressive secularization of society, loss of the proper concept of authority and lack of a proper use of freedom - these are only a few of the multitude of difficulties which, in varying degrees, according to the diverse cultures and the different countries, the adolescents and young people of today bring to the Catholic educator. Moreover, the lay state in which the teacher lives is itself seriously threatened by crises in the family and in the world of labour.

These present difficulties should be realistically recognized. But they should, at the same time, be viewed and confronted with a healthy optimism, and with the forceful courage that Christian hope and a sharing

in the mystery of the Cross demand of all believers. Therefore, the first indispensable necessity in one who is going to live the identity of a lay Catholic educator is to sincerely share in, and make one's own, the statements that the Church, illuminated by Divine Revelation, has made about the identity of an educator. The strength needed to do this should be found through a personal identification with Christ.

Professionalism. A Christian Concept of Humanity and of Life

27. Professionalism is one of the most important characteristics in the identity of every lay Catholic. The first requirement, then, for a lay educator who wishes to live out his or her ecclesial vocation, is the acquisition of a solid professional formation. In the case of an educator, this includes competency in a wide range of cultural, psychological, and pedagogical areas.(26) However, it is not enough that the initial training be at a good level; this must be maintained and deepened, always bringing it up to date. This can be very difficult for a lay teacher, and to ignore this fact is to ignore reality: salaries are often inadequate, and supplementary employment is often a necessity. Such a situation is incompatible with professional development, either because of the time required for other work, or because of the fatigue that results. In many countries, especially in those less developed, the problem is insoluble at the present time.

Even so, educators must realize that poor teaching, resulting from insufficient preparation of classes or outdated pedagogical methods, is going to hinder them severely in their call to contribute to an integral formation of the students; it will also obscure the life witness that they must present.

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

On the other hand, the gift cannot be offered coldly and abstractly. It must be seen as a vital reality, one which deserves the commitment of the entire person, something which is to become a part of one's own life.

Synthesis of Faith, Culture and Life

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

30. Critical transmission also involves the presentation of a set of values and counter-values. These must be judged within the context of an appropriate concept of life and of the - human person. The Catholic teacher, therefore, cannot be content simply to present Christian values as a set of abstract objectives to be admired, even if this be done positively and with imagination; they must be presented as values which generate human attitudes, and these attitudes must be encouraged in the students. Examples of such attitudes would be these: a freedom which includes respect for others; conscientious responsibility; a sincere and constant search for truth; a calm and peaceful critical spirit; a spirit of solidarity with and service toward all other persons; a sensitivity for justice; a special awareness of being called to be positive agents of change in a society that is undergoing continuous transformation.

Since Catholic teachers frequently have to exercise their mission within a general atmosphere of secularization and unbelief, it is important that they not be limited to a mentality that is merely experimental and critical; thus, they will be able to bring the students to an awareness of the transcendental, and dispose them to welcome revealed truth.

31. In the process of developing attitudes such as these, the teacher can more easily show the positive nature of the behaviour that flows from such attitudes. Ideally, attitudes and behaviour will gradually be motivated by, and flow out of, the interior faith of the individual student. In this way, the fulness of faith will be achieved; it will then extend to such things as filial prayer, sacramental life, love for one another, and a following of Jesus Christ - all of the elements that form a part of the specific heritage of the

faithful. Knowledge, values, attitudes, and behaviour fully integrated, with faith will result in the student's personal synthesis of life and faith. Very few Catholics, then, have the opportunity that the educator has to accomplish the very purpose of evangelization: the incarnation of the Christian message in the lives of men and women.

Personal Life Witness. Direct and Personal Contact with Students

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

33. In this context, what was said above about direct and personal contact between teachers and students(29) becomes especially significant: it is a privileged opportunity for giving witness. A personal relationship is always a dialogue rather than a monologue, and the teacher must be convinced that the enrichment in the relationship is mutual. But the mission must never be lost sight of: the educator can never forget that students need a companion and guide during their period of growth; they need help from others in order to overcome doubts and disorientation. Also, rapport with the students ought to be a prudent combination of familiarity and distance; and this must be adapted to the need of each individual student. Familiarity will make a personal relationship easier, but a certain distance is also needed: students need to learn how to express their own personality without being pre-conditioned; they need to be freed from inhibitions in the responsible exercise of their freedom.

