

OMAEC  
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Presentation of His Eminence Card. Giuseppe Versaldi  
Prefect for the Congregation for Catholic Education

## **Challenges of Catholic education in an interreligious society**

### ***Greetings***

For me it is a great honor and also a deep joy to express my cordial greetings from the Congregation for Catholic Education and myself greetings to the OMAEC's representatives on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of its foundation.

The willingness of Catholic schools alumni to come together to share their experiences and offer their skills at the service of young people and the most vulnerable, can be seen - in the first place - as a mandate that come from the heart of the Second Vatican Council, which precisely in those years, called Catholics to renew themselves in order to understand and transform the world, guided by the message of salvation and love of the Christian revelation.

### ***Introduction***

This important recurrence of your Organization is a motivation to look forward with confidence, being aware that - also between difficulties and impediments - your mission has been and continues to be a source of wealth for the Catholic Church.

During your studies in the Catholic scholastic institutions, education and training have never been separated from an integral vision of reality that knew how to see beyond the magnificence of individualistic competition, the primacy of technical skills and the prevalence of criterion of the useful as a measure for all elections. All these aspects - profoundly contradictory and contrary to the education self spirit - have resulted in a reduction of solidarity links, the exaltation of efficiency and optimization, as well as the success at any price, without any consideration of the ethical and deontological aspects.

It is evident that education has been challenged in its deepest values and, on many occasions, emptied of itself vocation. Thanks to your determination and example, the wealth received today allows us to constantly emphasize the primacy of the human being, the value of the community, the search for the common good, care for fragility and concern for the more needed.

Facing with an extremely fragmented, individualistic and arid society, the *educational mission* continues being the integral formation of the person. One balanced attention should be placed not only in the cognitive, emotional, social, professional dimensions, but also and especially in those ethical and spiritual. Then, the experience of learning must be characterized by the multiples opportunities offered to young people, to grow and develop their own abilities and their own talents in a climate of cooperation and

solidarity. Understanding the other is, by the end, the first step to understanding oneself.

*Catholic education* has always distinguished itself as a living testimony - courageous and persevering - in contexts sometimes very difficult, where the Gospel message has had to coexist with increasingly marked forms of secularism, relativism and fundamentalism. These difficulties have meant an impulse to find out new models and alternative ways, that - thanks to your solid education, to the world knowledge and your solidarity - you can make possible and always extend widely, putting yourself at the service of your original or adoptive communities.

In this way, you are called to testify the *educational passion* of a missionary Church, which - also through your contribution - has wanted to renew and update - as stated in the Council Declaration *Gravissimum educationis* - the "mandate received from its divine Founder, which is the announcement of the mystery of salvation to all men, and of to build everything in Christ, [and] it has the duty to take care of human being whole life, also of that earthly one, since it is linked to the spiritual vocation; therefore, it has a specific objective for the education progress and the development.

For all these reasons the Church is deeply grateful to you, and I wishes for you are that your vitality do not lose its initial vivacity and you would be able to interact positively with the epochal changes that we facing, and be ready to respond to the new challenges with hope and optimism.<sup>1</sup>

I would like to stop - on the occasion of this meeting - on some issues that I consider significant to understand our common commitment to the education promotion. After presenting a general view on the contemporary situation, this reflection will be focused on 4 central points: identity, dialogue, service and the need to *educate together*, concluding with some purposes and auspices.

### ***A general view***

The simultaneous presence of divers cultures is a characteristic feature of contemporary society. In the global era, this process is in continuous development also because of the growing migratory flows and the disruptive influence of the so called "information society". All this contributes to nurturing and weaving a constantly changing social fabric, with such new scenarios and very visible challenges for education itself. If in one side unexplored cultural perspectives are presented with all the richness of a historical, artistic and spiritual heritage to discover without prejudice; by the other hand - not rarely - the difficult coexistence between cultures leads to conflictive forms where a certain "extermination" of the others perception conduct to the emerge of threaten feelings to our own customs and traditional lifestyles.

The global space, in some cases, reduces the subject capacity to be measured with a reality that assumes more and more incomprehensible, fluid and basifying characteristics, with the consequent risk of the progressive extinction of cultural identities. It is more proper of the educational nature the ability to build the

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<sup>1</sup> VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL II, Dichiarazione sull'Educazione Cristiana *Gravissimum educationis* (28 ottobre 1965), Proemio

foundations for a peaceful dialogue and allow the encounter between diversities, with the primary objective of building a better world. One of the emergencies is -not just a coincidence- the formation of autonomous and responsible people.