It is good to remember here that a responsible use of freedom also involves the choice of one's own state of life. In contacts with those students who are believers, Catholic teachers should not be hesitant to discuss the question of

one's personal vocation in the Church. They should try to discover and cultivate vocations to the priesthood or to Religious life, or the call to live a private commitment in a Secular Institute or Catholic apostolic organization; these latter possibilities are areas which are often neglected. And they should also help students to discern a vocation to marriage or to celibacy, including consecrated celibacy, within the lay state.

This direct and personal contact is not just a methodology by which the teacher can help in the formation of the students; it is also the means by which teachers learn what they need to know about the students in order to guide them adequately. The difference in generation is deeper, and the time between generations is shorter, today more than ever before; direct contact, then, is more necessary than ever.

Communitarian aspects

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

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

35. A teacher must also be constantly attentive to the socio-cultural, economic, and political environment of the school: in the immediate area that the school is located in, and also in the region and the nation. Given

today's means of communication, the national scene exerts a great influence on the local situation. Only close attention to the global reality - local, national, and international - will provide the data needed to give the kind of formation that students need now, and to prepare them for the future that can now be predicted.

36. While it is only natural to expect lay Catholic educators to give preference to Catholic professional associations, it is not foreign to their educational role to participate in and collaborate with all educational groups and associations, along with other groups that are connected with education. They should also lend support to the struggle for an adequate national educational policy, in whatever ways such support is possible. Their involvement may also include Trade Union activity, though always mindful of human rights and Christian educational principles.(33) Lay teachers should be reminded that professional life can sometimes be very remote from the activities of associations; they should realize that if they are never involved in or even aware of these activities, this absence could be seriously harmful to important educational issues.

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

A Vocation, rather than a Profession

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

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

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

In the Catholic School

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

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

39. Certain elements will be characteristic of all Catholic schools. But these can be expressed in a variety of ways; often enough, the concrete expression will correspond to the specific charism of the Religious Institute that founded the school and continues to direct it. Whatever be its origin - diocesan, Religious, or lay - each Catholic school can preserve its own specific character, spelled out in an educational philosophy, rationale, or in its own pedagogy. Lay Catholics should try to understand the special characteristics of the school they are working in, and the reasons that have inspired them. They should try to so identify themselves with these

characteristics that their own work will help toward realizing the specific nature of the school.

40. As a visible manifestation of the faith they profess and the life witness they are supposed to manifest,(36) it is important that lay Catholics who work in a Catholic school participate simply and actively in the liturgical and sacramental life of the school. Students will share in this life more readily when they have concrete examples: when they see the importance that this life has for believers. In today's secularized world, students will see many lay people who call themselves Catholics, but who never take part in liturgy or sacraments. It is very important that they also have the example of lay adults who take such things seriously, who find in them a source and nourishment for Christian living.

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

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

43. Education in the faith is a part of the finality of a Catholic school. The more fully the educational community represents the richness of the ecclesial community, the more capable it will be of fulfilling this mission. When priests, men and women Religious, and lay people are all present together in a school, they will present students with a living image of this richness, which can lead to a better understanding of the reality of the Church. Lay Catholics should reflect on the importance of their presence,

from this point of view, alongside the priests and Religious. For each of these types of ecclesial vocation presents to the students its own distinct incarnational model: lay Catholics, the intimate dependence of earthly realities on God in Christ, the lay professional as one who disposes the world toward God; the priest, the multiple sources of grace offered by Christ to all believers through the sacraments, the revealing light of the Word, and the character of service which clothes the hierarchical structure of the Church; Religious, the radical spirit of Beatitudes, the continuous call of the Kingdom as the single definitive reality, the love of Christ, and the love of all men and women in Christ.

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

45. Lay Catholic educators must be very aware of the real impoverishment which will result if priests and Religious disappear from the Catholic schools, or noticeably decline in number. This is to be avoided as far as is possible; and yet, the laity must prepare themselves in such a way that they will be able to maintain Catholic schools on their own whenever this becomes necessary or at least more desirable, in the present or in the future. Historical forces at work in the schools of today lead to the conclusion that, at least for the immediate future, continued existence of Catholic schools in many traditionally Catholic countries is going to depend largely on the laity, just as that existence has depended and does depend, with great fruit, on lay people - in so many of the young Churches. This responsibility cannot be assumed with passive attitudes of fear and regret; it is a responsibility that offers a challenge to firm and effective action. And this action should even now look to and plan for the future with the help of the Religious Institutes who see their possibilities diminishing in the days immediately ahead.

46. There are times in which the Bishops will take advantage of the availability of competent lay persons who wish to give clear Christian

witness in the field of education, and will entrust them with complete direction of Catholic schools, thus incorporating them more closely into the apostolic mission of the Church.(38)

Given the ever greater expansion of the field of education, the Church needs to take advantage of every available resource for the Christian education of youth. To increase the participation of lay Catholic educators is not meant to diminish the importance of those schools directed by Religious Congregations in any way. The unique kind of witness that men and women Religious give in their own teaching centers, whether as individuals or as a community, surely implies that these schools are more necessary than ever in a secularized world.

Few situations are as apt as their own schools for the members of a Religious community to give this kind of witness. For in the schools, Religious men and women establish an immediate and lasting contact with young people, in a context in which the truths of faith frequently come up spontaneously as a means to illuminate the varied dimensions of existence. This contact has a special importance at a time of life in which ideas and experiences leave such a lasting impression on the personality of the students.

However, the call of the Church to lay Catholic educators, to commit themselves to an active apostolate in education, is not a call limited to the Church's own schools. It is a call that extends to the entire vast teaching field, to the extent in which it may be possible to give Christian witness in teaching.

In Schools That Have Different Educational Philosophies

47. We now consider all those schools, public or private, whose educational philosophy is different from that of the Catholic school, but is not essentially incompatible with the Christian concept of the human person and of life. Schools of this type form the vast majority of the schools that exist in the world. Their educational philosophy may be developed by means of a well-defined concept of the human person and of life; more simply and narrowly, they may have a determined ideology;(39) or the school may admit the coexistence of a variety of philosophies and ideologies among the teachers, within the framework of some general principles. " Coexistence " should be understood here as a manifestation of pluralism: in such schools, each of the educators gives lessons, explains principles, and promotes values according to his or her own concept of the

human person, and specific ideology. We do not speak here about the so-called neutral school because, in practice, such a school does not exist.

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

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

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

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

52. Professional commitment; support of truth, justice and freedom; openness to the point of view of others, combined with an habitual attitude of service; personal commitment to the students, and fraternal solidarity with everyone; a life that is integrally moral in all its aspects. The lay Catholic who brings all of this to his or her work in a pluralist school

becomes a living mirror, in whom every individual in the educational community will see reflected an image of one inspired by the Gospel.

In Other Schools

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

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

55. In every kind of school, the Catholic educator will not infrequently come in contact with non-Catholic students, especially in some countries. The attitude should not only be one of respect, but also welcoming, and open to dialogue motivated by a universal Christian love. Furthermore, they should always remember that true education is not limited to the imparting

of knowledge; it promotes human dignity and genuine human relationships, and prepares the way for opening oneself to the Truth that is Christ.

The Lay Catholic Educator as a Teacher of Religion

56. Religious instruction is appropriate in every school, for the purpose of the school is human formation in all of its fundamental dimensions, and the religious dimension is an integral part of this formation. Religious education is actually a right - with the corresponding duties - of the student and of the parents. It is also, at least in the case of the Catholic religion, an extremely important instrument for attaining the adequate synthesis of faith and culture that has been insisted on so often.