Facing such a situation, it seems necessary the proposal of a "critical universalism" that knows how to unite common values, social cohesion and identity with the ability to live autonomy and with responsibility in a world in which diversity is the primary norm. It is a comprehensive inclusion project that goes beyond the risks - certainly present - of homogenization or of a "localism" or fundamentalist withdrawal.

It is necessary, first of all, to remember - above everything in a secularized culture like ours - which "man is not limited only a temporal horizon, but, living in human history, he fully conserves his eternal vocation.<sup>2</sup> During the speech to the participants of the World Congress "Educate today and tomorrow. A passion that is renewed "the Holy Father emphasize that" the greatest crisis of education, from the Christian perspective, is to close ourselves to transcendence. [...] Educate humanly but with open horizons. Every confinement way do not serve to education.<sup>3</sup>

Then, Pope Francis adds, "Christian education is to encourage young people and children in human values in all reality, and one of them is transcendence<sup>4</sup>. It is an inalienable dimension in the formative itinerary of a person. Here the proposal of a unitary synthesis is transparent, which is at the base of a quiet animi necessary to really understand the "deep sense of existence that exceeds the contingent.<sup>5</sup>

In this way - the encyclical *Laudato Si* reads - "reduce unfulfilled needs, to reduce fatigue and anxiety. You may have little needs and live a lot, especially when you are able to give space to other pleasures, and you find satisfaction in fraternal encounters, in service, in making your own gifts come true, in music, in the art, in contact with nature, in prayer.<sup>6</sup>

### ***The master way of identity***

This passage - so dense and punctual at the same time - makes us to look towards the master way of identity. John Paul II warned in a famous speech to the young people of Casablanca that "man needs to develop his spirit and his conscience. This is what today man often lacks. The oblivion of values and the crisis of identity that our world goes through compel us to improve ourselves in a renewed effort of searches and questions. The inner light, which will then be born in our consciousness, will make it possible to give meaning to development, to direct it towards the man well-being, of each man and of all men, according to God's plan.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL II, Costituzione pastorale *Gaudium et spes* sulla Chiesa nel mondo contemporaneo (28 ottobre 1965), 76..

<sup>3</sup> POPE FRANCESCO, Discorso ai partecipanti congresso mondiale his "Educare oggi e domani. Una passione che si rinnova "promosso dalla Congregazione per l'Educazione Cattolica, 21 novembre 2015.

<sup>4</sup> POPE FRANCESCO, Discorso ai partecipanti congresso mondiale his "Educare oggi e domani. Una passione che si rinnova "promosso dalla Congregazione per l'Educazione Cattolica, 21 novembre 2015.

<sup>5</sup> BENEDETTO XVI, Udienza generale, October 17, 2012

<sup>6</sup> POPE FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si* '(24 May 2015), n. 223.

<sup>7</sup> JOHN PAUL II, To Young Muslims in Casablanca, Morocco, August 19, 1985: Teachings of John Paul II, VIII, 2 (1985) 505.

The heart of Catholic education is the educational project based on an anthropological foundation inspired by the Gospel, based on the person of Jesus Christ, and offered to everybody. The Catholic school, of every order and grade, participate in the general mission of the Church, which is that of evangelizing all people, but it does on its own way, integrating itself with the other ecclesial forms. From this identity emerge fragments of originality of an educational institution that is structured in explicit reference to faith.

If this constant claim did not exist, the Catholic school would lose its characteristic identity and its own reason for being,<sup>8</sup> it would lack [in the background] the source of inspiration itself, it would lack its central axis, it would lack that specific element that defines it and it particularizes it in the middle of the other organizational and didactic structures or other cultural promotion centers ". Precisely in this environment, young people are helped to develop their intelligence in attention to the world in which they live, to walk on the way of salvation until its ultimate end, beyond this world.