Therefore, the teaching of the Catholic religion, distinct from and at the same time complementary to catechesis properly so-called,(42) ought to form a part of the curriculum of every school.

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

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

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

and pedagogical formation, and also in the course syllabi; and they should remember that, in this area above all, life witness and an intensely lived spirituality have an especially great importance.

III.

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

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

AWARENESS AND STIMULATION

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

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

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

PROFESSIONAL AND RELIGIOUS FORMATION

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

65. For the Catholic educator, religious formation does not come to an end with the completion of basic education; it must be a part of and a complement to one's professional formation, and so be proportionate to adult faith, human culture, and the specific lay vocation. This means that religious formation must be oriented toward both personal sanctification and apostolic mission, for these are two inseparable elements in a Christian vocation. "Formation for apostolic mission means a certain human and well-rounded formation, adapted to the natural abilities and circumstances of each person" and requires "in addition to spiritual formation, ... solid

doctrinal instruction ... in theology, ethics and philosophy".(48) Nor can we forget, in the case of an educator, adequate formation in the social teachings of the Church, which are " an integral part of the Christian concept of life ", (49) and help to keep intensely alive the kind of social sensitivity that is needed.(50)

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

66. With appropriate degrees, and with an adequate preparation in religious pedagogy, they will have the basic training needed for the teaching of religion. Bishops will promote and provide for the necessary training, both for teachers of religion and for catechists; at the same time, they will not neglect the kind of dialogue with the corps of teachers being formed that can be mutually enlightening.

UPDATING. PERMANENT FORMATION

67. Recent years have witnessed an extraordinary growth in science and technology; every object, situation, or value is subjected to a constant critical analysis. One effect is that our age is characterized by change; change that is constant and accelerated, that affects every last aspect of the human person and the society that he or she lives in. Because of change, knowledge that has been acquired, and structures that have been established, are quickly outdated; the need for new attitudes and new methods is constant.

68. Faced with this reality, which lay people are the first to experience, the Catholic educator has an obvious and constant need for updating: in personal attitudes, in the content of the subjects, that are taught, in the pedagogical methods that are used. Recall that the vocation of an educator requires " a constant readiness to begin anew and to adapt ".(52) If the need for updating is constant, then the formation must be permanent. This need is not limited to professional formation; it includes religious formation and, in general, the enrichment of the whole person. In this way, the Church will constantly adapt its pastoral mission to the circumstances of the men and

women of each age, so that the message of Jesus Christ can be brought to them in a way that is understandable and adapted to their condition.

69. Permanent formation involves a wide variety of different elements; a constant search for ways to bring it about is therefore required of both individuals and the community. Among the variety of means for permanent formation, some have become ordinary and virtually indispensable instruments: reading periodicals and pertinent books, attending conferences and seminars, participating in workshops, assemblies and congresses, making appropriate use of periods of free time for formation. All lay Catholics who work in schools should make these a habitual part of their own human, professional, and religious life.

70. No one can deny that permanent formation, as the name itself suggests, is a difficult task; not everyone succeeds in doing it. This becomes especially true in the face of the growing complexity of contemporary life and the difficult nature of the educational mission, combined with the economic insecurity that so often accompanies it. But in spite of all these factors, no lay Catholic who works in a school can ignore this present-day need. To do so would be to remain locked up in outdated knowledge, criteria, and attitudes. To reject a formation that is permanent and that involves the whole person - human, professional, and religious - is to isolate oneself from that very world that has to be brought closer to the Gospel.

IV.

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

71. The different circumstances in which lay Catholics have to carry out their work in schools can often create feelings of isolation or misunderstanding, and as a result lead to depression, or even to the giving up of teaching responsibilities. In order to find help in overcoming such difficulties; in order, more generally, to be helped to fulfill the vocation to which they are called, lay Catholics who work in schools should always be able to count on the support and aid of the entire Church.