Here the importance of the relational environment and the quality of the relationships is revealed. Indeed, in the course of the evolutionary age, personal relationships with significant educators are necessary, and the same knowledge has a greater incidence in the formation if they were given in a context that involves personally, of authentic reciprocity, coherence of attitudes, forms and of daily behaviors.<sup>9</sup> It is, in fact, a journey that - through the paths of individual and collective history - leads us to discover that source of light in the depth of our interior life, so often obscured by the daily occupations and the dehumanizing rhythms. These difficulties extend, unfortunately, to human and family relationships, which today suffer - unfortunately - from so many evils.

The wise and prudent search for solutions focus in integral promotion of the person and society itself belongs to the very nature of Christian identity. She nurtures from the search for Truth, which goes beyond any reductionism or nihilistic denial. The contribution of all educational institutions is - thereafter - irreplaceable in a differentiated society, where are required universal competences. The Catholic school should not be left alone. Together with you and all the other educational agencies, it has the responsibility to promote tradition, identity and a sense of belonging.

In spite of the different religions and traditions, the Church starts precisely from the assumption of the acceptance of the common human nature, avoiding, on in one hand, accommodating itself in a passive syncretism, and on the other, remaining always firm in its own identity. On each culture and tradition we find strong values on which the formative processes of the younger generations are established. As Cardinal Pietro Parolin confirmed to the Forum presented to UNESCO on the seventieth anniversary of that International Organization: "Accepting the differences related to each culture does not mean denying the existence of objective values and principles common to the same human nature, without that, it has led us to the cultural relativism that

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<sup>8</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Discourse to the Federation of Institutes of Educational Activities- FIDAE, 29 December 1978.

<sup>9</sup> CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, Catholic school at the threshold of the third millennium, n.18

voluntarily forgets all ultimate questions about truth and open the doors to forgetting memory, nihilism and radicalism.<sup>10</sup>

So, it is in the nature of the person, in their demands for growth and fulfillment, in all their different dimensions (social, relational, religious, etc.) that there are common elements to collaborate for a healthy education. However, it is fully achieved if people are trained in a critical conscience, in a capacity for judgment or in a dynamic prominence role, avoiding an education that "calm down" them or transforms them into domesticated and harmless human beings.

A free and responsible education presupposes the exercise of critical analysis as well as the renunciation of ideologies, and the choice of different paths from those of radicalization. To learn to live in a complex society - where live together diverse options on the moral, religious, cultural and economic level - it is not about "politicizing" reality, but about helping young generations to understand life in a broad sense, acquiring - strong in theirself identity - either a spirit critical, whether the availability to cooperate, exchange and discussion. For this reason, we must also invest in those knowledge and skills that allow the development of argumentative skills, as well as effective participation in social processes.

In essence, a pedagogical project of integral formation - in a multiethnic and multi-religious context - must tend to create a balance between the acquisitions of intercultural education as it has been understood up to now (that is, the ability to know and appreciate differences) and the concern of orienting it not to the defense of the "particularisms", but to the social convergence and to the acceptance of a proposal of sharing. Basically, it is about recognizing and accepting cultural pluralism, contributing to the establishment of a just society based on equality of rights, as well as contributing to the establishment of respectful and harmonious interethnic and interreligious relations.

The Church speaks to all men with its own conception of the human person and its unique value.<sup>11</sup> She emphasizes that the person does not exist only as a physical being: it is body and matter, but also knowledge, love, spirituality, project and transcendence. He is able to recognize his peers - understanding them also in suffering and discomfort; he is capable of fighting for the others. In this way, they become mature and capable of committing themselves for a humanity in which they experience daily the experience of communion and love, as well as the transcendent dimension of being and acting.

### ***The master way of dialogue***

Therefore the way of dialogue appears as the only possibility for a positive transformation of concerns and misunderstandings, as a resource for the development of a richer, more open and more humane civilization. Indeed, it has been bitterly noticed – particularly within the last decade - that certain relativism implicit in the intercultural approach, while declaring respect for diversity, carries the risk of

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<sup>10</sup> P. PAROLIN, "The Catholic Church and Education. Address to UNESCO ", L'Osservatore Romano, 4 June 2015, pp. 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter Centesimus annus, n. 11.

considering cultures in a static way, leaving them isolated and impermeable from each other.

Neither an educational program with only the concept of difference as focus reach a true intercultural and interreligious dialogue if the search for integration does not join with it. The relativist configuration in school, centered on differences, not only pushes the teacher to fragment the curriculum, but above all, prevents him from establishing a dialogue between people belonging to living cultures, and as such, susceptible to changes, exchanges and of transformations.

Then it is fundamental the exercise of listening: "this is not only a necessary condition in a process of reciprocal understanding and peaceful coexistence, but it is also a pedagogical duty in order to be" capable of recognize the others' values, to understand the underlying concerns of their requests and to bring common convictions to emerge "(*Evangelii Gaudium*, 253).<sup>12</sup>

Within the sharing of a *culture of fraternity and peace*, as has already been clearly indicated in the proem of the conciliar Declaration *Gravissimum educationis*, it is our duty to start up a true process of reciprocal respect despiting the multiple tensions present in our society. It turns necessary the formation of men and women capable of reconciliation, capable of building a social fabric marked by encounter and solidarity.

As stated verbatim in the document "Educating intercultural dialogue in the Catholic school" (2013), "the dialogue with people and communities from other religions is motivated by the fact that we are all creatures of God, that God acts on each person human, which, through dialogue, find out reasons in the search for the heritage of common ethical values, present in the various religious traditions, in order to contribute as believers to the affirmation of the common good, justice and peace."<sup>13</sup>

### ***Service and inclusion***

It is required to reconsider the educative parable and, in general terms, the "knowledge" in terms of alterity, inclusion and service. Through the introduction of new formal and informal models, we are invited to go beyond a simple methodological organization and to act a true and proper one "Anthropological Foundation", extending it to the globalist of the educational event, within an environment in which a renewed vision of interpersonal links is manifested.

On each formative process, it is necessary to give space to an anthropology of reciprocity, which before constituting itself as a cultural event can be concretized in everyday practice as a dimension of inclusion itself. Through an affective, cognitive and social sharing, gradually reach the discovery of otherness as a central knot, either of knowledge, or towards values and action.

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<sup>12</sup> POPE FRANCIS, Address to the participants at the meeting promoted by the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, January 24, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, Educating for intercultural dialogue in the Catholic school. Living together for a civilization of love, Vatican City 2013, p. 12.

From the pedagogical point of view, this depth choice represents the commotion of validated optics, through which society often leans in the interpretation of facts, people and cultures, to concretely give space to paths of knowledge and of experience respectful of the plurality of subjects and groups. The encounter with diversity should represent normality within the daily experience in which everybody in his own way, with its own characteristics, is "other" of the other, that is, different and, at the same time, to be prone to "Become one" with him.

Starting from this perspective means assign to the diversity dimension the same importance that is justly given to that of identity, inalienable reference point for the self development, but insufficient if it is not considered in the inclusive line of openness and encounter with plurality. Only in this way, to reestablish pedagogy of proximity and service will help overcome fear or distrust facing the diversity and develop attitudes of encounter, search and acceptance.

Education must allow every person to actively participate in the construction of a new society, based on a set of shared ethical and normative instances. In this perspective, the process of inclusion advances to extend to the entire human family. What does this mean? In the first place, it is necessary that the inclusive process be able to influence the lifestyles and the existence, by themselves, of the citizens of future generations. It's about building the common good, without ignoring future generations. This requires an education based on an integral ecology and, consequently, on an intergenerational ethic.<sup>14</sup> But a true inclusion must also fulfill the next step of entering into a proactive bond of solidarity and service to the local communities themselves, favoring peaceful coexistence and an active responsibility.

To have a solid foundation to launch serious educational itineraries, it is necessary first of all to recover the humanistic dimension of knowledge, extending the reason to philosophical wisdom and to the light of faith, but in particular, it is auspicious to enter into a dimension where reason includes love. In other words, it is a question of moving from the cold monologue of modern man to the warmth of service, since the human person does not realize himself without truth and love. In this sense, education fully reaches its goals when, together with the mind, involves heart and hands, educating reason, feelings and life, when promote the community dimension, the culture of the meeting, the wonder of dialogue and the creativity of the subject.

In the catholic school promote that fruitful encounter between faith and reason, which are - as St. John Paul II said (second) - "like the wings whereby the human spirit rises towards the contemplation of the truth."<sup>15</sup> The one without the other would produce a disastrous separation since "the reason, deprived of the Revelation contribution, has traveled lateral paths that run the risk of losing sight of his final goal. Faith, deprived of reason, has highlighted the feeling and experience, running the risk of not being a universal proposal."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Educating to humanism in solidarity. To build a "society of love" 50 years after the Populorum progressio*, Tipografia Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2017, n. 21.