SUPPORT IN THE FAITH, IN THE WORD, AND IN SACRAMENTAL LIFE

72. Above all else, lay Catholics will find support in their own faith. Faith is the unfailing source of the humility, the hope, and the charity needed for perseverance in their vocation.(53) For every educator is in need of

humility in order to recognize one's own limitations, one's mistakes, along with the need for constant growth, and the realization that the ideal being pursued is always beyond one's grasp. Every educator needs a firm hope, because the teacher is never the one who truly reaps the fruits of the labour expended on the students. And, finally, every educator is in need of a permanent and growing charity, in order to love each of the students as an individual created in the image and likeness of God, raised to the status of a child of God by the redemption of Jesus Christ.

This humble faith, this hope, and this charity are supported by the Church through the Word, the life of the Sacraments, and the prayer of the entire People of God.

For the Word will speak to educators, and remind them of the tremendous greatness of their identity and of their task; Sacramental life will give them the strength they need to live this career, and bring support when they fail; the prayer of the whole Church will present to God, with them and for them, with the assured response that Jesus Christ has promised, all that the human heart desires and pleads for, and even the things that it does not dare to desire or plead for.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

73. The work of education is arduous, and very important; for that reason, its realization is delicate and complex. It requires calm, interior peace, freedom from an excessive amount of work, continuous cultural and religious enrichment. In today's society, it is seldom that conditions can all be met simultaneously. The nature of the educational vocation of lay Catholics should be publicized more frequently and more profoundly among the People of God by those in the Church most capable of doing it. The theme of education, with all that is implied in this term, should be developed more insistently; for education is one of the great opportunities for the salvific mission of the Church.

74. From this knowledge will logically flow understanding and proper esteem. All of the faithful should be conscious of the fact that, without lay Catholics as educators, the Church's education in the faith would lack one of its important basic elements. As far as they can, therefore, all believers should actively collaborate in the work of helping educators to reach the social status and the economic level that is their due, together with the stability and the security that they must have if they are to accomplish their task. No members of the Church can be considered exempt from the struggle to ensure that, in each of their countries, both the legislation of

educational policy and the practical carrying out of this legislation reflect, as far as possible, Christian educational principles.

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

THE SUPPORT OF THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS THEMSELVES.

THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL AND THE LAITY

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

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

78. If the directors of the school and the lay people who work in the school are to live according to the same ideals, two things are essential. First, lay people must receive an adequate salary, guaranteed by a well defined contract, for the work they do in the school: a salary that will permit them to live in dignity, without excessive work or a need for additional employment that will interfere with the duties of an educator. This may not be immediately possible without putting an enormous financial burden on the families, or making the school so expensive that it becomes a school for a small elite group; but so long as a truly adequate salary is not being paid, the laity should see in the school directors a genuine preoccupation to find

the resources necessary to achieve this end. Secondly, laity should participate authentically in the responsibility for the school; this assumes that they have the ability that is needed in all areas, and are sincerely committed to the educational objectives which characterize a Catholic school. And the school should use every means possible to encourage this kind of commitment; without it, the objectives of the school can never be fully realized. It must never be forgotten that the school itself is always in the process of being created, due to the labour brought to fruition by all those who have a role to play in it, and most especially by those who are teachers.(56) To achieve the kind of participation that is desirable, several conditions are indispensable: genuine esteem of the lay vocation, sharing the information that is necessary, deep confidence, and, finally, when it should become necessary, turning over the distinct responsibilities for teaching, administration, and government of the school, to the laity.

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

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

informed about the ways in which the educational philosophy is being applied or improved on, about formation, about administration, and, in certain cases, about the management.