<sup>15</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Letter Fides et Ratio* (September 14, 1998), Proemio

<sup>16</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Letter Fides et Ratio* (September 14, 1998), n. 48.

## ***Educate together: a common responsibility***

Another present challenge of education is the rediscovery of its communal nature. We cannot leave school: we are all called to work together, to work in communion.

In the Christian pedagogical tradition the environment has always been seen as formative itself. This conception is expressed in the most vast and richest category of the school understood as an educational community, made by the encounter and by the collaboration of diverse presences: students, parents, grandparents, professors, directors, consecrated persons, and non-teaching personnel. A community that is characterized "as an environment penetrated by the evangelical spirit of freedom and charity."<sup>17</sup>

This living community is not "an undifferentiated set of similar and identical, but the meeting of diverse and different people who have gathered around a shared horizon. What makes the community authentic is not uniformity, but mission. Consequently, the community is not spontaneous; on the contrary, it comes from a will and from the work of each moment. Because it is open to everyone and because it is based on the efforts of everybody, it demands a clear vision of the fundamentals and the objectives of the educational project itself."<sup>18</sup>

A scholastic environment structured as mentioned, deeply affect all the actors involved in the educational project, makes to live the proposed values influencing behaviors and approaches to reality, so long that at a distance of so many years, remember with gratitude the benefits received. From this perspective, it is understood that education is basically "a matter of love, for which the crisis of education is an expression of the crisis of love, of true love. Caring, in fact, demands attention, listening, dialogue, ability to put oneself in the place of the other, dedication and sacrifice, renouncing selfishness and overcoming one's own weaknesses, also distancing oneself from being able to accept error, and the distancing of the learner."<sup>19</sup>

For these reasons the role of the educator is constituted as a mission and a vocation "*wonderful* [because] collaborating with parents in the performance of their task and acting as the human community, [teachers] assume the duty to educate in the schools. Such a vocation requires special gifts of intelligence and heart, a careful preparation, a quick and constant capacity for renewal and adaptation."<sup>20</sup> His mission has a very high moral thickness: it is an activity among the highest and most creative of man.

Teachers, together with all educators, are called to give a testimony of life, occupying "a place of particular importance the preeminence that behavior always has over the word. The more the educator lives the model of man that he presents as an ideal, the more he will be credible and imitable, so that the student can contemplate it as

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<sup>17</sup> SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum educationis* (October 28, 1965), n. 5.

<sup>18</sup> P. BALMAND, "Training Project and Educational Community: A Testimony of Consistency and Communion", *Educatio Catholica*, 3 / 4-2015, p. 138 (Traduzione nostra).

<sup>19</sup> Y. REUNGOAT, "Identity and mission of Catholic education", *Educatio Catholica*, 3 / 4-2015, p. 122.

<sup>20</sup> SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum educationis* (October 28, 1965), n. 5.



reasonable and as worthy of being lived,<sup>21</sup> close and realizable. The educator does not write about an inert matter, but in the very spirit of men<sup>22</sup> and, for that reason, it is important that he keep the maximum awareness of the importance, wealth and responsibility of such a vocation, with the awareness that such an effort has a profound impact on the construction and renovation of the earthly city.<sup>23</sup>

The role of the scholastic director could not pass unnoticed, whom is and should be – by antonomasia-, a person of the dialogue with the disciples, with the educators, with all the non-teaching staff and with the territorial and parochial realities. His role can be seen as a kaleidoscope of differences in unity. In fact, it is not simple. His complex and tiring work is the result of collaboration with families and the entire educational community in a communion of attempts and ideals.

Harmony with families must be, therefore, promoted and strengthened, because it does not only aim at scholastic questions, but tends above all to reach the integral formation of every student. Without the active support of families, the school cannot be an authentic educating community, but the family - more than ever - needs to be sustained with "the courage of patience, acceptance, reciprocal forgiveness, reconciliation and also sacrifice."<sup>24</sup> Not infrequently, in our institutions there are many situations of discomfort and pain that will touch the sensitivity and growth of so many children and adolescents. Unfortunately - also because of these factors - "a fracture has opened up between family and society, between family and school, today the educational pact has been broken; and thus, the educational alliance of society with the family has entered into crisis."<sup>25</sup>

Although it seems an arduous task, organizations like yours are called - by their heritage of experience and humanity - to collaborate in healing those cracks and closing wounds. It is a patient action and, sometimes, titanic, but that will certainly give unexpected results. We cannot leave families alone! "The Christian communities [in effect - affirms the Holy Father -] are called to offer a support to the educational mission of families."<sup>26</sup>

The OMAEC can be an ideal platform to carry out a shared action with all the actors of education process, knowing how to set the foundations for a constructive dialogue between the demands of school managers, teachers, students and parents. We must not and cannot leave them alone! The Catholic school especially entrust in you for this task of support, accompanying and mediation. Your history makes you suitable to play this role of fundamental help to the didactic and formative activities, starting from the certainty that the Christian vision of man offers an anthropological "plus": a communitarian Personalism that emphasizes the social nature of man himself. The educational community is the privileged place for an opening to solidarity humanism

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<sup>21</sup> CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, The lay Catholic witness of faith in the school, n. 32

<sup>22</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, Catholic school at the threshold of the third millennium, n. 19.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, The lay Catholic witness of faith in the school, n. 37.

<sup>24</sup> POPE FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Amoris Laetitia* (March 19, 2016), n. 41.

<sup>25</sup> POPE FRANCIS, Catechesis (20 May 2015): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 21 May 2015, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> POPE FRANCIS, Catechesis (9 September 2015): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 10 September 2015, p. 8.

where young people can mature their freedom as a relationship between responsibility and solidarity.<sup>27</sup>

## **Conclusions**

As a conclusion of my presentation I wish to emphasize that the dimension itself of inter-dependence and interculturality belongs to the patrimony of the Church and manifests itself in history as a dialogue with the world, in the prospective not only of recognizing and valuing differences, but of contributing to the construction of a civilization founded on love.

Faced with individualism, narcissism and consumerist validation that leads our society, the Catholic school is challenged in its manifestation with a true community of life, where the complex network of interpersonal relationships among the diverse subjects, find the foundation in the love of the Truth, in the search of communion and harmony especially in all the difficult moments of the formative process.

It is necessary to accompany people and Christian communities to develop a pedagogy of communion, structured mainly through listening, dialogue, cooperation, the search for common values and the sharing of objectives for the promotion of the common good and of peaceful coexistence. The contribution of the alumni of Catholic education has been and may still be very important.

For a school that is rooted in the tradition of the Gospel, it also seems a priority to educate in fundamental values and in freedom to respect differences. This principle - already pointed out in the *Gravissimum Educationis* - corresponds to the Christian vision of nature common to all men, which is respectful of the individual and cultural peculiarities that characterize the reality and history of peoples. Such respect, however, is directed to a common goal, which is a fraternal coexistence with the other peoples, in order to guarantee true unity and true peace on earth.

"True education must [in effect] - says *Gravissimum Educationis* - promote the formation of the human person, either in view of its ultimate goal, or for the good of the different societies, of which man is a member and in which, becoming an adult, will have tasks to perform.<sup>28</sup> This invitation from the Council Fathers is still very current and is aimed particularly at those of you, that play roles of responsibility at local, national and international level.

In thanking all of you who represent the OMAEC for your attention, with deep conviction I predict you will be ready to understand the challenges of the times. Without losing confidence and seeking adequate solutions through mediation in communion.<sup>29</sup> Never as today - says Pope Francesco - "the task of educating and accompanying the new generations to learn human values and cultivate an evangelical vision of life and history is urgent"! This is just one of the horizons of the evangelizing

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Educating for humanism in solidarity. To build a "society of love" 50 years after the Populorum progressio*, Tipografia Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2017.

<sup>28</sup> SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, *Declaration on Christian Education Gravissimum educationis* (October 28, 1965), n. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. PAPA FRANCESCO, *Address to pontifical representatives*, 21 June 2013.

mission of the Church, towards which the entire Christian community is invited to leave.<sup>30</sup> Continue, for this, without fears in your precious work!

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<sup>30</sup> POPE FRANCIS, Discourse to the participants in the General Chapter of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, 16 September 2017.