CONCLUSION

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

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

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

WILLIAM Cardinal BAUM

Prefect

Antonio M. Javierre, Secretary
Titular Archbishop of Meta

- (1) Second Vatican Council: Const. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 31: " The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in a religious state sanctioned by the Church " .
- (2) Cf. Second Vatican Council: Decl. *Gravissimum educationis*, n. 8.
- (3) Cf. Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education: " *The Catholic School* ", March 19, 1979, nn. 18-22.
- (4) Second Vatican Council: Const. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 32.
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Ibid., n. 31.
- (7) Ibid., n. 33.
- (8) Ibid., n. 31.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Second Vatican Council: Const. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 36; Cf. Decl. *Apostolicam actuositatem*, n. 7.
- (11) Second Vatican Council: Const. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 36.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) Ibid., n. 33.
- (14) Cf. Second Vatican Council: Decl. *Gravissimum educationis*, n. 3.
- (15) John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, Nov. 22, 1981, AAS, 74 (1982) n. 36. Pag. 126.
- (16) Cf. Second Vatican Council: Decl. *Gravissimum educationis*, n. 5.
- (17) Ibid., n. 3.
- (18) Ibid., n. 6; Universal Declaration on Human Rights, art. 26, 3.
- (19) Cf. Second Vatican Council: Decl. *Gravissimum educationis*, n. 6.
- (20) Ibid., n. 5; Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, December 8, 1975, AAS 68 (1976) n. 70, pp. 59-60.

(21) Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education: " *The Catholic School* ", n. 31.

(22) Cf. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum progressio*; March 26, 1967, AAS 59 (1967), n. 19, pp. 267-268; cf. John Paul II, *Discourse to UNESCO*, June 2, 1980, AAS 72 (1980) n. 11, p. 742.

(23) Paul VI, *Discourse on Christmas Night*, December 25, 1976, AAS 68 (1976) p. 145.

(24) Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem exercens*, 14. Sept. 1981, AAS 73 (1981), Foreword, p. 578.

(25) John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem exercens*, *ibid.* p. 577.

(26) Cf. above, n. 16.

(27) Cf. above, n. 20.

(28) John Paul II, *Discourse to UNESCO*, June 2, 1980, AAS 72 (1980) n. 11, p. 742.

(29) Cf. above, n. 21.

(30) John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, AAS, 74 (1982) n. 37, p. 127.

(31) *Ibid.*, n. 40.

(32) *Ibid.*, n. 36.

(33) Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem exercens*, September 14, 1981, AAS 73 (1981) n. 20, pp. 629-632.

(34) Second Vatican Council, Decl. *Gravissimum educationis*, n. 8; cf. Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education: " *The Catholic School* " n. 34.

(35) Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education: " *The Catholic School* ", n. 9.

(36) Cf. above, n. 29 and n. 32.

(37) Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decl. *Dignitatis humanae*, n. 3.

(38) Cf. *Apostolicam actuositatem*, n. 2.

(39) The concept here is a more ample one: a system of ideas joined to social, economic, and/or political structures.

(40) Cf. above n. 9.

(41) Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decl. *Ad Gentes*, n. 21.

(42) Cf. John Paul II, *Discourse to the Clerics of Rome Concerning the Teaching of Religion and Catechesis*, March 5, 1981, « *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II* », 1981, IV, I, n. 3, p. 630.

(43) John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi tradendae*, October 16, 1979, AAS 71 n. 66, p. 1331.

(44) *Ibid.*, n. 6.

(45) *Ibid.*, n. 61.

(46) Second Vatican Council: Decl. *Gravissimum educationis*, n. 5.

(47) *Ibid.*, n. 8.

(48) Second Vatican Council: Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem*, n. 29.

(49) John Paul II, *Discourse on the Occasion of the 90th Anniversary of « Rerum Novarum »*, May 13, 1981 (not delivered), *L'Osservatore Romano*, May 15, 1981.

(50) Cf. *Ibid.*

(51) Cf. Second Vatican Council: Decl. *Gravissimum educationis*, n. 8.

(52) Second Vatican Council, Decl. *Gravissimum educationis*, n. 5.

(53) Cf. Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, " *The Catholic School* " n. 75.

(54) Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, " *The Catholic School* ", n. 78.

(55) Cf above, n. 43

(56) Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, AAS, 73, (1981) n. 14, p. 614.

(57) Second Vatican Council, Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem*, n. 33.

